

CALRE

“Stars of Europe” AWARD

Institutional Event “The Voice of the Ukrainian People in the Assembly of Extremadura”

Brief description of the initiative

Parliaments are spaces where words are stronger than weapons; they are places where citizens discuss and reach peaceful agreements on issues of common interest. The national parliaments of many countries have offered shelter to and have amplified the demands and denouncements of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is at the helm of a country that has suffered a bloody invasion by Russia.

In light of this, the Assembly of Extremadura, which is the seat of the sovereignty of the people of Extremadura, wanted to give voice to the Ukrainian people on the occasion of its 39th anniversary.

Words are indeed a tool of democracy with which to fight senselessness. Oksana Sheykina and Nadiia Astapenko are refugee women who have been living in Extremadura for a few months. They were tasked with coming onto the speakers' lectern to raise their voices and give an account of the dramatic situation experienced by their fellow countrymen and countrywomen in Ukraine, and of the horror that made them leave their country with some family members.

The event started with the national anthems of Spain, Ukraine, and Extremadura. Then, the younger members of the Assembly took the floor, followed by its President and the President of the Region.

Main objectives of the initiative

- Give visibility to the terrible situation experienced by those European citizens whose country has been invaded and bombed by Russia.
- Give voice to the citizens of Ukraine who have been forced to leave their country and show the solidarity of the people from Extremadura and Spain in the regional parliament. This chamber is a space whose greatest value lies in the use of the words over weapons against the absurdity and the imposition of will through force and military actions.
- Show the support and commitment of Extremadura to the refugees now residing in the region.

Role of the Assembly in the success of the initiative

As a public authority, the Assembly of Extremadura includes among its guiding principles the understanding that the active contribution of Extremaduran society and its institutions to the peace and development of all the nations and peoples of the world is a collective ethical requirement. It also adopts and disseminates European policies and values through their activities.

Given its mandate, and in the face of Russia's military attack against Ukraine last February, the regional parliament of Extremadura has been very active in condemning this action and expressing its solidarity with the Ukrainian people. It adhered to the CALRE Declaration of 24 February. Since 3 March it has been flying a Ukrainian flag in the Noble Patio of the Regional Chamber. In addition, in a plenary meeting held on 10 March, it unanimously adopted an Institutional Declaration in support of the Ukrainian people, condemning the attack.

Moreover, the Assembly of Extremadura has joined a smart platform that offers a comprehensive learning system to Ukrainian children and their families, who have had to flee their country because of the war.

Finally, on 21 May 2022, the 39th Anniversary of the Assembly of Extremadura's creation was marked. At the proposal of its President, Blanca Martín, tribute was paid to the Ukrainian people in an institutional event which was organised and developed at the Chamber headquarters, with the participation of officials, Members of Parliament, and Chamber staff.

Solidarity is one of the greatest traits of the citizens of Extremadura, and this is one of the many initiatives undertaken in the region to help the Ukrainian people.

European perspective of the initiative

The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine.

Russia is grossly violating international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermining European and global security and stability.

The use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century. Tensions and conflict should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy. (*European Council Conclusions, 24 February 2022*).

The EU stands in full solidarity with Ukraine and commends the people of Ukraine for their courage in defending their country. The EU has shown unity and strength to provide coordinated humanitarian, political, financial and material support.

In addition, this conflict has led to an influx of millions of people seeking refuge in the EU and in the Republic of Moldova, so it is necessary to help those fleeing the war as well as the host countries.

The Assembly in Extremadura aligns itself with this initiative through the many decisions, events, and support actions that the EU has and is developing in support of the Ukrainian people, since “Ukraine belongs to the European family.”
(*EU leaders’ statement, 10.3.2022*)

Photos



Oksana Sheykina during her intervention



The President presenting them with a flower bouquet with the colours of the Ukrainian flag



During the event, the national anthems of Spain, Ukraine and Extremadura were played

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Standing ovation following the speeches by Oksana Sheykina and Nadiia Astapenko

Photo album link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/asambleaextremadura/albums/72177720299103025/with/52085143722/>

Link to the streaming of the event:

<https://www.asamblealex.es/acto-1006>