Fleeing Ukrainians to Get More Help From United States

Friday, March 25, 2022

The United States has joined many European countries that are opening their doors and offering humanitarian assistance to fleeing Ukrainians.

Ireland, Great Britain and Canada have all started private sponsorship programs for Ukrainians. That assistance is not necessarily a one-way street. Easing the way for incoming Ukrainians may help those nations deal with their own labor shortages.
Ukraine is known for its skilled workforce, including tech engineers, and some companies in Europe are specifically targeting jobs for Ukrainians, offering everything from language training to child care to attract the refugees. Even temporary employment agencies are involved and new companies are being founded for the purpose of matching Ukrainians to jobs across Europe – jobs that run the gamut from highly skilled tech work, to healthcare aids, to retail and hospitality positions.

U.S. employers are generously offering humanitarian aid and donations to help Ukrainian refugees, but now those employers may be able to offer jobs to displaced Ukrainians seeking refuge. The Biden Administration will open various legal pathways that could include the refugee admissions program (which can lead to permanent residence through asylum, but is a long process), visas, and humanitarian parole (a temporary solution). The focus will be on Ukrainians with family in the United States or others considered to be particularly vulnerable. Approximately 1,000,000 people of Ukrainian descent currently live in the United States.

The administration originally believed that most Ukrainians did not want to flee to the United States because it was too far away from other family members who have remained in Ukraine. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had stated that the priority was to help European countries who are dealing with huge waves for migration instead. But advocates have been arguing that the administration could create special status for Ukrainians to allow them to enter the U.S. or stay with family members.

In early March, the Biden Administration established Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ukrainians who have been in the United States continuously since March 1, 2022, but that did not help those who are still abroad. Visitor visas are hard to come by because applicants for visitor visas need to be able to show that their stay will be temporary and that they have a home to return to in Ukraine, and such temporary nonimmigrant visas may not meet that criterion or be practical in most of these situations. Moreover, consulates abroad are already overwhelmed and understaffed due to COVID-19.

While small numbers of Ukrainians have made it to the United States by finding private or family sponsors, this new policy should at least open the doors to some Ukrainians and likely make it possible for U.S. companies to hire some of the incoming refugees. They will need and want employment, but they will also need support.

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National Law Review, Volume XII, Number 84

Source URL: https://www.natlawreview.com/article/fleeing-ukrainians-to-get-more-help-united-states