

Copenhagen, November 2022

Title of press release:

Ukrainian soldiers had to send money to wives and children in Denmark

Introduction:

A Danish-Russian woman has gone to the DRC Danish Refugee Council with a plea for help for Ukrainian refugees in Denmark. Through her voluntary work with refugees, the woman has collected information in a report that uncovers shocking conditions with widespread economic, social and mental failure as a consequence of the Danish Special Law. The Danish Refugee Council has read the report and replies that it will be brought up in relevant contexts.

The report to the Danish Refugee Council gives a very disturbing insight into errors and failures of the Danish Immigration Service, municipalities and job centers, as well as strong criticism of the Special Law, which outlines conditions and benefits for Ukrainian refugees in Denmark. The conclusion of the report is that the Special Law is often a direct cause of the distress experienced by the refugees.

Many Ukrainian refugees struggle with trauma from the war and fleeing their home. They have trouble functioning normally in their daily life. Despite this, municipalities and job centers set requirements that refugees should be job-ready and self-sufficient within 3 months. The report reviews examples of where refugees there utilised through municipal job activations by employers, who use the system to acquire free labor. According to the woman's report, this is the most serious problem that refugees face in the Danish system, where they are unable to get proper employment and are activated in basic jobs without a contract.

Municipalities often sanction significant sums of money from benefits for absence due to illness, without taking into account the social and psychological situation of the individual refugee. According to the Special Law, a Ukrainian refugee receives 50 percent less in financial aid than Danes on basic benefits. After taxes and rent, there is only money left for food. In the Capital Region, it is very common for municipalities not to pay any immediate benefit for months to arriving refugees.

The situation has led to many refugees losing faith in being able to get help and cope in Denmark, and therefore they travel back to Ukraine before their case is finalised. By that time many have exhausted their own savings and must travel back without any financial safety net.

In a survey of Ukrainian refugees on Facebook, a poll showed that 50 percent had knowledge of refugees who had been completely without financial help after they arrived in Denmark. 60 percent experienced a worsening of their mental state as a result. 50 percent knew about refugees who felt compelled to return to Ukraine after experiences of lack of assistance.

Some examples from the report:

"There are several cases in Lyngby municipality where men at the front in Ukraine had to send money to their wives in Denmark, because the benefit from the municipality was either too low, delayed or missing altogether."

"A municipality north of Copenhagen had given a mother with a child DKK 2,000 to live for, for almost 2 months, until her social benefit was finalized. The woman had been provided with housing by the municipality. Everything else she had to provide herself from the amount given."

"A refugee in a municipality outside Aarhus was sanctioned 10% of her monthly allowance due to absence from a Danish language class. This punishment was put in place after the refugee missed out on just one single day teaching due to illness (insomnia due to trauma and worries). The municipality refused subsequently the woman's complaint on the grounds that the complaint was submitted too late according to the rules."

"A female refugee with a sick child was referred by the Danish Immigration Service to a municipality on the other side of the country, despite the fact that the woman already had connections in another municipality, including employment, housing and medical care for her child, as well as a well-established social network with other Ukrainian refugees. The woman's case was still not finalized after 6 months and she received no financial help to which she was entitled by law. In the end she gave up and left Denmark."

It should be mentioned that the author of the report meets many refugees who are deeply grateful for the abundant help they receive from private Danes. Furthermore, the refugees do not usually complain about problems from the system described in the report.

The report to the Danish Refugee Council with additional information and selected documentation is available in the attached material. (A translation program could be used to translate from Danish.)
<https://www.presseudsendelser.dk/pressemeddelelser/vis/5214.html>

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