

## P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

### **Ukraine: Some 1 million child refugees on the move are at risk of separation**

Kyiv, 8 March 2022 – An estimated one million children have fled Ukraine in recent weeks, as the total number of refugees fleeing the country reached [2 million people today](#). A growing number of these children are arriving on their own, without family support, in an escalating child protection crisis.

Reports from the border suggest that some children are arriving unaccompanied after being sent by family members who were unable to leave Ukraine but wanted their children to be safe from ground attacks and aerial explosions. Others have been separated from their families in the chaos of fleeing their homes. Many of the solo arrivals are under 14 and showing signs of psychological distress.

Save the Children is working to establish family tracing and reunification procedures with other agencies to help reunite children with extended family and friends in Poland and neighbouring countries, as well as to establish child protection systems and reporting mechanisms to keep children safe.

#### **Irina Saghoyan, Save the Children’s Eastern Europe Director, said:**

*“Parents are resorting to the most desperate, heart-breaking measures to protect their children. This includes sending their children away with neighbours and friends, to seek safety outside of Ukraine, while they stay home to protect their homes.*

*“Separation can mean profound psychological stress from uncertainty, and fear for family members and separation anxiety. It also increases risks of violence, exploitation, trafficking and abuse. Many of these separated children are travelling with their older siblings or extended families. Others are travelling with neighbours or other adults. They are in need of protection and support and still incredibly vulnerable.*

*“All efforts must be made to prevent the separation of children from their caregivers and to ensure immediate family tracing and reunification where separation occurs. We know that the quicker we act the most likely it is to successfully reunify children with their caregivers. We will continue to respond where we are most needed and where children need urgent protection.”*

Save the Children is calling on border authorities and humanitarian actors to put measures in place to keep children with their primary caregivers, provide child-centred psycho-social support and implement programming to prevent separation. These services must include child friendly spaces, child friendly information, family tracing and reunification and maternal health support.

Save the Children has been operating in Ukraine since 2014, providing humanitarian aid to children and their families. This includes supporting access to education, distributing winter and hygiene kits, and providing cash grants to families. Our specialists support children to overcome the mental and psychological impacts of their experiences of conflict and violence and increase their ability to cope with stress in their daily lives.

**Notes to editors:**

- Save the Children staff and volunteers are distributing food, water and hygiene kits to refugees arriving at the Romania-Ukraine border and in reception centres.
- In Poland and Romania, the organisation is providing Child Protection services including targeted support for unaccompanied and separated children, psychosocial support and access to legal services.
- Save the Children works with refugee and migrant children inside and outside of Europe, aiming to support vulnerable children with the greatest needs.

**Unterstützen Sie Kinder in der Ukraine mit Ihrer Spende:**

Spendenkonto Save The Children  
Bank für Sozialwirtschaft  
IBAN: DE92100205000003292912  
BIC: BFSWDE33BER  
Stichwort „Spendenaufruf Ukraine“

**Bei Interviewanfragen wenden Sie sich bitte an unsere Pressestelle.****Kontakt:**

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**Über Save the Children**

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in rund 120 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.