

**3rd meeting of the Thematic study group on Immigration and Integration:
"The protection and integration of Ukrainian refugees, 9 months on: how well is it going?"**

Speaker biographies

Panel I: The protection of Ukrainian refugees: the institutional perspective

Cecilia VERKLEIJ, Deputy Head of Unit, Asylum, DG Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission

Cecilia joined the Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security (now DG Migration and Home Affairs) in 2005. She previously worked on facilitating access to information for law enforcement authorities and agencies within the EU, with the aim of preventing and combatting terrorism and other forms of serious crime. She is currently deputy head of unit of the Asylum in DG HOME.

Nataša Chmelíčková, Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU

Natasa Chmelickova is head of unit for Asylum Legislation within the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic. Currently she is a member of the legislation team dealing with temporary protection at national level. She also acts as a chair of the Asylum Working Party during the current Czech Presidency. She has been participating in negotiations related to the Common European Asylum System, including return legislation since 2007.

Lucie Verachten, General Secretariat of the Council

Lucie Verachten is a political administrator at the Justice and Home Affairs Directorate, dealing with migration. In 2013, she started working at the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, and since 2021 has been working in the JHA directorate. Previously, she was an archivist at the Belgian State Archives.

Giuseppe Varacalli, Committee of the Regions

Giuseppe Varacalli was the rapporteur on the European Commission's package Legal Migration - Attracting Skills and Talent to the EU. He is a member of the Gerace municipal council in Italy, an alternate member of the European Committee of the Regions, a member of the National Council of Anci (National Association of Italian Municipalities) and member of the ANCI regional council for the Calabria Region.

Panel II: The view from the ground: the challenges and strains facing refugees

Justyna Segeš Frelak and Caitlin Katsiaficas, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

Justyna Segeš Frelak is a senior policy advisor for Legal Migration and Integration at ICMPD. She works on labour migration, migration governance and integration. From 2004 to 2017 she was working at the Institute of Public Affairs (Poland) as the head of the Migration Program and senior analyst. At her previous work, she focused on migration policy development, intra-EU mobility, integration of migrants and refugees in Poland and discrimination.

Caitlin Katsiaficas is a policy analyst at ICMPD. Her recent research focuses on displacement, international protection and integration. Prior to joining ICMPD, Caitlin held positions at George Washington University's Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, Migration Policy Institute, World Bank, and International Rescue Committee.

Gabriela Alexandrescu, Save the Children, Romania

Gabriela Alexandrescu specialises in sociology with studies in management, economics and international humanitarian law. She has spent the last 20 years dedicated to advocating children's rights in the national and international fora.

Maria Papaioannou and Thomas Jezequel, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)

Maria Papaioannou is an information and analysis officer and coordinates *inter alia* the EUAA Situational Updates System portfolio. Previously, she was Lawyer (Athens Bar Association), and worked in NGOs, the European Commission, and academia. In 2013-2015, she presided one of the International Protection Appeal Committees in Greece.

Thomas Jezequel works as a reception officer since January 2018 after having spent 10 years in Brussels working for Caritas International and EUROCITIES on migration and integration issues. Since November 2022, he is the head of the Reception & Vulnerability Sector, within the Asylum and Reception Cooperation and Guidance unit.

Panel III: The integration of Ukrainian refugees in education, housing and employment: facts and figures

Giuliana Benedetto, DG Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission

Giuliana is a policy officer at the Legal pathways and Integration unit in DG HOME. She has been working in the Commission for the last 4 years, mainly in the field of EU migration policy.

Ramona David, CEDEFOP

Ramona David Craescu has worked at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) since 2008. Her main areas of research are apprenticeships and migration with a special focus on refugee support and integration through VET, skills and qualifications.

Maria Cantero, Eurofound

Maria Cantero is a research support officer in the Working Life unit at Eurofound. She is involved in quality control and analysis of Eurofound's EU PolicyWatch database and in topics related to minimum wages and national reporting on industrial relations, social dialogue and working life.

Sogol Noorani, EACEA

Sogol Noorani works as a policy analyst for Eurydice - a unit and network located in the European Commission's executive agency EACEA, whose task is to explain how European education systems are organised and how they work. Her main areas of research are school education policies promoting inclusive education and school achievement.

Panel IV: The integration of Ukrainian refugees in education, housing and employment: the perspective from social partners, civil society and think tanks

Robert Plummer, BusinessEurope

Robert Plummer is a senior adviser responsible for issues concerning migration and mobility, education and skills, social dialogue and the European Labour Authority. Prior to joining BusinessEurope, Robert worked as a political adviser for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) party.

Magdalena Chojnowska, All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ)

Magdalena Chojnowska is the lead international affairs specialist in the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ), the largest nationwide umbrella confederation of trade unions in Poland, comprised both of unified nationwide trade union organisations and the sectoral federations of trade unions. The OPZZ aims are to ensure decent living and working conditions in a democratic society.

Robert Ranson, Social Platform

Robert Ranson is a senior policy and advocacy officer at Social Platform. Robert leads Social Platform's work on the response to the war in Ukraine, equality and non-discrimination, and income and wages. He has previously worked on migration and social rights for a number of organizations at the EU and national level, including Save the Children Europe, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, and the UN Refugee Agency.

Jasmijn Slootjes, Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe

Jasmijn Slootjes is a Senior Policy Analyst with MPI Europe. Her areas of expertise are migrant integration, migrant health, evidence-informed policymaking, and innovation. Prior to joining MPI Europe she was the Executive Director of the Berkeley Interdisciplinary Migration Initiative at UC Berkeley.
