



INSPIRATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF MIGRANT INTEGRATION

examples of good practice
from the Czech Republic, Poland, Israel and Europe

Marie Jelínková (ed.)



INSPIRATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE FIELD OF MIGRANT INTEGRATION

examples of good practice
from the Czech Republic, Poland, Israel and Europe

ed. Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

Published by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University,
Smetanovo nábřeží 6, 110 01 Praha 1, <https://fsv.cuni.cz>

Authors: Marie JELÍNKOVÁ, Karin AMIT, Sinem YILMAZ, Agnieszka BIELEWSKA, Ewa ŚLĘZAK-BELOWSKA, Mariola MAMCARCZYK, Kamil MARSZYCKI

Proofreading: Anna MAGDALENA BARTOŇOVÁ

Graphic design: Blanka KLIMEŠOVÁ

© Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, 2024

ISBN 978-80-87404-76-8



**Funded by
the European Union**

This publication is one of the outcomes of the project Migrant Integration Through Education (MINTe), funded with the support of the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
CZECH REPUBLIC	6
Česky levou zadní: a High School Preparatory Course for Adolescent Migrants	7
The Let's Learn Together project and online tutoring for migrant children	12
Intercultural workers in public institutions, schools, and hospitals . . .	16
Manual on Local integration of Migrants in the Czech Republic	20
Website: Doctors for Ukraine	24
Ukrainian Refugees in Vnoř	27
POLAND	32
Ola, Boris and their new friends	33
Meeting Point Kraków	36
A school and peer-mediation project: Mediation builds relationships	38
Ocalenie Foundation	41
Starter Pack: a guide for parents and students	44
Day Care Kraków	47
ISRAEL	50
TechForChanges	51
HIAS: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	54
Zav Hasha'ah - "The call of the hour"	57
The International Fellowship for Christians and Jews (Yedidut Fund) .	60
Nof HaGalil	63
The Jewish Agency for Israel – Selah programme	66
EUROPE	68
I-WELCOME	69
IncluCities	72
The Including Children Affected by Migration (ICAM) Programme . .	76
Magdas Hotel	79
NEW ABC Networking in the educational world: Crossing boundaries for community-building	82
Neighbourhood mothers (The Bydelsmødre)	86
BIOGRAPHIES	90

List of abbreviations

AIM	Association for Integration and Migration
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
EU	European Union
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GP	general practitioner
IT	information technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PESEL	Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności (national identification number used in Poland)
SEL	social and emotional learning
TCN	third country national
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

Although migration has always been a part of human civilization, it is receiving increasingly negative attention. The number of migrants in the world is rising, but it is increasing far less dramatically than might seem to be the case, judging by statements made in the media and by politicians. In 1960, migrants made up 2.7 % of the world's population, while in 2020 the figure had increased to approximately 3.6 % (UN, 2024). With the concurrent increase in the human population, the absolute number of migrants has increased significantly. Since the turn of the millennium, the increase in the number of migrants has been most intense in Asia and Europe (ibid.).

Contemporary society is facing a large number of rapid changes, caused by globalisation and various crises. Its ability to cope with these changes depends not only on political will or material and technological resources but also on social cohesion, the sense of mutuality, and the ability to agree on common goals and means of achieving them. Since social cohesion is dynamic and dependent on many factors, it may not always be easy for migrants to integrate into a new society. At the same time, it may not be easy for the majority society to accept newcomers, either. Practice shows that besides carefully set structural conditions, such as residence conditions, a crucial determinant of successful integration is whether, and how, the newly-arrived meet the longer-settled residents. Personal experiences, meetings, and forming ordinary relationships are key to creating social bonds, without which a cohesive society cannot exist.

The integration of migrants into receiving societies cannot be achieved without efforts on both sides. Often this process takes place completely spontaneously, but sometimes it needs to be encouraged. Many integration initiatives are 'bottom-up', reacting to situations that have already arisen. Often these are great activities that try to achieve the needed goal in the best possible way. However, in some cases such 'bottom-up' initiatives inefficiently re-create initiatives already implemented elsewhere, create over-complex programmes, or resign unnecessarily to the situation that has emerged due to a lack of know-how or resource.

This handbook presents 24 inspirational practices of innovative capacity in the field of migrant integration that have been tried and tested and have produced very positive results. We have selected practices that, albeit each developed in specific context, can be relatively easily transferred to new settings. Most of the inspirational practices presented here have been implemented over a long period of time, while a few of them capture specific short-term responses to the arrival of Ukrainian migrants that have had an extremely positive impact and that we consider worth highlighting.

Although the handbook is primarily aimed at professionals working in local government, we believe that it can also be useful for experts and for anyone interested in the local integration of migrants. The inspiring practices captured relate to the activities of municipalities, schools, NGOs and active individuals. In their scope, the inspiring practices touch upon activities in a diverse range of areas such as education, work, access to health, and the situation of women, children, and older migrants.

This collection of inspiring practices in the field of migrant integration was created within the MINTE (Migrant Integration through Education) project, which involves partners from the Czech Republic, Poland, Israel and Belgium. The publication therefore presents best practices from some countries whose experience in the field of migrant integration is less known in our region. Eight inspiring practices come from the Czech Republic, eight from Poland, eight from Israel and the last eight from different parts of Europe.

We hope that this publication will help to convey what has worked at the local level in the field of integration and inspire others to similar activities.

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ
MINTE project coordinator



CZECH REPUBLIC

Česky levou zadní¹: a High School Preparatory Course for Adolescent Migrants

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

In the Czech Republic there is a lack of systematic support for adolescent migrants whose level of spoken and written Czech is insufficient for studying at local high schools. The linguistic, social, cultural, and administrative barriers these young people face often result in them not entering high school at all, or in them leaving relatively soon into their high school education. The organisation META, which has been providing advisory services to these migrants since 2006, has been running a [yearly preparatory course](#) for high school studies since 2016. The course is unique not only because it is the first in the Czech Republic to focus specifically on this target group of migrants but also because it combines language learning with subject-based education in a practical way. Its aim is to teach students how to work with the more complex, specialised texts that they may encounter in high school. Additionally, the course makes use of a wide range of specially designed teaching materials and includes social counselling, which is designed to help young migrants navigate the high school admissions process as well as other study and career opportunities available to them in the Czech Republic.

¹ Meaning: Czech is a piece of cake.

In 2017, there were 10,328 migrants aged 15–19 in the Czech Republic who were not attending high school and were out of the educational system². Due to the war in Ukraine and the arrival of nearly 400,000 more Ukrainians³ in the Czech Republic, that number has since increased more than fivefold, reaching 56,578 in 2022⁴. Although a small proportion of these pupils may still be studying at primary school⁵, tens of thousands of young migrants in the Czech Republic of high school age have not entered high school. Besides the difficulty of navigating the Czech education system and the high school admissions process, an additional barrier for migrants wishing to study beyond the age of 15 is that they must, if they have completed any part of their prior education in the Czech Republic, pass a standardised admissions examination for high school, which includes a challenging Czech language test⁶. Due to inadequate language preparation provision at primary schools, migrant pupils rarely pass this test. In the Czech Republic, there is a complete lack of systematic language support for students who have not entered high school due to the language barrier, and minimal assistance is provided at high school for students who are admitted, yet struggle with their language proficiency in Czech.

2 Compulsory education in the Czech Republic is usually completed at the age of 15.

3 As of March 2, 2024, there were 386,388 registered refugees from Ukraine residing in the Czech Republic.
Source: <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/cs/data-statistiky-a-analyzy/statisticka-data-o-migraci>

4 The result was obtained by comparing the number of foreigners aged 15–19 who were residing in the Czech Republic in 2022 (70,706) with the number of foreigners enrolled in high schools in the academic year 2022/2023 (14,128).
Sources: <https://statis.msmt.cz/rocnka/rocnka.asp> and <https://csu.gov.cz/docs/107508/a40367ba-b820-3014-9f63-6f9bafa3d0e4/290027230108.pdf?version=1.0>

5 In the Czech Republic, basic primary school education lasts 9 years, from age 6 to age 15.

6 Pupils coming directly from abroad can request a waiver of the language test, which is replaced by an interview, the language level and content of which depends on the headmaster or headmistress of the school in question. These pupils are not, however, exempt from the single entrance examination in mathematics, which consists mainly of word-based problems.

For these reasons, [META](#), an organisation that supports young migrants in the Czech Republic, decided to create a preparatory course for high school study. In 2016, after several years of unsuccessful applications, META and its partner organisation Centre for the Integration of Foreigners, received funding from the Velux Foundations enabling them to run the course. The main aim of the course, which is now in its eighth year, is to enable students who have very minimal knowledge of the Czech language to pass the entrance exam and gain places at the high schools of their choice. Participation in the course is conditional on applying to at least one high school.

The preparatory course runs for one school year, from September until June, Monday to Friday, and comprises 1080 hours of instruction. Students are divided into two classes, each accommodating up to 12 students. The course is conducted entirely in Czech, making it suitable for a linguistically diverse student body. The initial phase of the course concentrates on building foundational language skills and concludes with an examination aligned with A2 level proficiency. The subsequent part of the course (from January to June) focuses on reaching B1 level and mastering academic language fundamentals, supported by instruction of the basics of four subjects taught in Czech: history, geography, science, and civic education. Special emphasis is placed on reading comprehension for academic texts and fostering the students' ability to engage in discussions based on acquired knowledge. Additionally, the course includes maths teaching focused on understanding word-based problems, which are integral to the high school entrance exams. The latter half of the course culminates in an examination assessing students' language proficiency and their understanding of the subject content covered during the course. On successful completion of the course, students receive a certificate and a refund of the initial deposit they paid when signing up. Collaboration between social workers from the participating organisations, students, parents, and instructors is integral to the course. Volunteers also provide tutoring in various subjects. Furthermore, the course incorporates excursions and cultural events to acquaint students with their new surroundings and reinforce their acquired knowledge.

The admissions process for the course involves submitting a motivation letter, attending a model lesson, undergoing a language assessment, and participating in an interview with social workers. The goal of this selection process is to assemble a linguistically diverse cohort of motivated students who will

successfully complete the course. Additionally, the initial adaptation course, regular classroom sessions, and group activities are instrumental in motivating students to engage with and complete the course, fostering a sense of unity and support among participants.

The course is based on a wide range of original teaching materials, among which the textbooks *Levou zadní I* (2018), *Levou zadní II* (2024) and *Levou zadní III* (in pilot version) play a key role. Students use the *Levou zadní I* textbook during the first trimester of the course, while the subsequent two volumes are used throughout the remainder of the academic year. These textbooks incorporate glossary sections, where students can annotate word meanings in their native language, alongside a guide enabling self-directed learners to navigate the texts effectively. The *Levou zadní I* textbook is supplemented by a workbook, a conversation guide and other supplementary materials (e.g. listening guides, teacher's guides, practice tests), which are available via the [ceskylevouzadni.cz website](https://ceskylevouzadni.cz). A comprehensive grammar handbook containing rules and tables serves as a year-round reference for students. Furthermore, students benefit from access to the online learning platform [Levou zadní online](#), featuring worksheets, interactive exercises, and revision tests. Those interested can also utilise the free mobile app *Čeština levou zadní* for grammar and vocabulary practice. These online tools are widely utilised by both Czech as a second language instructors and their students, as well as self-directed learners. All materials are thoughtfully designed with clear and engaging graphics⁷, focusing on practical themes relevant to the daily lives of young migrants, such as navigating shared living spaces, sexual education, and digital technologies and social media.

