



EU, Ukraine, Canada and partners join efforts to return forcibly transferred and unlawfully deported Ukrainian children

Brussels, 11 May 2026

Today, representatives of the European Union together with Ukraine and Canada hosted a 'High-level Meeting of the [International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children](#)'. This initiative was announced by European Commission President, Ursula **von der Leyen**, in her [2025 State of the Union address](#).

On behalf of the EU, High Representative and Commission Vice-President, Kaja **Kallas**, and Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta **Kos**, joined representatives from around 60 countries to reaffirm a shared commitment to stepping up actions for securing the return of every Ukrainian child forcibly transferred or unlawfully deported by Russia, and to ensuring full accountability for these crimes committed by Russia.

President **von der Leyen** said: *"Tens of thousands of Ukrainian children taken by Russia remain separated from their country and loved ones. We will not rest until every single one of them is reunited with their families. With €50 million, we're putting concrete support behind our commitment. Strengthening protection systems, providing education and ensuring justice for the stolen children. The return of each child must be part of any peace agreement."*

Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, more than 20,500 Ukrainian children have been recorded as unlawfully deported or forcibly transferred to Russia or to temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Russia's systematic efforts to conceal the identities and whereabouts of these children make sustained, coordinated international action more urgent than ever.

Following the meeting, the European Union, Ukraine and Canada issued [joint conclusions](#) reflecting the commitments agreed by partners.

Commitments made at the high-level meeting

The high-level meeting was opened by [video messages](#) from President of the European Commission Ursula **von der Leyen** and President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Participants agreed on a set of concrete measures, such as:

- **Strengthening tracing, verification and monitoring:** building on Ukraine's Pilot Tracing Mechanism, the Coalition will expand partnerships, strengthen coordination on the ground, and intensify tracing efforts, including through open-source intelligence.
- **Supporting Ukrainian return efforts:** the EU will provide further technical, financial and institutional support to Ukrainian authorities and civil society organisations working to secure the return of unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred children.
- **Boosting the diplomatic track:** the Coalition will strengthen engagement at the United Nations and international partners, promote existing mediation mechanisms, and support formal and informal channels for returns.
- **Supporting return, protection and reintegration:** the EU and its partners will expand support for reintegration through early childhood education and care, child protection, education in emergencies and the next phase of the Better Care reform to strengthen family- and community-based care.
- **Ensuring accountability:** the Coalition will step up support for investigations and legal proceedings related to the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children; strengthen Ukraine's investigative capacity; support child-friendly justice, access to compensation; and accountability for indoctrination, so-called "re-education", and militarisation

of Ukrainian children.

- **Stepping up coordinated sanctions:** Partners agreed to adopt further coordinated sanctions and targeted listings against those responsible for, or complicit in, or involved in the unlawful deportation, forcible transfer, "re-education" and militarisation of Ukrainian children.

To support these efforts, the European Union is mobilising **additional €50 million to strengthen Ukraine's child protection system**, expand child-centred and community-based services, support early childhood education, improve access to justice, and reinforce digital systems, including for compensation claims.

Background

The European Union, together with its partners, is supporting Ukraine in its quest to ensure that all Ukrainian children are returned to their homes. The documentary '*After the Rain: Putin's Stolen Children Come Home*', featuring first-hand accounts from Ukrainian children and their families, will be available for viewing on the [audiovisual portal](#) for one month free of charge.

The [International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children](#) was launched in Kyiv in February 2024. Co-chaired by Ukraine and Canada, the Coalition welcomed the EU as a full member in September 2025. It now unites 49 countries and international organisations, serving as the central platform for coordinating diplomatic, humanitarian, legal, and informational efforts to address the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children.

For more information

[Bringing Ukrainian children back home webpage](#)

[Factsheet - EU solidarity with Ukraine](#)

[Factsheet – High-level meeting deliverables](#)

[EU, Ukraine and Canada to co-host high-level meeting on returning Ukrainian children - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#)

[Bring Kids Back UA](#)

[International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children](#)

[Documentary After the Rain: Putin's Stolen Children Come Home'](#)

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Quote(s):

"Tens of thousands of Ukrainian children taken by Russia remain separated from their country and loved ones. We will not rest until every single one of them is reunited with their families. With €50 million, we're putting concrete support behind our commitment. Strengthening protection systems, providing education and ensuring justice for the stolen children. The return of each child must be part of any peace agreement."

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

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