



BRINGING UKRAINIAN CHILDREN BACK HOME

Joining forces for returning Ukrainian children unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred by Russia

May 2026



Since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has been **forcibly transferring and unlawfully deporting Ukrainian children** under false claims of “evacuation” or “protection.” Many of them are then **adopted by Russian families** (despite having relatives in Ukraine), **granted Russian citizenship**, and subjected to **re-education and militarised indoctrination** to erase their Ukrainian identity.

Forcible transfer and unlawful deportation involve moving civilians by force from areas where they legally reside. Both are **banned under international law**, including the **Rome Statute**, and can be **war crimes** (if linked to armed conflict) or **crimes against humanity** (if widespread or systematic).

The situation in 2026



1.6 million

Ukrainian children remain under Russian control – deported, forcibly transferred, or trapped in temporarily occupied territories.



More than 20.500

records of possible deportation and forced transfer of children by Russia.



2.129

children have been returned to Ukraine from deportation, forcible transfers, as well as temporary occupation.

How the EU is helping

- The EU is funding measures to facilitate the children's return and reintegration into society.
- It also supports international diplomatic efforts on this urgent humanitarian issue.
- The EU has joined the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.
- Since 2023, has supported the President of Ukraine's Bring Kids Back initiative through its rapid response capabilities.
- The EU is mobilising **additional €50 million to support these efforts.**



High-level Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children

As announced by President von der Leyen in her 2025 State of the Union address, the EU, Ukraine and Canada co-hosted the High-level Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian children on 11 May 2026 in Brussels.

The International Coalition and its partners agreed to a set of concrete measures:

1

Strengthening the capacity of Ukrainian authorities to locate, protect and secure the return of children at risk, or unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred.

2

Advancing diplomatic efforts.

4

Holding Russia accountable for its actions.

3

Supporting the return and reintegration of children.

5

Imposing further sanctions on Russia.

The European Union and its partners will continue to pursue these efforts relentlessly until every Ukrainian child is returned by the Russian aggressor, providing the children with a better future, in Ukraine.