No comprehensive statistics are currently available from the previous years of the course related to the success rate or students' overall course performance. However, the course organisers are actively working on enhancing data collection methods for future evaluation. As an illustrative example, the data from the last academic year (2022/2023) may provide some insight. Out of a total

of 24 students enrolled in the course, 22 completed it successfully, of whom 20 were accepted to pursue further studies at Czech high schools.

Starting from the academic year 2023/2024, the course has expanded its reach beyond Prague to include the South Moravian and Pilsen regions, effectively tripling its annual capacity. The team at META have carefully selected partner organisations that are primarily focused on career counselling rather than language instruction. They have transferred to them the know-how regarding the running of the course, its content and the comprehensive support provided. Despite high demand for the course in the capital, where demand far exceeded supply, partner organisations in the two new regions found it more challenging to fill the course in its first year and to ensure a linguistically diverse student body, since there are lower numbers of foreigners living in those areas. Nevertheless, the courses in the regions were eventually successfully filled.

The preparatory course is followed by further Czech language improvement courses which META organises for high school pupils, and a two-year preparation course for the school-leaving examination in Czech. In addition, META has established cooperation with some of the high schools to which the students of the language course are accepted. In those schools, they are gradually building up various forms of support, such as buddy systems and tailored support for teachers. The language course has also proved an inspiration for several high schools in Prague, which have opened their own preliminary year for pupils who have completed their primary education but failed to obtain a place at a Czech high school. META's long-term goal is to integrate its one-year high school preparation course into the Czech school system.

Drawing from eight years of experience in running the course, the organisers suggest that organisations interested in implementing similar programmes should aim to establish groups of students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. This diversity encourages students to actively engage with the language they are learning in their daily classroom interactions. They also emphasise the importance of fostering a sense of community among students through an adaptation course, classroom sessions, and involvement in extracurricular activities, thereby cultivating a respectful and supportive environment. Finally, they highlight the necessity of tailoring the thematic content of the course to the interests and requirements of migrant adolescents.

7 Excerpt from the textbook *Levou zadní II*: https://cloud.meta-ops.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/levou_zadni_2_ukazka.pdf

The Let's Learn Together project and online tutoring for migrant children

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

While Czech primary schools do offer support for children learning Czech as a second or additional language, the time allocated to Czech language teaching is often insufficient to meet their needs, leaving many students in need of additional, sometimes hard-to-access, language and educational support. The [Let's Learn Together](#) project stands as one of a number of initiatives dedicated to fostering school inclusivity and aiding migrant children. Here, we look at one of its key activities: online tutoring for migrant children. The project matches pupils in need of academic assistance with volunteers who opt to deliver support via digital platforms.

In 2021, new structural support for the provision of Czech language teaching to migrant children was introduced in Czech primary schools. Mandated by law, this support entails compulsory additional language lessons for children for whom Czech is not their first language, extending up to 200 hours during their first or second year of residence in the country. Schools are also eligible to receive funding for establishing Czech language courses and other supportive activities, but the implementation of such additional support largely hinges on the initiative of individual teachers and school leadership staff. The level of language support provided remains insufficient for many pupils with foreign backgrounds, and awareness of this issue has increased in particular following the influx of Ukrainian refugees since early 2022. Primary schools that have historically been more open to migrants often combine the state structural support with cooperation with NGOs that focus on helping migrant children in the Czech Republic.

The objective of the Let's Learn Together⁸ project is to foster the integration of pupils with diverse mother tongues attending two primary schools in Prague. The project covers four main activities, one of which is online tutoring. The idea of providing online tutoring to migrant children emerged from the Association for Integration and Migration (AIM), the organisation implementing the project, during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was a heightened interest in tutoring that prompted the expansion of this activity, and in turn its gradual professionalisation: clear guidelines for cooperation were established, volunteer tutors received specialised training, valuable teaching materials and strategies were shared, and volunteers received personalised support and guidance.

The pupils receiving the online tutoring responded very positively, as did their teachers, and the tutors themselves, and demand for tutoring persisted even after the pandemic subsided. Initially the greatest interest was for catch-up tutoring, but gradually AIM began offering online tutoring to schools as a pro-inclusive tool. Moreover, AIM managed to attract a harder-to-reach group of volunteers. Online tutoring has the advantage of eliminating the need to travel, making it convenient for volunteers from rural areas or for those who prefer not to spend time commuting.

AIM prioritises tutoring support for migrant pupils from the schools with which it collaborates, where online tutoring serves as a key pro-inclusive activity. Other activities usually revolve around establishing cooperation with the school, assessing the needs of both the school and its migrant pupils, training teachers, and working with intercultural specialists. Within these activities, teachers are introduced to the service of online tutoring for migrant students and then connected with volunteer tutors to agree on the content of the tutoring and how it will complement the teaching the pupils receive at their primary school.

Tutoring sessions, typically lasting 1–3 hours per week, occur at scheduled intervals using various online platforms such as Google Meet. Progress made

⁸ The project is co-financed by the European Union through the European Structural and Investment Funds, within the framework of the Operational Programme Prague – Growth Pole of the Czech Republic.

during tutoring sessions is meticulously documented through regular reports provided by the volunteers, with valuable input from students, their parents and teachers. A shared folder is often used to enable teachers to track the activities students have completed with their volunteer tutors, and to share information about particular topics the teachers wish the pupils to practise during their tutor sessions. Nevertheless, the level of teachers' involvement fluctuates significantly based on their individual willingness and motivation. Parental interest in these sessions remains relatively low.

Volunteer recruitment primarily occurs through AIM's Facebook page and website. Although demand for tutoring slightly exceeds the available supply, the majority of pupils who express an interest are accommodated. Each volunteer undergoes comprehensive training on how to effectively engage with migrant students and adheres to specific guidelines outlined in a volunteer contract. During the training process, volunteers receive continuous support and guidance from a methodologist specialising in working with pupils for whom Czech is not their first language and a volunteer coordinator. The coordinator also maintains communication with the students undergoing tutoring, their parents, and any teachers who opt to be partially involved in the process. During the initial weeks of tutoring, volunteers may encounter minor challenges, often related to technical issues, lesson structuring, and aligning expectations. This is particularly true for volunteers who are tutoring children learning Czech as a second or additional language for the first time. It takes time to navigate how to incorporate engaging lesson components with necessary practice. Fortunately, volunteers have access to recommendations and pre-developed materials to facilitate the tutoring process. Many volunteers exhibit creativity in their teaching approach, utilising interactive methods and online tools extensively.

Following the initial clarification of tutoring procedures, approximately six months into the programme, evaluations consistently return positive feedback from both tutors and students. Experience underscores the significance of aligning teachers' expectations with volunteers' approaches, highlighting the importance of enhancing students' communication skills in Czech rather than solely reviewing school materials. It is crucial to consider the students' own perspectives: they often value the opportunity to engage in dialogue, seek clarification on unclear concepts, and experience a more interactive approach to learning Czech or other subjects. Online tutoring does not

only enhance their language proficiency but also introduces them to Czech cultural references and the educational system in an informal manner. In practice, volunteers assume roles akin to "partners" or "guides" for the students, providing tailored support that aligns with their individual needs and abilities.

Online tutoring connects volunteers with school pupils across the Czech Republic who have limited proficiency in the local language. It has proved an effective way of addressing pupils' language and knowledge support needs while leveraging volunteers' expertise. Moreover, the online tutoring model boasts a low financial burden. However, volunteer coordinators play a pivotal role in this programme, creating clearly defined tutoring protocols, carrying out ongoing evaluation, and providing access to methodological and instructional resources cannot be overlooked. While online tutoring has the potential to function independently, it is most successful when integrated into the school support system as a collaborative effort to foster inclusivity within schools. In practice, it has demonstrated its effectiveness as one of a set of activities aimed at building a more inclusive school environment.

Intercultural workers in public institutions, schools, and hospitals

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

Civil society organisations in the Czech Republic have long advocated for the provision of intercultural workers, who assist migrants in communicating with public institutions. Today, some cities, hospitals, and schools utilise the services of this already established profession. The services provided are positively evaluated, and the number of intercultural workers has grown (not only in connection with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees), even though their work is still predominantly reliant on project-based financing.

The essence of intercultural work is to facilitate mutual communication between migrants, the majority society, and public institutions. Intercultural workers (also referred to as sociocultural mediators in other countries) often have experience of migration, have been resident in the Czech Republic for a long time, are proficient in Czech, and are familiar with customs and systems both in the Czech Republic and in their home countries. Thanks to their knowledge of both societies and languages, intercultural workers can not only provide interpretation and advice but also prevent misunderstandings, explain the origins of any differing expectations, and help overcome psychological barriers for both migrants and institutional workers. Additionally, they offer basic social counselling in Czech and other languages, share contacts for specialised counselling, and provide information about life in the Czech Republic as well as about other cultures and customs.

Currently, in the Czech Republic, intercultural work has become an established profession that can be practised after completing several weeks of training, culminating in a qualification exam. The profession of intercultural worker is listed in the National Qualifications Framework and the Nation-

al Occupation Framework, which clearly define the necessary competencies. The Association for Intercultural Work, which ceased to exist just a few years after it was established, created the necessary methodological materials, while non-governmental organisations conduct the training and professional exams. However, initial efforts to establish the position primarily carried out by migrants did not receive a substantial response, mainly because there was little awareness of its benefits and because the necessary training system was still lacking. The expansion of the profession was aided by continuous negotiations with key institutions, thematic internships for NGO and public institution workers abroad, where intercultural workers' services are widely used (such as in Portugal and Austria), and the creation of an accredited training scheme.

Intercultural workers mostly work in non-profit organisations, offering accompaniment to clients or partners at meetings or appointments. Increasingly, they are also working at the Ministry of the Interior, where migrants handle their residence issues, at municipal offices, in health care facilities and in schools. Intercultural workers often work as external employees, but there are some who have found employment as permanent staff. The current, predominantly project-based financing for this work, allows for the provision of intercultural workers' services to both institutions and migrants free of charge. At the same time, however, the dependence on project funding significantly affects the availability of these services. Some cities, such as the capital city Prague, publish a regularly updated list of available intercultural workers on their websites in order to facilitate better access to their services.

The employment of intercultural workers on a project basis has also expanded in the second largest Czech city, Brno. As elsewhere, these intercultural workers initially faced lukewarm reception, but positive experiences with their work and the realisation that their work was a facilitating factor for many municipal departments gradually led to their positive acceptance. Additionally, the city gained a much better overview of residents with migration experience. Some years later, the South Moravian Region, where Brno is located, also adopted this good practice.

