

Project Group (Number and Name):

No. 13 – The War in Ukraine: a Turning Point towards Sustainability?

Comment

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Comment:

The War in Ukraine – a Turning Point towards Sustainability (and perhaps even Humanity?)

For the last eight months, the Russian War against the Ukraine and its consequences for our society have been relentlessly discussed all throughout the news. Suddenly, everyone is talking about energy supply shortages and our economy going downhill due to it. Additionally, the unique Ukrainian nature is heavily compromised. In fact, there are 20 rare plant species at risk of extinction due to the war. And the saddest thing about this: Almost no one knows about the ecological destruction connected to the war. Nevertheless, if we want to look at the invasion and its aftermath in a sustainable manner, it is crucial to keep the third pillar, the social aspects of sustainability, in mind as well.

Ever since the Russian invasion into the Ukraine on February 24th 2022, the EU has set a prime example in terms of providing support in times of major crisis and protecting the vulnerable.

Ukrainian refugees are granted the automatic right to stay and work throughout its 27 member nations for up to three years. They are offered housing in reception centers, food, medical care and information about onward travel. They are entitled to social welfare payments and access to housing, medical treatment and schools. And to see the mobilization of enormous amounts of citizens who were so eager to help through donating and housing strangers in their homes was truly heart-warming.

Yet, only three months prior to that thousands of refugees have been denied the international right on protection from the effects of war and violence on the Belarusian borders. The refugees, who were mostly from the Middle East, were trapped in freezing forests between the borders without any access to food or a shelter. Hungary's prime minister Victor Orbán has described non-European refugees as "Muslim invaders" and migrants as "a poison".

These double standards also affected non-Ukrainians fleeing the war in the Ukraine. Students and migrants who have been working and living in Ukraine, but originally came from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia have faced racist treatment and even violence trying to flee the Ukraine. Many were not allowed to board trains and buses in the Ukraine while priority was given to Ukrainian nationals. Without even realizing it, we are applying double standards to refugees. Since the fear is the same everywhere, what makes the war in Ukraine different from the war in Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq?

Fighting countering nationalism is crucial to ensure the refugee protection. Any kind of double standard cannot be accepted, moreover they can be harmful for the international EU citizens. In conclusion, Europe has no other options, but to rethink how it treats all people seeking protection. Here, Europe has reached a critical turning point that needs to be addressed, even though an international agreement on identical standards seems to be unlikely.

Resources

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472>

<https://euobserver.com/migration/155232>

<https://hir.harvard.edu/the-limitations-of-humanity-differential-refugee-treatment-in-the-eu/>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-crisis-double-standards-has-europe-s-response-refugees-changed>

<https://www.vogue.pl/a/o-nierownym-traktowaniu-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy-i-bliskiego-wschodu-w-polsce>