

Dear members of city council my name is Sergii, I am an assistant professor at the University of Twente.

Every Ukrainian abroad as well as **the whole world** now feels **devastated** by the **unprecedented violence** happening back in our homeland. Our families and friends are left to survive under bombings of nearly all large cities. Ukrainian men and women of all ages and professions are joining territorial defense while Ukraine is facing **a full-perimeter attack** launched by Russia. Watching such **horrendous attempt** to destroy to the ground something that has been built by generations of Ukrainians, it becomes clear to everyone that the sheer goal of this assault is the **subversion of freedom, democracy and all the European values**.

It is day 11 of this ugly and inhumane war. The response of our army has been unprecedented. They make the invaders pay a high price for every square meter of our land and with heroic firmness still keep all the major Ukrainian cities to see another day of freedom. However, not being able to crush our resistance in first days of war, **Russia switched to another tactic, the one they used in Chechnya and Georgia**. If you can not win with brute force – **make the civilians suffer**. Russian army now targets **civil infrastructure** including **nuclear power plants, schools, hospitals and residential areas** unfolding a great humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and **refugee crisis** here in Western Europe.

In past 10 days we have learnt that there is **horrendous evil** that can crash lives.

But we have also learnt that there is bravery, **fierce and selfless**.

And the last, but definitely not least, we learnt that there is **kindness, so generous and full-hearted**, it makes me constantly be mesmerized with the people from all over the globe uniting their efforts to help those in need.

And it's the **kindness** I want to focus on today. Since the war in my homeland Ukraine broke out I met a lot of wonderful people here in Enschede, dedicated to help both refugees and Ukrainian defense forces. My hat is off to such **immense support you give us Ukrainians** in these terrible times. It means a lot to us and that is the only way we can win this war – **together, showing to the rest of the world the explicit example of unity.**

Last week Saturday I spoke in front of a demonstration in Enschede where I said that you can help by spreading the word, and using less gas of Gazprom. In a week from that moment Twente has **a full scale operation that delivers humanitarian goods directly to Kyiv** in frame of Twente voor Oekraïne initiative and **we are setting up one of the most advanced initiatives in the Netherlands aimed at safe hosting of refugees by families.** And this is **all run by volunteers!** The level of self-organization is unbelievable. Volunteers **work**, catering companies **feed** them, people bring literally **tons of help.**

This emotional response delivers a marvel of **unity and solidarity.** However, looking ahead of this situation we can see that we are not running a sprint here, **but rather a marathon** and we have to brace for longer times that the help of our motion will be needed. This volunteer motion needs support from the government to sustain the effort that is being applied.

Historically, the Netherlands has been hosting refugees from different countries, but **it has never been a country of the first entry.** Now it is. And a lot of people are willing to help refugees and to provide shelter. This is where sheer good intention unfortunately can do harm. People set up initiatives to match online

families that seek shelter with people who would like to give it. However, as good as it may sound such initiatives often just **connect people**, but **they don't prepare volunteer hosts to the experience of living with a traumatized person for potentially longer time**. Such initiatives don't provide **an informational, psychological, medical and financial support to both host and the refugee family**, which in the current situation is well-needed. That's where our initiative NUTwente (stands for noaberschap Ukraine-Twente) **can make a difference**. We are rooting into providing **safe communication** to the people who offer shelter, **informing** them about the challenges and letting them do a **conscious decision**. So far already more than 250 homes signed up to our briefing sessions, one briefing session was already on Saturday and more is yet to come. It never stops to amaze me **how quickly** our initiative gained traction and **how well** it was perceived. I am very happy with our progress, but I can not stress enough that it **is still ran by volunteers and we are reaching the scale where we need support with human resources and organization as well as coordination on the level of other gemeente in Twente**.

Another thing that is **urgently needed** is the **noodopvang** for the refugees. When the neighboring countries are saturated and **a steady flow of refugees starts coming to the region** we would need a **safe place** for them to **stay, rest and get medical assistance** if needed. We would **be more than grateful** if gemeente could help us to arrange an appropriate facility.

With that in mind we hope for **your support** in pursuing our goal to safely connect **both sides, the residents of Twente and Ukrainian people** coming here in search of shelter, and **to provide professional assistance** to the people fleeing from the dangers of war. **Only together**, with high level of **awareness** and **integrity**, we can smoothly come through these crisis times.