Over the years, intercultural workers have become drivers of development in many areas of intercultural work. In healthcare facilities, they most often

explain the differences in healthcare systems or treatment procedures alongside providing interpretation services. They are also increasingly utilised in schools, where they offer direct support to children whose first language is not the language of instruction, while also serving as a resource for parents and educational professionals. Their activities in schools focus on interpretation during personal meetings, parent-teacher conferences, or school enrolment. Additionally, they often help explain and bridge socio-cultural differences, the knowledge and understanding of which are crucial for mutual understanding. The specific scope of their work depends on whether the intercultural worker is directly employed by the school (often in conjunction with another role, e.g. as a teaching assistant) or whether they are part of a project in which the school is involved.

After the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, Ukrainian intercultural workers addressed issues such as disobedience and emotional outbursts among Ukrainian pupils, which were frequent reactions to stress and trauma but were often mistakenly labelled as ADHD. They also explained differences in communication between schools and parents, in pedagogical practices, and in common educational recommendations (e.g. that attending speech therapy is not a sign of discrimination, but a necessary step to support the child). Intercultural workers in schools, for example, point out that parents' apparent reluctance to enrol their children in secondary school might not be due to passivity but to a lack of information or misunderstanding.

Czech institutions have tended to be cautious initially about the presence of intercultural workers, yet support from intercultural workers in an employment relationship has consistently proven helpful, especially in offices that interact directly with the general public. Schools and healthcare facilities have generally been more open to the presence of intercultural workers, and swifter to recognize the contributions they make. Once mutual trust has been built up, requests for the services of an intercultural worker become more frequent, both in person and over the phone. The mass arrival of Ukrainian forced migrants revealed places where intercultural workers had so far been less present (e.g. Departments of Social and Legal Protection of Children) and their services have since begun to be in high demand.

In practice, intercultural workers naturally encounter situations that are not easily resolved. Therefore, it is important to invest in their training and es-

tablish connections with institutions where they can address and consult on more challenging situations. Courses for intercultural workers were in high demand after 2022, particularly from Ukrainian coordinators, active Ukrainian individuals who sought to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian refugees into Czech society. The methodological materials and professional training that many of them underwent helped them to improve their skills quickly in the activities they had begun to carry out.

While the role of intercultural workers in the Czech Republic initially developed somewhat spontaneously, driven by the enthusiasm of a handful of individuals and later a few NGOs, it has since grown to be embraced by various institutions that now actively seek out such services. Despite achieving recognition as a well-established and in-demand profession, the majority of intercultural workers continue to work on a project basis, facing uncertain conditions and sometimes considerable fluctuations in financial compensation. Considering the growing diversity of Czech society, intercultural workers' services will remain essential and beneficial in the years to come and arranging stable funding for their work is thus a key task for the immediate future.

Manual on Local integration of Migrants in the Czech Republic

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

[The Manual on Local Integration of Migrants in the Czech Republic](#) is an extensive publication designed to assist local stakeholders in navigating the daily challenges of coexistence between migrants and the broader Czech society. This visually engaging manual provides readers with insights into essential aspects of living together, outlines relevant legislation and data, and gives stakeholders practical, action-oriented recommendations on the types of activities they can undertake, funding options, and additional resources for further information. Developed in response to the needs expressed by numerous Czech municipalities, this manual fills a critical gap by offering practical information and methodological resources to support effective integration efforts.

Although Czech strategic documents have long emphasised the importance of integrating migrants at the local level, municipalities and regions in the Czech Republic have historically lacked methodological support in this area. Their integration activities have mostly occurred in response to the challenges of settling a large number of migrants in a certain area or linked to the activity of specific individuals. Even proactive officials have frequently encountered difficulties in navigating the complex array of migrant-related agendas and accessing relevant information or guidance. To address this gap, the Association for Integration and Migration, the Multicultural Centre Prague, and Charles University collaborated to create the Manual on Local Integration of Migrants in the Czech Republic. This comprehensive manual provides officials with guidance on various topics related to migrant integration. The extensive manual serves as a catalyst for municipal and regional authorities to adopt a more inclusive approach

to governance or, perhaps more realistically in current practice, to better incorporate migrant considerations into broader policy domains such as health and education.

The Manual on Local Integration of Migrants is a straightforward publication designed as a hands-on resource to assist municipalities, regions, and other local stakeholders in addressing the integration of migrants, and to develop effective integration strategies. Tailored to the staff of regional and municipal authorities, local politicians, and employees of other local institutions who interact with migrants, this manual offers practical tips, concrete guidelines, and actionable insights. It is specifically crafted for readers with limited prior experience in the field of integration, providing accessible and user-friendly information to facilitate effective action at the local level.

The publication consists of removable, numbered fact sheets of various sizes. These fact sheets can be examined individually or grouped into chapters, and they can also serve as standalone handouts for meetings or presentations. Each infosheet typically includes a designated space for notes or observations on the topic. Additionally, some infosheets feature annexes that succinctly summarise the information in the form of simplified tables or diagrams. The manual's structured design facilitates rapid navigation between topics, based on interest or necessity. This format seamlessly connects a wide range of subtopics related to migrant integration, enabling efficient exploration.

Each topic covered in the manual includes detailed input information, referencing relevant legislation, as well as a glossary of key terms to facilitate understanding. Additionally, there is an overview of basic steps that local governments might consider and easily implement in practice. Furthermore, the manual contains sections dedicated to real-life examples drawn from practical experience, along with numerous tips and references to both Czech and foreign sources for further learning. Special emphasis is placed on identifying potential sources of funding for various activities. To enhance coherence and facilitate navigation, each chapter is accompanied by signposts indicating links with other topics covered in the manual.

At its inception, the manual focused on critical topics pertaining to migrant integration in the Czech Republic. These included:

- The framework of the integration of migrants in the Czech Republic and relevant stakeholders;
- Autonomous local government authorities as a provider and recipient of grants;
- Strategic management of integration in local government;
- Integration at the municipal level;
- Communication with the majority society;
- Communication with migrants;
- Education for children learning Czech as a second or additional language;
- Employment;
- Social security;
- Healthcare;
- “Refugees” – a specific regime of international protection, and
- Safety.

Over time, additional topics have been incorporated, and existing sections have been enriched with additional subchapters. Many of these additions stem from smaller international projects that provide inspiration or address topics less adequately covered in the context of Central Europe. These include fact sheets on field social work with migrants and recommendations for municipalities that lack experience in migrant integration.

As the Manual primarily addresses the Czech context and legislation, a significant portion of its content is available exclusively in Czech. However, chapters with broader applicability, such as “Strategic Management of Integration in a Local Government” have also been translated into English. The examples and ideas for implementation are predominantly drawn from past experience in the Czech Republic and neighbouring countries. The aim is to provide easily transferable inspiration that aligns closely with regional contexts. In cases where exemplary practices are lacking in the region, the Manual incorporates examples from other countries. For instance, it highlights the experience of the Belgian city of Mechelen in integrating diversity into

municipal policies and showcases how migrant councils have served as advisory bodies for municipalities in Germany.

Due to its emphasis on legislative settings, practical applications, and subsidies, certain sections of the Manual need to be updated frequently. Updating the manual online has proven successful, albeit challenging. For instance, the Czech Republic recently adopted significant changes in the language-learning support it provides to migrant children, but the timetable for this change was very short and the implementation of the steps taken so varied that the updated version of the relevant fact sheets was published some time after the changes had taken place.

The manual was developed between 2017 and 2020 as part of the [Cities and Inclusive Strategies project](#). The development process involved over forty experts from civil society organisations, the public sector, local governments, and academia, ensuring a highly participatory approach that significantly enhanced the quality of the manual. Following its publication, the Ministry of Regional Development requested a condensed version, which was subsequently distributed to mayors across the country.

Following its initial positive reception, the Manual found more traction among individuals with a pre-existing interest in the subject matter, suggesting it may have been somewhat ahead of its time in its focus. However, the unexpected influx of nearly 500,000 Ukrainian refugees into the Czech Republic in 2022 significantly raised pressure at the local level to address migrant integration. In response, a new section entitled “Citizens with temporary protection - Initial Assistance for Refugees from Ukraine” was added to the online version of the Manual. The information and guidance provided in the manual swiftly became a vital resource for local stakeholders seeking guidance on how to approach the integration of their newly arrived migrants effectively. The adage “fortune favours the prepared mind” rings particularly true in this instance, as the Manual’s timely expansion proved invaluable in equipping local actors with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the evolving landscape of migrant inclusion.

Website: Doctors for Ukraine

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

The website lekariproukrajinu.cz features a directory of doctors in the Czech Republic, categorised by specialty, who are prepared to provide medical care to Ukrainian refugees. In addition to this list, the website offers comprehensive practical resources for healthcare professionals treating these patients. This includes multilingual forms, methodological recommendations, and guidance on finding equivalent medications. Furthermore, the website provides valuable information for qualified Ukrainian doctors seeking to practise in the Czech Republic. By addressing the fragmented nature of information on healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in the country and the limited accessibility of certain medical specialties, the website serves as a crucial resource for both healthcare providers and refugees alike.

During the initial weeks following the outbreak of Russian aggression, the Czech Republic witnessed a staggering influx of up to 18,000 Ukrainian refugees daily. At the onset of this migration surge, uncertainty loomed over whether these individuals would have access to healthcare within the Czech Republic. Responding to this urgent need, Dr Anna Matoušková and her husband, IT specialist Jiří Matoušek, spearheaded a private initiative that led to the swift launch of the website lekariproukrajinu.cz. Virtually overnight, the platform facilitated general practitioners in offering free medical care to Ukrainian citizens at their practices. In a remarkable testament to solidarity, the initiative garnered the support of 500 doctors within a mere 10 days. This number steadily increased, stabilising at around 800 doctors over time. Once it became evident that Ukrainian refugees were entitled to healthcare covered by public health insurance in the Czech Republic, the website evolved beyond merely listing doctors open to treating Ukrainian refugees

and became a widely utilised information hub, where Czech doctors can find comprehensive guidance on providing medical care to Ukrainians.

As of spring 2024, the lekariproukrajinu.cz website operates in Czech, Ukrainian, Russian, and English, catering to the needs of both Ukrainian patients and Czech doctors. Doctors' contact information is categorised by specialty, including Adult GPs, Child and Adolescent GPs, Gynaecologists, and Other Specialties. The system enables users to filter contacts based on the geographical location of the practice, by region, district, or city. In addition to contact details such as email, phone, and website, the website also informs users about whether each listed doctor speaks English, Russian, or Ukrainian. This facilitates effective communication between doctors and patients. Furthermore, doctors listed on the website can be contacted by both patients and other doctors seeking consultation regarding Ukrainian patients. This collaborative approach ensures comprehensive support and access to healthcare services for Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic.

The website also serves as a vital resource for doctors, aiding in their initial interactions with Ukrainian citizens and providing them with a collection of useful links and materials. The section "Information not only for doctors," acts as an informative guidepost, consolidating essential resources related to healthcare provision for Ukrainian refugees. These resources include links to various tools, including a free online counselling service for Ukrainian patients, an interactive manual for identifying medicines available in the Czech Republic that are equivalent to those registered in Ukraine, as well as PDF files containing translated versions of medical history questionnaires and other forms into Ukrainian. Moreover, a significant portion of this information section addresses practical issues pertaining to healthcare delivery. This includes recommendations from the Society of Vaccinology, methodological guidelines from the Ministry of Health, and a practical manual for healthcare providers. In this section, users can also access formal statements from various institutions that provide guidance on addressing practical challenges for which the Czech Republic previously lacked binding legal or methodological opinions.

