

Ukrainians Speaking – Conditions, Dreams and Perspectives on the Future

Summary

Considering the poor prospects for peace and stability in Ukraine in the near future, DRC Integration has initiated dialogues with displaced Ukrainians in Denmark about their perspectives on the future.

These conversations highlight how adults and youth alike have a significant need for stability, security, and a legal framework that allows for planning and imagining their future. The panel discussions point to a shared wish for durable solutions, which for many amounts to the prospect of a more stable foundation for their residence permit, as most of the participants hope to build their life and future in Denmark.

The facilitated panel discussions show that uncertainty regarding the future and the temporary nature of the residence permits, have a negative impact on several aspects of the Ukrainian refugees' life in Denmark. This includes the adults' lack of motivation to learn Danish and to engage with broader Danish society. Moreover, it worsens their mental health conditions, as the uncertainties create a fundamental sense of psychological insecurity, which hinders their ability to build relations and attachment to their surroundings and makes it difficult to create meaningful everyday routines for themselves and their families.

Participants in the youth panel clearly express a determination to build their future in Denmark. They want to get an education and a relevant job – to contribute meaningfully to the society they are part of. They do not believe that there will be peace in Ukraine for the foreseeable future and have given up on their life there. The panel discussions suggest that there is potentially a large group of Ukrainian youths, who wish to stay in Denmark long term. This group is foremost concerned with the opportunities for self-realization and exploring their dreams for the future in safe and secure surroundings.

The Ukrainian youth experience higher standards of living in Denmark; economically, psychologically, and in regard to their personal safety.

The youth experience a sense of freedom in Denmark, that they have not had in Ukraine. Many express that they are freer to be themselves and pursue what they want. They are highly motivated and ready to contribute and participate in Danish society if they are allowed to stay in Denmark.

Adult and youth participants share similar worries about their future, especially the concern as to whether their residence permit will be extended beyond March 2025.

The panel discussions clearly illustrate that a significant part of the Ukrainian refugees consider their future to be in Denmark – even if there will be peace in their hometown. This calls for more durable solutions, long-term planning, and initiatives that can support integration in Denmark as well as support a return to Ukraine.