



Bild: Ukrainian Refugees in Germany Are Not Working

The German government's move to get more Ukrainian refugees into the workforce has been failing amid the substantial financial support given to those seeking shelter in the country, the tabloid *Bild* reported on Monday.

Per the paper, only 25.2 percent of the refugees from Ukraine in Germany are presently employed, compared with 78 percent in Denmark and 66 percent in the Czech Republic. The share is also considerably higher in several other EU states, including Poland (65 percent), Sweden (56 percent), and the Netherlands (50 percent).

The report indicated that across the EU, Ukrainian refugees obtain temporary protection status without having to go through a complex asylum procedure, are included in health and social systems, and are allowed to work immediately. However, financial support programs for refugees vary. In Germany, single adults or single parents receive €563 (\$604) per month, while children are given between €357 and €471 depending on their age. In addition, housing and additional costs are covered. The Czech Republic provides €200 in emergency assistance, while the cost of living in a hostel is covered for a limited period of time. In Poland, Ukrainian refugees can receive a one-time payment of €66 and a child benefit of €110 per month.

The German government has been taking steps to expedite the integration of tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees into its labor market, urging companies to loosen their German language requirements and offer extra training. Last year, Labor Minister Hubertus Heil declared the launch of the so-called "job turbo" initiative with the plan of putting millions of refugees — especially Ukrainians — to work.

Meanwhile, based on a recent publication by *Der Spiegel*, citing a draft report on federal spending, most of the Ukrainian refugees in Germany who enrolled in government-funded integration courses did not complete them. The outlet called the results "sobering," considering the cost of the program. The



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courses were first launched in 2005 and currently have an annual budget of around €1 billion.

Details of the document produced by Germany's Federal Audit Office, which informs lawmakers on how effectively taxpayer money is helping to integrate refugees into the labor force, were disclosed by the weekly magazine.

More than a million Ukrainians have been granted asylum in Germany since Kyiv's conflict with Russia erupted into open hostilities in February 2022. Of those, almost 450,000 had been admitted to the *Integrationskurs* program, per auditors citing data from the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). Some 198,000 Ukrainian refugees started their courses, while 135,000 had sufficient time to complete them, although not all successfully.

Only 61,266 participants had passed the program by September, having obtained B1 level in language fluency and passing a "Life in Germany" test. Learning German and how the nation's society functions are the two key components of *Integrationskurs*.

Of the 56,750 individuals who failed the exams, most did not have sufficient language skills. Another 16,546 Ukrainians dropped out of the program and did not take the final tests, *Spiegel* said.

A migration report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published in October put Poland, the second-largest recipient of Ukrainian refugees among EU member states after Germany, at the top in terms of employment rate, with 65 percent of working-age Ukrainians having a job. The survey did not include German data, but the nation's Federal Employment Agency put the German number at 19 percent earlier this year.

Meanwhile, Agiya Zagrebelskaya, the head of the sanctions department at Ukraine's National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NCPA), told the media outlet EUObserver that the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia are "weak," adding that she does not think that the bloc can tighten restrictions in the future.

"Is this [13th] package weak? Let's not look at it separately. Rather, we can say all the previous measures were weak," Zagrebelskaya told the EUObserver, stating that if Brussels had done enough, the conflict would not be entering its third year.

Responding to a question about the prospects of a stricter crackdown by the EU on Moscow in the future, Zagrebelskaya said that she doesn't "believe in magic."

"I don't believe in it because some of the [Russians] who should've been sanctioned in 2014 are still not under sanctions," she said.

The NCPA has been known for its particularly aggressive stance on seeking to punish Russia. It has attempted to shame international companies that have not left Russia by adding them to its notorious "sponsors of war" list. Nearly 50 international brands, including PepsiCo, Nestle, Mars, Unilever, Xiaomi, Bacardi, Leroy Merlin, Procter & Gamble, Yves Rocher, and Alibaba (owner of AliExpress), Subway, and Viciunai Group, have been branded with the designation.

The 13th package of EU sanctions on Russia is currently being prepared to commemorate the second anniversary of the beginning of Moscow's military operation in Ukraine. The new set of restrictions, poised to be agreed upon by February 24, will reportedly target around 200 entities and individuals but not include any "big names" or import bans. The European Commission reportedly discussed the package over the weekend with the plan of finalizing the proposals.

Reuters previously reported that the European Commission was hoping to "cause minimal debate"



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among member states so that the package could be passed as quickly as possible.



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