The final significant section of the website caters to Ukrainian doctors, offering them essential information and resources to assist them in navigating the Czech healthcare system. Here, Ukrainian healthcare professionals

can access updated news regarding the Czech Republic's evolving approach to medical personnel from Ukraine. Moreover, this section provides comprehensive information on the recognition of foreign qualifications, and the conditions for working in healthcare without such formal recognition. It includes links to video tutorials and websites offering practical assistance in this process. This section of the website also directs Ukrainian doctors to job portals for healthcare workers and Czech language courses and language-learning resources that are tailored specifically to healthcare professionals. Finally, this section addresses employment opportunities in non-medical health professions, providing a holistic view of career options within the Czech healthcare sector.

Now entering its third year of operation, the website is continuously updated and stands as a testament to a successful private initiative. Originally intended to be maintained for just a few weeks or months, the site has evolved into a long-term project due to its widespread usage. It has become a vital resource both for Czech doctors seeking guidance on treating Ukrainian refugees and for Ukrainian patients looking for specialist doctors in their area who speak their language(s). The website serves as an information hub that brings together otherwise fragmented information about healthcare and access to healthcare in the Czech Republic. In essence, this initiative exemplifies the profound impact that the efforts of two individuals can have on the availability of crucial information. By establishing a reliable and regularly updated information channel, this project has effectively connected healthcare providers with those in need, underscoring its significance as a beacon of support and assistance in times of crisis.

Ukrainian Refugees in Vinoř

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ

The integration of migrants into society is often likened to a metaphorical litmus test: a greater influx of new residents clearly reveals what works and what does not in a given community. This was evident in 2022 when nearly half a million Ukrainians arrived in the Czech Republic. The reception and integration of these individuals into everyday life were largely driven by individual communities and their citizens. Well-functioning local communities embraced and, to a significant extent, cared for the newcomers. However, the experience in Prague's Vinoř district illustrates that the successful integration of Ukrainian migrants was primarily attributed to selfless individuals who were willing to help, collaborate, and dedicate their leisure time for months on end to support those in need.

Before 2022, coexistence with migrants was not a major issue in the small district of Vinoř, in Prague. However, one local construction company that employed Ukrainian workers occasionally worked on small contracts for the municipal authorities, and that collaboration was successful. After 24 February 2022, in the context of the invasion of Ukraine, the mayor of Vinoř and other municipal representatives reacted promptly: they announced a humanitarian collection and started to provide accommodation for refugees in Vinoř. Several residents were prepared to host Ukrainian refugees, and their involvement was pivotal. It was also essential to identify a local coordinator, who gathered information about what was needed and who was offering what. The spontaneous wave of assistance was thus well coordinated from the very beginning. The group of volunteers, which is still functioning today (spring 2024), divided among themselves the topics and locations where the Ukrainian refugees were accommodated. Accommodation was one of the most pressing topics. Football pavilions and the local rectory were turned into hostels, the municipality acquired a house awaiting

renovation, and a significant number of people were accommodated by private owners or in municipal apartments.

The activities of the coordinated voluntary group have evolved substantially over time. Initially, their focus resembled crisis intervention, necessitating the provision of fundamental life necessities ranging from accommodation to clothing, food, and hygiene products. There was also an urgent need for a storage facility. The local parish offered its premises, and clothes and furnishings offered were stored in the garage of the house provided. The involvement of the parish also made it possible to open the local food bank to newly arrived Ukrainians. The food bank persists as a cornerstone initiative, serving as an enduring and inclusive resource for both Czech and Ukrainian citizens.

The municipality then applied for support under the Ministry of the Interior's call for proposals, which enabled it to fund Czech language courses, Czech conversation sessions, extracurricular activities for Ukrainian children, and additional assistance. The municipality also employed a highly capable Ukrainian woman who coordinated all the relevant activities for the refugees and gradually became the primary contact for the Ukrainian community. The scope of activities undertaken by volunteers evolved over time, transitioning from addressing basic existential needs to providing accompaniment and assistance during interactions with authorities. Accompanying Ukrainian migrants to the authorities proved to be crucial for the successful completion of the necessary agenda. Specific cases (a disabled child, a seriously ill senior citizen) required more time.

The early establishment of a WhatsApp group between local volunteers and newly arrived individuals from Ukraine proved to be an excellent initiative. The group serves as a platform for communicating updates on legislative changes, as well as various other information, offers, and community activities. Additionally, it allows engaged Ukrainians to convene if necessary (e.g. in response to significant legislative changes or for collective activities). Initially, information was shared in both Czech and Ukrainian, but the group now primarily communicates in Czech. At present (spring 2024), the group comprises approximately 65 members.

During the first six months following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, a coordination group convened at the municipal office, attended by representatives from the local government, parish, school, other organisations, and key volunteers. Later, that group met on an informal basis as needed. Despite changes in the political leadership of the municipality, the cooperative relationship between the local government and volunteers supporting Ukrainians has remained intact. Over time, some of the local volunteers have also become municipal councillors, and the entire agenda of aiding refugees has transitioned to the purview of the Social and Healthcare Commission established by the Municipal Council. However, as the group's involvement within the municipality has expanded, the Ukrainian refugees have also become just one of several target groups for their activities.

The municipality was at an advantage because it had a well-functioning school with accommodating school leadership staff, which successfully integrated all Ukrainian children mandated to attend school. The young ages of the newly-arrived children and the amiability of the class teachers emerged as crucial factors for the involvement and contentment of the Ukrainian pupils. During the initial phase, the school procured tablets to facilitate better communication for Ukrainian pupils through translators. Funding for refugee children's participation in extracurricular activities such as music and sports clubs and summer camps, primarily sourced from project funds and through the voluntary efforts of local organisations (such as the parish, Sokol, etc.) proved extremely helpful. Subsequently, support for extracurricular activities for children whose parents couldn't afford them was extended to include all those in need across the municipality, regardless of their nationality.

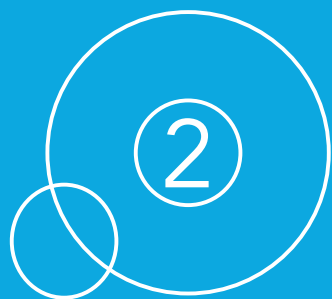
The number of Ukrainians in Vinoř fluctuated, reaching over 200 individuals at its peak, many of whom are interconnected: when the municipality acquired additional accommodation facilities, these spaces were offered to acquaintances and relatives of refugees who were already housed in the community. This measure helped foster better relations among the refugees in Vinoř and consequently facilitated the smoother integration of subsequent arrivals. Over time, as accommodation in some facilities became increasingly inadequate, some refugees relocated to other districts. However, they still visit Vinoř for various activities or to replenish necessary clothing and equipment for sports or for their homes free of charge.

Some Ukrainians previously resident in Vinoř have now travelled to other European countries; however, the majority of those who have left the district have returned to Ukraine. Some have returned due to homesickness and longing for their homeland and loved ones, while others did so because, despite substantial assistance at the local level, the conditions in the Czech Republic were such that mothers with several children were unable to make ends meet.

More than two years after the mass influx of Ukrainian refugees, Vinoř stands out as a municipality that (despite declining state-level support) has managed and continues to manage coexistence with Ukrainians excellently. Local volunteers and political representatives have reason to be proud: many refugees (most of them mothers with children) have found jobs in the municipality, their children attend local schools and kindergartens, and they interact not only among themselves but also with permanent residents. During an interview, volunteers Kateřina Hájková and Helena Švarcová, who have been involved in numerous voluntary activities, explained how their volunteering has helped them make many good friends among the Ukrainian community in Vinoř, who occasionally reach out with questions or more often call to invite them for coffee. They also reflected positively on the experience of great solidarity among residents, the church, and the municipal council, as well as broader supportive activities, such as meetings of citizen volunteers from various municipal districts initiated by the Prague City Hall, or the regularly distributed informational newsletter of the Consortium of Migrant-Assisting Organisations. However, they also recall the challenges of distributing humanitarian aid, clashes with the state support system, which became very tough especially for single mothers, and the immense difficulties young Ukrainians faced in continuing their studies at Czech high schools. As volunteers, they had initially not expected to be involved for such a long time: in the end, their voluntary involvement continued for more than two years. This would not have been possible without the consent and support of their families, relatives, and close friends.

The Vinoř municipality's successful welcoming and support for Ukrainian refugees is inspiring thanks to its exemplary coordination of the assistance offered by the municipality, local volunteers, and other local organisations, the willingness and ability to find solutions to emerging problems, the es-

tablishment of communication channels, the prompt utilisation of available resources (donations, grants from the Ministry of the Interior), networking with broader structures, and seeking specialised cooperation as needed. However, all of this was built on an as yet non-transferable resource, which is the commitment of the local residents.



POLAND

Ola, Boris and their new friends

Agnieszka BIELEWSKA

After the Russian attack on Ukraine on 24th February 2022, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian women and children arrived in Poland. A few days after the war started, students and lecturers from SWPS University and the University of Wrocław created a therapeutic story to help introduce preschool and early school children to their initial experiences in Poland. The story is available in Polish, English, Ukrainian, and Russian and it can be freely downloaded both in written form, with stunning illustrations, and as an audiobook.

The outbreak of war in Ukraine stirred emotions in Polish society deeply. As Russia attacked their neighbouring country, many in Poland feared that the war might later spill over into their own land. This situation was especially distressing for those directly impacted, in particular those fleeing their homes in Ukraine, who faced an unimaginable tragedy. Thousands of volunteers soon became involved in initiatives to help out in every possible way. People journeyed to the border to transport refugees in their own vehicles, offered them shelter in their homes or apartments, and provided vital assistance, including material aid, information, and emotional support as they took their initial steps in Poland. Doctors, lawyers, and translators volunteered their services without charge. Given the circumstances, there was an awareness that Ukrainian refugees, especially a significant number of children, might require psychological assistance and help with adapting to their new situation.

Professor Justyna Ziolkowska from the Faculty of Psychology at SWPS University came up with the idea of a story to reduce the stress of Ukrainian children arriving in Poland as war refugees. She developed and coordinated

the project together with Professor Dariusz Galasiński from the University of Wrocław. The story itself was written by a group of psychology students from the Scientific Circle of Clinical Psychology at SWPS University in Wrocław. Artist Paula Metcalf created the illustrations for the book, and designer Rebecca Scambler handled the graphic design.

The resulting story, [Ola, Boris and their new friends](#), describes a Ukrainian brother and sister who have arrived in Poland with their mother, during their first few days in their new country. It portrays their gradual adaptation to their new surroundings, as they become acquainted with a different alphabet and language, new places, and new friends. This narrative allows children to relate to the characters' experiences. The enchanting illustrations enhance the story's magic.

Every individual involved in the project participated on a voluntary basis. Their dedication and commitment enabled the story to be completed quickly, during the early days of the war, and made available for download from mid-March 2022. The story was then recorded as an audiobook in both Ukrainian and Russian. Finally, with the support of the Heweliusz Institute, the Zaczycani.org Foundation, and Amazon, 50,000 copies were printed and distributed around Poland for free.

