

Temporary protection in Bulgaria for persons who have fled Ukraine after February 24, 2022

In connection with the wave of refugees fleeing the territory of Ukraine, the European Council adopted Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection, by force of which temporary protection is afforded to persons who have fled Ukraine after February 24, 2022. On the authority of said decision, and in pursuance of article 2(2) of the Bulgarian Asylum and Refugees Act, the Council of Ministers has determined, in its Resolution No. 144 of March 10, 2022, the framework of granting such temporary protection in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Said temporary protection will apply to Ukrainian nationals and to third-country nationals or stateless persons who had been granted protection in the territory of Ukraine. The rules of such temporary protection will also apply to members of the families of persons belonging to any of the above groups.

Even prior to the provision granting temporary protection, Ukrainian nationals were allowed entry and sojourn in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for up to 90 days within any 6-month period by virtue of the visa-free status granted them at EU level. Said visa-free status, however, is now extended in scope by the above-cited Council act to apply not just to holders of biometric passports but also to anyone presenting Ukrainian-issued identity papers, including expired ones. The temporary protection status, however, allows Ukrainian nationals to stay in the territory of Bulgaria for longer periods of time: up to one year as from February 24, 2022, whereby said period may be extended or curtailed, depending on circumstances. However, the Council of Ministers resolution provides that, to be eligible for temporary protection following March 31, 2022, refugees from Ukrainian territory must have stated their willingness to apply for such protection not later than April 15, 2022, with the registration procedure being simplified in the utmost. To date, there are 27 registration centers operating in the territory of Bulgaria where they can apply for temporary protection.

Persons granted protection will have the right to be issued a registration card; to be reunited with their families; to seek employment; to get an education; to be granted social assistance and medical help in an emergency. Further information in that context can be accessed at the single online information portal at: <https://ukraine.gov.bg>