Summer camps in EU provide a safe place for Ukrainian children

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President of European Committee of the Regions and Mayor of Kyiv praise solidarity shown by EU regions and cities organising summer camps for Ukrainian children.

The presidents of the European Committee of the Regions and the Association of Ukrainian Cities have congratulated cities and regions that are organising summer camps in the European Union for Ukrainian children, saying that this is an act of solidarity that offers a sense of normality to some of the millions of Ukrainian children whose lives have been shaken by the war.

The summer camps are part of a broader show of solidarity by the EU's cities and regions, ranging from humanitarian aid to twinnings and commitments to support the reconstruction of Ukraine. Children welcomed at the summer camps organised by members of the European Committee of the Regions number over five hundred, come from both primary and secondary schools, and are currently displaced within Ukraine. The camps have lasted from 10 days to three weeks. More camps will be hosted by European local and regional authorities over the course of the summer.

Vasco Alves Cordeiro (PT/PES), President of the European Committee of the Regions and member of the Parliament of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, said: "The war against Ukraine has shaken the entire continent, but the thing it has shaken most is the life of millions of Ukrainian children. European cities and regions immediately stepped in to provide humanitarian aid and welcome displaced Ukrainians and they are now working to support Ukraine's reconstruction. Several also decided to provide many children with a place to feel safe and to take part in recreational activities, as they should normally do. From Rome to Preili, from Maramureș to Wielkopolska, and more: I am thankful to all the local and regional representatives who responded to this call and provided a breath of fresh air to hundreds of Ukrainian children. We will not forget the bigger picture and will continue to support Ukraine's local and regional

authorities."

Vitaly Klitschko, mayor of Kyiv and president of the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), said: "We are grateful to the European Committee of the Regions for promoting the project of summer camps for Ukrainian children. It is nice to see smiling kids who went to the camps and felt safe there, at least for a while. The Association of Cities of Ukraine hopes for more responses from members of the European Committee of Regions, as the need is extremely urgent both in the summer period and in the future."

So far, five camps have been arranged with the support of the CoR – in Rome in Italy, Nîmes in France, Preili in Latvia, Wielkopolska in Poland, and Maramureș in Romania – and camps are planned in the regions of Bavaria in Germany, Podkarpackie in Poland, Mallorca in Spain, and in the city of Gdańsk in Poland.

Activities at the camps typically include indoor and outdoor activities, excursions, and evening entertainment. The children have psychological and medical support to hand.

Mayor Klitschko called for the EU's cities and regions to help organise summer camps at a plenary session of the CoR in April 2022. His call was answered immediately by the mayor of Rome, Roberto Gualtieri, who was speaking in the same panel.

The costs of the camps are footed by the EU municipalities and regions participating, together with public, private and civil-society partners. In some cases, the AUC and Ukrainian partners are covering the cost of transporting children to the destination.

The children at the camps come from across Ukraine, but some of the camps have helped children from specific areas, including the regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Zakarpattia and the municipalities of Kyiv, Chuhuiv, Nizhyn, and Tyachiv.

Figures from the UNHCR indicate that 7.1 million Ukrainians have been displaced by the war but remain in Ukraine, while another 5.8 million are refugees in Europe, most of them women and children.

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