Ukrainian refugees welcomed this initiative. Printed copies were in high demand among parents and institutions, and the printed stock ran out quickly. However, the audiobooks in two languages and e-books in four languages are still accessible and available. Many Ukrainian parents have written on social media that the story helped their children. Simultaneously, psychologists and psychotherapists, including those from outside of Poland, have reached out to the project coordinators to express their interest in using the publication in their work. The story is thus able to aid Ukrainian children displaced by the war, not only throughout Poland but also in other countries.

The project's significance extends beyond the support it has provided to the most vulnerable individuals impacted by the war. The engagement of students in the project, prompting them to empathise with young refugees and gain insight into refugees' experiences and requirements, is a further valuable outcome. Additionally, the project empowers those students by showing them that they can make a meaningful impact on society.

In September 2022 a second volume of the adventures of Ola and Boris was published in two bilingual versions: Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-English. [Ola and Boris go to School](#) tells the story of Polish and Ukrainian children who go to school together and encounter difficulties such as communication problems, loneliness, and jealousy. It incorporates the viewpoint of Polish children, who find themselves having to share their classrooms and teachers with newly arrived Ukrainian children, who may also require guidance and assistance. The story is supplemented with teaching modules designed for educators working with a diverse range of pupils. The print release of 22,000 copies of this second book was funded with the support of the Heweliusz Institute, Rotary, and the City of Wrocław.

The project highlights the benefits of collaboration between academic institutions, NGOs and commercial entities, in providing aid to the most vulnerable war refugees. The concept of using storytelling to ease and heal challenging experiences can be readily applied in other countries and for various types of experiences. Thus, this initiative holds significant potential for future expansion and adaptability.

Meeting Point Kraków

Ewa ŚLEŹAK-BELOWSKA, Mariola MAMCARCZYK

Meeting Point⁹ was created in response to the forced displacement suffered by Ukrainian families who fled to Kraków after the outbreak of Russian military aggression in their homeland. It is a place where children, teenagers and adults (newcomers and long-term residents, both from Ukraine and Poland) can meet, spend time together and take part in free, intercultural classes that develop their passions.

Meeting Point was created by the Fine Foundation in the aftermath of the outbreak of war in Ukraine, in collaboration with multiple partners¹⁰, including UNICEF. Its creation reflects an understanding of the challenges that newcomers encounter when they arrive in a foreign country and city, including existential uncertainty, language barriers, cultural differences, systemic hurdles, and apprehension about the future. These challenges are relevant not only for the newcomers themselves but also for the city's long-term residents and policymakers.

The objective of the Meeting Point is to be a place where people of various ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and nationalities can meet, share and learn about themselves and their culture through direct encounters, dialogue, and communication, and even address challenging or sensitive topics deeply root-

ed in cultural contexts or historical narratives. Meeting Point offers a space for people to gather, fosters mutual understanding, alleviates fear of the unfamiliar and promotes integration. As its organisers emphasise, “We believe that regardless of where you are from and what language you speak, you can meet and perhaps even make friends with other people who have passions just like you! Together we will find a common language, because the most important thing is to want to communicate.”

Initially situated at the Malopolska Garden of Art within the magnificent Slowacki Theatre, Meeting Point now has its home on Kraków's Main Square (Rynek Główny). It operates centres for Intercultural integration, Dialogue, and Polish Language Learning. The Intercultural integration centre offers a wide range of artistic workshops (ceramics, drawing and painting), sports activities, culinary and educational classes open to all (some of them upon registration). The Dialogue Centre is primarily intended for high school students, who are encouraged to cultivate social skills that will prepare them for coping with the challenges of the modern world. At weekends, the centre organises special events, including various workshops, creative mornings, and meetings with invited guests. Many activities possess therapeutic and mediating qualities, aiding in the displacement of war-related memories and experiences.

Policymakers and decision-makers (such as the city hall and entrepreneurs) have acknowledged and praised the Meeting Point initiative for its efforts to connect incoming residents with the local population, assistance to local residents in overcoming the general apprehension of the unfamiliar and provision of support to those in need. The Meeting Point project harbours the potential to evolve into a focal point for inclusive ideas and initiatives in the future. The only requirement for its continued smooth-running is funding, which has thus far (as of 2023) been sourced consistently from donors.

⁹ As of February 2024, the facility is now known as the Fine Space: <https://fine.ngo/en/fine-space>

¹⁰ The project partners are: the Ukrainian club of Kraków – Zustricz Foundation, Arete – Pracownia, Teatr w Krakowie – im. Juliusza Słowackiego, IKEA, and the city of Kraków.

A school and peer-mediation project: Mediation builds relationships

Kamil MARSZYCKI

The [Polish Mediators Association](#) and the Ukrainian [Alternative Decisions Institute](#) have introduced a school and peer mediation programme in the city of Rybnik¹¹. The scheme provides students and teachers with training in conflict psychology and conflict prevention and resolution methods, especially mediation. The project has helped to speed up the integration process for Polish and Ukrainian students and has given students and teachers the tools they need to resolve the conflicts that arise in their multicultural community.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians, including children, were forced to leave their country. As the largest wave of migration occurred in the middle of the school year, Ukrainian refugee children did not only face language learning challenges, but also had to adapt to a new educational system distinct from their own. Polish children also experienced a significant shift in their environment, transitioning from a monocultural to a multicultural setting. Teachers faced challenges in instructing Ukrainian children, requiring them to adhere to the content outlined in the Polish curriculum, which notably differs from the Ukrainian curriculum, especially in the humanities. The Polish Mediators Association and the Ukrainian Alternative Decisions Institute cooperated to address these challenges through a project designed to strengthen the newly created multicultural school community, primarily through efficient conflict mediation.

¹¹ The project was funded through the [We Support Ukraine Program](#), funded by the [Polish-American Freedom Foundation](#) and administered by the [Education for Democracy Foundation](#).

Mediation is a quick and effective method of resolving disputes and repairing and rebuilding relationships. Introducing this method in schools helps to strengthen bonds between members of the school community. Training both young people and teachers in communication and dispute resolution methods, as well as expanding their knowledge of conflict psychology, contributes to building better relationships and mutual understanding. It also helps prevent bullying and school violence.

The “Mediation builds relationships” project was initially planned to be implemented in five Ukrainian schools. However, due to the war and the migration of the Ukrainian population, its implementation was redirected to Poland, where it has been running at [School Complex No. 3 in Rybnik](#) and the [Regional Center for Teacher Training and Pedagogical Information “WOM” in Rybnik](#). Additional elements of multicultural communication were added to the project to help both Ukrainians and Poles to adapt and thrive in their new circumstances.

The project is structured around two areas of activity:

1. Training high school students, high school teachers and primary school teachers in conflict psychology, communication and conflict resolution, especially through mediation.
2. Mentoring students and teachers, in particular with regard to problem solving.

The fact that the project's training sessions are conducted by both Polish and Ukrainian experts aided the integration of the school community. The teaching staff include psychologists, mediators, educators and coaches. Interpreters were also present during the sessions. A former member of the Polish Mediators Association from Ukraine had been engaged to document the project by recording videos and taking photos, but was unable to leave Ukraine due to the war. His role was taken up by well-known Polish actor Szymon Piotr Warszawski, whose presence proved appealing to both students and teachers. The involvement of Ukrainian experts in the project presented a certain organisational challenge, especially since they were required to obtain PESEL numbers and open accounts in Polish banks.

Before the training sessions, surveys were conducted to assess the participants' needs. During this phase, project leaders observed that Ukrainian stu-

dents felt more secure at school than their Polish counterparts, which may or may not be surprising, considering that they had fled from a war-zone. After the training sessions, evaluation surveys were conducted, in which the students and teachers declared that their communication skills, relationships with peers/students, and ability to make decisions effectively had improved, and that they were satisfied with the opportunity they had been given to speak well about each other in the forum.

The project brought positive changes to the life of the school community, enhancing both students' and teachers' knowledge about conflicts and their resolution, and providing them with the opportunity to communicate and work together in a multicultural environment. This project has the potential to be transferred to other schools with ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse communities of students and teachers. Its effectiveness resulted from the training of teachers who are involved in the training of other teachers as well as in the rigorous evaluation.

Insufficient data on conflicts within the participating schools makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the project's implementation has reduced their frequency or intensity. Nevertheless, results from other schools and peer mediation programmes suggest that participants in similar projects are better able to manage conflict and to understand others' perspectives, which helps to reduce in-school violence¹². The success of the project is further evidenced by the participants' willingness to participate in further similar ventures in the future. The project organisers are prepared to undertake similar activities in other schools and to establish school mediator clubs, provided that they receive sufficient governmental funding to enable them to do so.

12 For more see e.g.: Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Dudley, B. (1992). Effects of Peer Mediation Training on Elementary School Students. *Mediation Quarterly*, 10(1), 89–99. <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.3900100108>

Ocalenie Foundation

Kamil MARSZYCKI

The Ocalenie Foundation is an NGO dedicated to assisting migrants and refugees, including both foreigners and repatriates. It carries out noteworthy work in migrant integration, irrespective of the migrants' backgrounds or reasons for coming to Poland. The foundation offers a wide spectrum of support services, encompassing emergency aid, psychological and legal assistance, vocational guidance, language courses, and aid for victims of torture. Its multifaceted initiatives can serve as a solid foundation upon which other NGOs, government bodies, and local authorities can build their own programmes.

For many years, migration was a relatively minor issue in Poland and little attention was paid to migrants' integration into Polish society. Although there were fairly significant numbers of migrants to Poland from Chechnya they were distributed over time and not sufficient to bring this issue to the fore. However, the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas, followed by the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border and the full-scale Russian war against Ukraine resulted in an unprecedented influx of migrants to Poland and made migrant integration a very current issue for Polish society.

Ocalenie Foundation was founded in the year 2000 and has been helping refugees, immigrants and repatriates build new lives in Poland ever since. It has collaborated on various projects with organisations like UNHCR, Care, and Save the Children. The Ocalenie Foundation's work stands out for the comprehensive nature of the support it provides to migrants, which includes humanitarian aid and assistance with integration into Polish society. The Foundation's humanitarian work has included running the Warsaw Biennale reception centre for six months, providing life-saving aid at the Polish-Belarusian border, and collaborating with the Open House Initiative to

launch “Magazin”, a store offering essential items to refugees and immigrants.

The Foundation has also established Foreigner Help Centers in Warsaw, Łódź, and Łomża. These Centers provide holistic support that empowers migrants to surmount the most significant challenges they face upon arrival, including language barriers, lack of information regarding the legal and tax systems, finding work, accessing social security, addressing psychological issues, feelings of insecurity, and distrust of unfamiliar surroundings.

1. The centres provide initial support to migrants via a culturally diverse team of mentors who assist individuals facing language barriers or discrimination in everyday tasks such as liaising with government offices, completing paperwork, searching for housing, and enrolling children in schools and daycare centres.
2. At the centres, migrants can also access psychological and psychotherapy services, including support for individuals dealing with trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as legal assistance relevant to matters such as legalising their stay, seeking international protection, or addressing unethical employer practices. Moreover, the Help Center for Victims of Torture provides specialised psychological, psychiatric, social, and legal assistance to affected migrants.
3. The centres also provide adults with access to complimentary Polish language courses, vocational consultations (for instance, the centres partner with IKEA Retail, which has introduced a three-quarters-time job programme at their stores), and specialised projects designed specifically for women, with plans to extend similar opportunities to men in the future.
4. The Foundation runs Youth Centres offering a wide range of activities for children, including school catch-up classes, Polish language classes, cultural and educational courses, field trips, and summer holiday activity camps. The Foundation has also established child-friendly areas at its reception centres. Furthermore, in collaboration with the BNP Paribas Foundation, the Foundation has initiated the “Knowledge to

the Power” tutoring and scholarship programme to support young refugees.

5. To prevent the risk of homelessness, the Foundation leases apartments from the private market and local government resources, subsequently subleasing them to migrants at rates tailored to each family’s financial means.

Beyond direct assistance to refugees, the Foundation also offers training for schools, public institutions etc. in areas such as diversity management, inclusive language usage, and anti-discrimination practices. These initiatives play a crucial role in creating a welcoming environment for migrant integration.

The Foundation secures funding for its initiatives from both private and public sources, including government and local government grants and the 1.5 % income tax option that citizens can donate. It’s worth noting that the significance of private funding has grown since 2021. However, this increase in private funding sometimes comes with restrictions, as donors may have specific requirements for how their contributions should be allocated, potentially limiting the Foundation’s flexibility in managing these funds.

The scope of the Foundation’s activities has been expanding steadily, as evidenced by the annual increase in funds raised, expenditures, and the growing number of employees and volunteers. The key measure of the Foundation’s impact is the number of individuals it has assisted, which exceeded 22,500 people in 2022. The growth of the organisation has made effective management increasingly challenging. Despite these difficulties, the Ocalenie Foundation continues to provide effective assistance across various levels and in multiple languages, including Ukrainian, Russian, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Tajik, and others.

The Ocalenie Foundation’s endeavours provide a valuable blueprint for NGOs, state and local authorities looking to replicate its successful 20-year model of migrant assistance. While the potential for replication of the Centres for foreigners in other areas is evident, it is worth noting that the recruitment of language-proficient specialists could present a challenge to such initiatives.

Starter Pack: a guide for parents and students

Agnieszka BIELEWSKA

As Wrocław's migrant population grows, more and more foreign students enrol in local schools. Migrant students and their parents must adjust to the Polish educational system, with all the surprises and confusion that brings due to its differences from the systems in their home countries. In cooperation with the Wrocław Municipality's Education Department, the [Wrocław Social Development Centre](#) (Wrocławskie Centrum Rozwoju Społecznego) created a booklet known as the [Starter Pack](#) to guide students and parents through the process of adapting into Polish schools and ease the stress for both parents and students by providing essential information in their native language, facilitating their transition.

After the end of the Second World War, Polish society was largely homogeneous, and the education system was designed primarily for Polish children. Highly skilled professionals and diplomats who immigrated to Poland from abroad during the 1990s and 2000s typically enrolled their children in private international schools. Large-scale migration to Poland began only after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. By 2019, state-funded primary schools in the larger Polish cities had noticeable numbers of foreign pupils. After the Russian attack on Ukraine on 24th February 2022, large numbers of Ukrainian refugees arrived in Poland, most of them women and children. By June 2022 there were [182,600 Ukrainian pupils](#) enrolled in Polish educational institutions.

As the foreign population in Wrocław grew, institutions catering to foreigners found themselves fielding an increasing number of queries from students and their parents. Many schools in the Wrocław region employed [intercul-](#)

[tural assistants](#) to explain the Polish education system to migrant pupils and their parents. However, both teachers and intercultural assistants noticed a need for written materials that would give foreign parents and children up-front knowledge. Several schools created their own written guides, although these were typically localised efforts tied to specific institutions. Meanwhile, parents and children had numerous questions concerning the Polish school system, about matters ranging from enrollment procedures and grading systems to the various types of schools available and the educational terminology used in school settings.

In response to the growing population of foreign pupils in Poland, the Wrocław Social Development Centre released a booklet in collaboration with the Wrocław Municipality's Education Department in 2019, known as the Starter Pack. This guide was designed to provide assistance to primary school pupils and their parents in adapting to the Polish education system by introducing them to the various educational institutions in the Wrocław region and explaining the Polish school system in general. The booklet's content was reviewed by school teachers, intercultural assistants, and foreign pupils, all of whom contributed their own insights.

The booklet comprises a central section that features a glossary of fundamental terms related to education in Poland. It also includes templates for documents that parents can use when corresponding with schools, such as consent forms and exemptions. It provides explanations of the grading system, guidance for children on where to seek assistance in various crisis situations, and an outline of the parents', schools', and students' responsibilities.

The booklet was published in three language versions: Ukrainian, English and Polish, ensuring inclusion for the local Polish-speaking community. The content of each edition is the same, and consists of two sections – one for parents and one for students. The student section is written in a simpler, less formal style. It has been observed that students often bring the booklet to school and consult it during lessons.

A second edition of the booklet, financed by UNICEF, was published in August 2022, after the arrival of thousands more refugees from Ukraine. This updated booklet was delivered to primary schools, institutions that help migrants, and municipal public spaces for meetings and social activities, such

as [Passage of Dialogue](#), before the beginning of the new school year in September 2022. The authors have revised and expanded the text of the original booklet, incorporating a broader range of information. The Wrocław Social Development Centre intends to release further editions in future, to keep pace with changes in the Polish school system, ensuring that readers receive up-to-date information.

The Starter Pack could easily be transferred to other cities or countries. Implementing this practice in other Polish cities would require only minor adjustments, to ensure e.g. the addresses of school recruitment websites are correct for each location. Similar initiatives have already been launched in some other Polish cities, but it is unclear whether any of these have drawn their inspiration from Wrocław's Starter Pack. In other countries, the Starter Pack could serve as a guide for how such a booklet might be prepared and what topics should be covered.

Day Care Kraków

Mariola MAMCARCZYK, Ewa ŚLĘZAK-BELOWSKA

Day Care Kraków was created in response to the needs of Ukrainian refugees and their families who had fled their country and ended up in Kraków. Most of those refugees were women with children. The presence of young children poses a challenge for single mothers trying to establish a new life in an unfamiliar location, especially when access to daycare centres and kindergartens is limited. By providing these refugees with a trustworthy, secure, and convenient childcare facility during the day, this project enables them to get on with their lives in Kraków, e.g. learn the Polish language, deal with the formalities of their stay, and find employment.

The project was conceived by Karolina Bisping Adamik, who is currently the president of the Fine Foundation, which runs the Day Care Kraków centre. Since February 2022 many people and institutions have been involved in the project. Know-how and organisational support were offered by various facilities and cultural institutions in Kraków, including the Arete Workshop, Little Friends Kindergarten, academic staff of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków Festival Office, and countless committed individuals. Since June 2022 the Day Care has been operating under the official patronage of UNICEF. As of April 2023, it is financially supported by CORE (Community Organised Relief Effort) a non-profit organisation founded by Sean Penn and Ann Lee in response to the Haiti earthquake.

The Day Care operates from Monday to Friday between 7:30 am and 5:30 pm and offers places to 100 Ukrainian children. Childcare and related educational activities are provided by a team of highly skilled and certified Ukrainian kindergarten teachers, caregivers, speech therapists, and child psychologists, all dedicated to ensuring the children's well-being and holistic development. The children are grouped by age into four groups, each consisting of 25 chil-

dren. Attendance at the daycare centre is free of charge; parents pay only for the cost of their children's meals.

For Ukrainian children, the Day Care facility acts as a bridge connecting them to both their home country and their new place of residence. It provides them with Ukrainian peers, teachers, and other professionals who communicate in their native language and foster their national identity. At the same time, it offers them opportunities for learning Polish and provides much-needed support to parents navigating their lives in a new environment, easing their concerns by ensuring their children are well-cared for. The Day Care facility delivers education in accordance with the Ukrainian system, but the children are also prepared for their potential transition into the Polish educational system. After attending the Day Care, children can seamlessly transition to primary schools in either country.

The project maintains its own [website](#) where, among other things, Ukrainian forced migrants can access registration forms for Ukrainian classes, opportunities to assist with childcare on a voluntary basis, and instructions for external workshop facilitators. Additionally, an app developed by UNICEF and national partners can be downloaded from the website for free, which aids parents in making informed decisions about their child's care and development from birth to the age of 6.

The Day Care has implemented several innovative practices, including:

1. Additional classes on diseases and personal hygiene. This is an important area of education as preschool children are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases due to their underdeveloped immune systems and frequent contact with other children. During these classes they learn about the differences between bacteria and viruses, the causes and symptoms of diseases, and personal hygiene.
2. Various workshops organised for children at the Meeting Point (a venue described in a separate inspiring practice). One of these workshops focuses on robotics, offering children the opportunity to design, build, and program robots. This fosters engagement and learning in programming, engineering, and mathematics, promoting creativity, logical thinking, and valuable problem-solving skills for the future. It also

provides a chance for the children to escape from their everyday circumstances and explore new passions and interests.

3. Easier participation in cultural events (International Day of Theatre) and regular visits to the theatre, Polish cinema and museums (e.g. Museum of Natural Environment).
4. Community events for Polish and Ukrainian families, e.g. Ukrainian storytelling.

Through these and other activities, the Day Care project supports and provides care and education to Ukrainian families while also familiarising them with the receiving Polish society and its culture. Nonetheless, the future of this project remains uncertain, as it is financially dependent on private and institutional donations. We hope that the spontaneous, ambitious, determined, and compassionate team at the Fine Foundation will manage to institutionalise the Day Care project and secure sustainable financial support from the local authorities.



ISRAEL

TechForChanges

Karin AMIT

In February 2022, thousands of refugees from Ukraine (including olim¹³) arrived in Israel as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine. To help deliver information and assistance to these refugees, three startup founders formed the initiative TechForChanges¹⁴, which worked to create local networks using technology and community. The initiative formed partnerships with NGOs, companies, volunteers, charity organisations, government entities, and municipalities, aiming to provide support quickly and on a large scale.

The TechForChanges initiative connected organisations with Ukrainian refugees in need, rapidly and on a large scale. The project leveraged the power of the community to provide help for individuals and create greater impact. Utilising innovative and digital solutions, TechForChanges aimed to address old problems in new and effective ways. Additionally, the initiative built a shared and open data platform to increase visibility and assessment for all network participants.

The implementation of TechForChanges was a direct response to the arrival of thousands of refugees from Ukraine to Israel. These refugees needed

13 Olim are migrants to Israel with Jewish ancestry and their spouses, who are granted Israeli citizenship upon arrival.

14 This civil initiative was active for about a year and a half (from February 2022 to July 2023). The website www.techforchanges.org/services is no longer available.

support in numerous areas such as health services, employment, and housing. Many of them were olim who were granted Israeli citizenship upon arrival. Many organisations in Israel worked to address the refugees' needs, yet a lack of coordination between these organisations made it difficult to determine the refugees' exact needs. Beyond organisational assistance, there was no reliable source of information to help the refugees navigate their new, unfamiliar reality. Thus, they also required a support network or community for help in acclimation.

In response to this situation, TechForChanges aimed to identify the needs of the refugees clearly and in an organised manner, and to facilitate partnerships between organisations to provide support. By harnessing technology, community, and data, TechForChanges created a network of partners to help meet the refugees' needs in a more efficient and effective manner. The project operated through networks established in selected municipalities in Israel.

TechForChanges aimed to assist Ukrainian refugees with integration into Israeli society, regardless of their gender, religion, or political views. To achieve this, the project made information accessible to refugees by building local networks. The project collaborated closely with municipalities. For example, weekly meetings were held between the TechForChanges community manager and representatives of municipal integration offices to assess the refugees' needs. The project operated in four municipalities and aimed to further expand.

The project operated by first establishing a local network, which included national partners (healthcare institutions, companies, government authorities, non-profit organisations), local partners (municipalities, local businesses, NGOs, volunteers), and technology partners (digital services, development). The second step was to map the needs of the refugees, and the third step was to develop innovative solutions to meet these needs.

To introduce the refugees to the local networks, TechForChanges organised a city fair for aid organisations that serve Ukrainian refugees in many aspects of life. The fair provided a platform for direct interaction between these aid organisations and refugees, leading to the creation of various forms of support, such as emotional support groups and a free digital wallet for financial

services. The fair also integrated employment services, through cooperation with HIAS. Furthermore, TechForChanges attempted to fill in an existing gap by providing services to refugees who are not olim: a free dental programme, pilot online Hebrew study groups, and a support group for families of children with special needs.

The initiative was also developing a mobile app for refugees that would address their immediate primary needs, including information on legal status, health insurance, emergency medical services, employment, and education.

TechForChanges held local network fairs with approximately 3,500 participants and built partnerships with around seventy organisations in Israel.

The initial funding of NIS 1 million was obtained through personal appeals by the founders. Second stage funding was secured through partnership with the New York Federation.

In conclusion, TechForChanges successfully delivered significant benefits for Ukrainian refugees' integration into Israeli society. The innovative solutions and partnerships created were instrumental in addressing the refugees' pressing needs. The project led to the expansion of local networks that provide services in different regions throughout Israel. The founders of TechForChanges were considering taking their operating model to the next level by offering their services to immigrants arriving in Israel from other countries, such as Ethiopia. The project's development and success demonstrate its ability to adapt to new challenges and provide meaningful support to those in need.

HIAS: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Karin AMIT

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, an estimated 45,000 Ukrainian refugees have found shelter in Israel. To accommodate this influx, the Ministry of Interior implemented various policies for Ukrainian refugees, such as regulating the entry of non-Jewish individuals and ensuring access to employment and essential services. [HIAS Israel](#) was among the first organisations to respond to the crisis, providing legal and paralegal assistance to prevent deportation and reunite families. This document will examine a HIAS Israel project aimed at promoting the employment of (non-Jewish) refugees from Ukraine in Israel.

HIAS is a global organisation dedicated to protecting refugees who have been forced to leave their homelands due to their ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or other factors. HIAS Israel focuses on assisting Jewish immigrants and refugees, as well as collaborating with civil society organisations and government bodies to improve the asylum system for non-Jewish refugees. HIAS Israel also represents refugees through legal proceedings, with the ultimate aim of becoming a leading authority in the field of immigration and addressing the challenges facing new immigrants and asylum seekers. In one of its current projects, HIAS Israel is working to help refugees from the conflict in Ukraine, who have found safety in Israel, to secure legal employment opportunities.

To begin with, Ukrainian refugees who entered Israel were automatically granted a three-month tourist visa that did not include permission to work. However, in May 2022, the Israeli government announced that Ukrainians who had arrived in Israel after February 24 or who were already in the country legally on that date, were permitted to work under a non-enforcement policy. This policy will be valid for the duration of the war in Ukraine and until

the refugees are able to return home. This means that at present, Ukrainian refugees are allowed to work without a formal work permit, with no legal consequences for themselves or their employers.

HIAS recognizes how important it is for refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and independence within Israeli society, and therefore works to promote economic inclusion. This involves regulating refugees' legal employment to help them achieve greater stability. To this end, HIAS connects refugees with potential employers. It also collaborates with employers' human resources departments to ensure that they have the necessary information to hire refugees legally. By providing these connections and information, HIAS aims to help refugees secure employment, thereby increasing their financial stability and reducing their reliance on family and friends.

After conducting a needs assessment in August 2022, HIAS identified a crucial need for employment opportunities for war refugees in Israel who were seeking legal and fair employment, especially women. The organisation recognized that the refugees' relatively high level of education, professional experience, and skill sets could make a significant contribution to the Israeli labour market. However, the survey of 143 war refugees revealed that only 40 % had found employment, and that most of the women were employed in cleaning, which was a severe mismatch of their abilities and experience. The result was that they were facing economic hardship and integration difficulties.

HIAS created a special social and economic integration programme for Ukrainian refugees, aiming to recruit small and large employers who would treat the refugees as human capital and provide them with fair employment opportunities. To achieve this, the organisation contacted both large corporations and small businesses, and gave them the knowledge they needed to employ the refugees. HIAS also supported the employers in integrating this knowledge into the organisation's employment programme. Additionally, the programme offers the refugees opportunities to learn Hebrew and English and develop their job-search skills.

In December 2022, HIAS partnered with TechForChanges and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to organise a job fair in Tel Aviv, which provided over 300 jobs for 200 families. This job fair was a positive

starting point for the programme and proved that the need for high-quality, legal employment was very prominent in the field. Over 100 job interviews were conducted, and some 150 visitors received free services such as appointments for dental care and legal advice on employment and status issues. Additionally, visitors to the job fair had the opportunity to attend three talks on relevant topics.

As part of this employment programme, HIAS Israel collaborates with numerous organisations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Physicians for Human Rights, Early Starters International, the Tel Aviv University legal clinic, the African Refugee Development Center, and local authorities and volunteer organisations.

HIAS' efforts to provide employment opportunities for Ukrainian war refugees in Israel have transformed their lives by helping them earn a living and integrate into society. The organisation has partnered with various agencies and corporations to offer refugees the knowledge and resources they need to become active members of the workforce. Through this initiative, refugees have been able to leverage their skills and experience to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Today, however, two years after the refugees' arrival in Israel, challenges remain in motivating them to take more individual responsibility for their welfare. Additionally, the Israeli government has imposed geographic restrictions on employment, a problem HIAS is working to address through legal means.

Despite these challenges, the HIAS employment programme has been successful in creating opportunities for refugees to become self-sufficient and contribute to Israeli society. Through ongoing partnerships and advocacy efforts, HIAS continues to work towards creating a brighter future for refugees in Israel.

Zav Hasha'ah - "The call of the hour"

Karin AMIT

[Zav Hasha'ah](#) is a government initiative led by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs in collaboration with Joint Israel, Magen David Adom, and civil society organisations. Its aim is to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainian war refugees who arrived in Israel after February 24, 2022 and are not eligible for the Law of Return (not considered olim¹⁵). Joint Israel was recruited by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs as a partner and operational body at the time the project was established, initially for a period of 3 months but this has been extended due to the continuation of the war.

Zav Hasha'ah is a humanitarian aid centre that serves as an official resource for refugees displaced by the war in Ukraine. The centre aims to improve refugees' lives by providing a coordinated, effective response to the crisis. It operates a telephone hotline that provides support in three languages: Ukrainian, Russian, and Hebrew. This "one stop shop" offers essential services and guidance to help refugees navigate various aspects of their new lives in Israel. It helps to mitigate feelings of confusion and exploitation, and serves as a hub for civil society organisations, philanthropic groups, and businesses to collaborate on humanitarian aid efforts.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, thousands of refugees fled their homes in haste and travelled to Israel. Many found themselves in a foreign land with no belongings and in need of help. The Israeli government decided to assist these refugees by offering information and guidance, food,

¹⁵ Olim are migrants to Israel with Jewish ancestry and their spouses, who are granted Israeli citizenship upon arrival.

medical care, employment and residency permits, education, clothing and supplies, housing, respite and leisure programmes, and mental health support. The call centre provides information on these services. It also responds to inquiries from local authorities and Israeli citizens regarding the government aid provided, as well as from citizens who wish to assist through donations. Overall, the centre plays a crucial role in helping Ukrainian refugees in Israel to rebuild their lives and find a sense of stability and security in their new home. Between the months of March and June 2022 about 21,000 people entered Israel, of which about 15,000 have remained in the country.

The assistance programme covers several areas:

- **Education** – Israeli government policy enables Ukrainian minors with legal visitor permits to enter the Israeli education system.
- **Employment and Residence Permits** – the Ministry of Interior has established an employment policy for Ukrainian war refugees in Israel who are not eligible for the Law of Return. The telephone assistance centre provides comprehensive information about this policy.
- **Medical Aid** – the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services provides free medical assistance to those who do not qualify under the Law of Return.
- **Food Assistance** – Available in the form of food baskets or vouchers for purchasing food.
- **Mental Health Support** – Israel acknowledges that war and the transition to a foreign country can result in mental health issues such as trauma, anxiety, depression, and complex emotional states. To address these challenges, the State provides a package of therapeutic sessions either in person or online, over several weeks, with a licensed therapist who speaks the refugees' language. This is provided free of charge.
- **Respite and Leisure Programmes** – Zav Hasha'ah operates a variety of respite and leisure activities for adults and children in locations across Israel.
- **Housing** – While Ukrainian war refugees must have a host in order to enter Israel, alternative housing assistance is available if it is not possible to continue staying with the host.
- **Equipment** – the centre offers basic equipment such as beds, mattresses, and baby carriages by partnering with civil society organisations to obtain private donations. Requests can be made through the centre.

Israel's humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees has been a noteworthy achievement. However, the State of Israel has more experience with the process of accepting immigrants under the Law of Return (olim) than it does with receiving refugees seeking asylum. Some initiatives were not successful – for example, efforts to provide emotional support to refugees met with limited receptiveness, as the refugees were focused on fulfilling their immediate physical needs. Also, the logistical challenges of providing aid were further compounded by the fact that numerous government ministries were involved. Zav Hasha'ah had to organise contracts with multiple service providers, leading to delays in service delivery.

In conclusion, the State of Israel's willingness to assist refugees from Ukraine is commendable. The establishment of Zav Hasha'ah constituted a unique emergency event that is unlike other emergency events in Israel in general and events involving Joint Israel in particular. The success of the project was thanks to the effective partnership with the Joint Israel organisation. Collaboration between the partners was smooth and clear, there was systemic flexibility within the requirements of proper administration, and meaningful action was achieved in the field. The effort made to provide aid across numerous aspects of life reflects Israel's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of those seeking refuge in the country. To enhance future efforts, the Israeli government should establish partnerships with local organisations specialising in refugee support, who possess a deep understanding of the unique challenges and requirements of displaced individuals. Such collaborations can foster an integrated approach to addressing the needs of refugees and enable a more effective and sustainable response.

The International Fellowship for Christians and Jews (Yedidut Fund)

Karin AMIT

In response to the war in Ukraine, the [International Fellowship for Christians and Jews](#) (IFCJ, also known as Yedidut Fund)¹⁶ initiated a project to facilitate the immigration of Jewish refugees (olim¹⁷) to Israel and support their successful integration into Israeli society. The Fund established an emergency programme of aid for the Jewish community in Ukraine, providing material and financial assistance and help with obtaining immigration visas. In addition, the organisation cooperated with the Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration on projects facilitating the integration of immigrants in Israel.

For the past thirty years, the Yedidut Fund has assisted Jews immigrating to Israel from all over the world. Over the course of its operation, the Fund has invested NIS 800 million to facilitate the immigration of 750,000 Jews from countries such as the former USSR and Ethiopia.

In November 2014, the Fund established an independent immigration system to bring Jews from twenty-six countries worldwide. While focusing on

¹⁶ The IFCJ is a philanthropic organisation founded in 1983 whose mission is to promote understanding and cooperation between Jews and Christians, and provide humanitarian aid for the State of Israel.

¹⁷ Olim are migrants to Israel with Jewish ancestry and their spouses, who are granted Israeli citizenship upon arrival. Their immigration, regardless of the circumstances, is called aliyah.

countries where Jewish communities are under economic or security distress, the Fund is committed to helping any Jew exercise their right to immigrate to Israel, regardless of their financial situation. When the war in Ukraine broke out, the Yedidut Fund found it necessary to provide assistance in raising funds and facilitating the integration of Jewish immigrants from Ukraine into Israel.

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, thousands of refugees were forced to flee their homes and seek safety in neighbouring countries, arriving with nothing but the clothes on their backs. In addition to lacking basic necessities like food, clothing, and housing, the refugees faced significant information gaps, including a lack of knowledge about their rights in Israel. To address these pressing needs, the Yedidut Fund launched a project to support Jewish refugees arriving in Israel and facilitate their successful integration into Israeli society. The project was designed to address the urgent needs that arose during the emergency and included several key components, which will be explained in detail below.

In the initial phase, the Fund collaborated with the Jewish Agency to establish an information centre in Ukraine. The centre provided guidance on evacuation and travel arrangements to safe places, including flights to Israel and permits under the Law of Return which refugees required to enter Israel. Additionally, two aid centres were opened, one in Israel and another in Ukraine.

The Fund also worked with the Jewish Agency to facilitate the rescue and immigration of Jewish refugees from Moldova and Poland (countries bordering Ukraine). Fund representatives served as intermediaries with the local Israeli consulate to smooth the refugees' immigration process. The Fund provided basic needs such as accommodation, food, and clothing for refugees who were waiting for immigration visas to Israel.

Upon the refugees' arrival in Israel, the Yedidut Fund offered several avenues of support for their integration into Israeli society:

1. Financial grants for the purchase of electrical appliances.
2. Lectures on various topics to support successful integration. These lectures were tailored to meet the needs identified by local authorities. They covered subjects such as refugee rights through the Ministry of

the Interior, employment, the Israeli banking system, and education. Most lectures were conducted in person, and several dozen people participated in each session.

3. A camp for the refugees' children, where they participated in fun activities, learned Hebrew, and gained an understanding of Israeli culture.

These efforts required cooperation with numerous organisations, including local organisations in Moldova and Poland, the Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, and Israeli local authorities.

During the project, the Yedidut Fund faced challenges that exposed areas the organisation was unequipped to address. Following identification of these gaps, the Fund collaborated with local associations with expertise in these areas. For instance, support for finding employment emerged as a significant need among the refugees, prompting the Fund to partner with the Gvachim Association, a known expert in this field. Going forward, the Fund plans to expand its activities to incorporate occupational integration into its own support system.

The Yedidut Fund's response to the war in Ukraine serves as a model for how organisations can assist refugees in times of crisis. The information and aid centres established in collaboration with the Jewish Agency, efforts to help refugees obtain immigration visas, and provision of material assistance such as accommodation, food, and clothing, have played a crucial role in facilitating the immigration of Jewish refugees to Israel.

Furthermore, the Fund has demonstrated its commitment to supporting the successful integration of refugees into Israeli society. By providing financial grants and electrical appliances, organising lectures on various topics, and establishing a camp for children, the Fund helps ensure that refugees have the resources and support necessary to adjust to their new lives in Israel.

Nof HaGalil

Karin AMIT

In response to the war in Ukraine, the Nof HaGalil municipality launched a project to facilitate the relocation of Jewish refugees to Israel and help them integrate successfully into Israeli society in general and Nof HaGalil city in particular. To achieve this goal, the municipality implemented a comprehensive set of measures. It began by sending emissaries to countries such as Moldova and Poland to encourage potential immigrants to settle in Nof HaGalil. Once the migrants arrive in Israel, a well-designed integration program offers solutions for their needs, including housing, healthcare, and education. Through this initiative, the municipality is committed to ensuring that these immigrants feel welcomed and valued as members of Israeli society.

The Nof HaGalil municipality views immigrant integration as a crucial mission both at the national and local levels. The city's leaders recognize the immense contribution that immigrants bring to their community and view the creation of a diverse and inclusive city as a significant advantage.

After fleeing the war in Ukraine, many Jewish refugees arrived in Israel destitute and traumatised. Moreover, many families were forced to separate when male family members were conscripted into the Ukrainian army. To address these challenges, the Nof HaGalil municipality adopted a unique policy for accepting immigrants, offering newcomers refugees above-standard assistance, including rent subsidies, furniture, basic household items, clothing, and toys for children. These measures aimed to support the immigrants' well-being and help them to settle smoothly into their new homes. Furthermore, the municipality prioritised the provision of essential services, such as healthcare and education, recognizing their critical role in supporting the refugees' integration into Israeli society.

To support the successful integration of Jewish refugees from Ukraine, the Nof HaGalil municipality has taken a range of proactive measures, including:

1. Establishing a streamlined system inside the hotel where the immigrants are initially housed, to expedite their registration and access to essential services. This system unites representatives from various government agencies responsible for immigrant integration, such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs (“one stop shop”).
2. Converting the municipal parking lot building into a supermarket that provides immigrants with basic necessities free of charge, including clothing, shoes, food, school supplies, and toys.
3. Recruiting over 200 Russian and Ukrainian speaking municipal employees across various departments to support the immigrants in their integration process.
4. Recruiting Russian and Ukrainian speaking volunteer residents to host and support the new immigrants.
5. Enrolling immigrant children in kindergartens and schools immediately upon their arrival.
6. Establishing a municipal warehouse to store donated furniture and electrical items for distribution to immigrant families in need.
7. Providing a unique basket of municipal benefits for immigrants from Ukraine in their first year in the city, such as free access to municipal facilities, children’s classes, libraries, cultural events, concerts, and swimming pools.
8. Creating a dedicated municipal website and Facebook page in Russian to enable direct communication with immigrants.
9. Hosting special cultural events in Ukrainian to empower and celebrate the immigrants’ heritage.

To support the immigrants’ integration, the Nof HaGalil municipality has collaborated with several parties to provide comprehensive assistance. For instance, the municipality worked with health insurance funds to ensure that all immigrants, regardless of their official status, received health services and free insurance for the first three months. Additionally, the municipality

reached an agreement with the Ministry of Education to provide transportation for immigrant children from the hotels to schools. The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration helped finance the hotels and provided three coordinators to aid procedures for refugees on arrival.

Furthermore, the municipality has established a close relationship with several clubs in the area, including a club for the elderly that functions as a support and social group, with volunteers providing instruction. Several industrial plants in the city have hired refugees, despite their lack of language skills and mismatch of specific job skills. This has helped the immigrants integrate into the workforce and become self-sufficient.

In conclusion, the Nof HaGalil municipality has demonstrated a unique and proactive approach to supporting the successful integration of Jewish refugees from Ukraine. Recognizing immigrants’ specific needs beyond those met by its standard support services, the municipality has collaborated with various entities (such as ministries, health insurance funds, local companies, NGOs and volunteers) and taken significant measures to provide comprehensive assistance. Overall, based on feedback from the immigrants and their activity on social networks, it appears that the Nof HaGalil municipality’s efforts have been successful in supporting the immigrants’ well-being and helping them to settle smoothly into their new homes.

The Jewish Agency for Israel – Selah programme

Karin AMIT

[The Jewish Agency for Israel](#) is a non-profit organisation with a mission to facilitate global Jewish immigration to Israel, support the welfare of Jewish communities around the world, promote Jewish identity, and foster connections between Jews and Israel. In response to the war in Ukraine, the Jewish Agency for Israel has taken several initiatives to assist Ukrainian refugees. One of these initiatives is the [Selah](#) programme (students before parents), which specifically addresses the needs of young Jewish refugees arriving in Israel.

Founded in 2003, Selah programme assists young people from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), aged 18-21, who immigrate to Israel without their parents after completing their high school matriculation certificate. Prior to enrollment, applicants undergo a rigorous screening process, personal interview, and an adjustment process. The 10-month programme provides participants with a unique opportunity to further their education and integrate into Israeli society.

In normal times, the young people selected to participate in the Selah programme have excellent academic skills, as well as talents in extracurricular fields such as art, sports, and music. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the arrival of many young refugees in Israel, the programme has opened its doors to these individuals without screening.

Following the invasion of Ukraine, nearly 15,000 young Jewish refugees arrived in Israel. Many of them had fled battle zones and were in a vulnerable state. The new arrivals included hundreds of young people aged 18-24, some of whom had come without their parents. Confused about their future and uncertain about their lives in Israel, these young people needed immediate support and guidance.

To ensure that they receive the best possible assistance, the Jewish Agency decided to enrol them in the Selah programme, despite the fact that they had not been through the selection process. To accommodate these additional participants, the Agency increased the programme quota from 500 to 1000 students per year and established an additional welcome centre. The Selah programme provides these young refugees with a unique opportunity to access high-quality education and support, enabling them to integrate more effectively into Israeli society.

The Selah programme offers a comprehensive experience to young immigrants. Housing is provided in welcome centres in Karmiel in the north and Nitzana in the south. The programme includes Hebrew language instruction, a preparatory course for the psychometric (college entrance) exam, and a range of social and cultural activities. These activities include classes, workshops, and lectures on relevant topics, as well as trips around the country. The comprehensive support system includes funding for housing, laundry, activities and trips, gym access, and a monthly allowance for personal expenses. Participants also gain exposure to a diverse range of Israeli youth and communities.

The young people volunteer in many projects in Karmiel and Nitzana, including preparing food parcels for the needy, visiting Holocaust survivors and the elderly, and working with children with special needs. In addition to academic and cultural enrichment, the programme offers preparation for military service through the Ministry of Defense and the IDF. To support these efforts, the programme has established partnerships with a range of organisations in Israel, including the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, universities and colleges, and third-sector organisations in Karmiel and Nitzana.

While the Selah programme provides extensive support, programme graduates may face challenges once they leave the structured environment of the welcome centre and must navigate decisions about housing, education, military service, and more on their own. Given the unique needs of young refugees from Ukraine, the programme is also providing these young people with personal psychological assistance and guidance to help them make decisions about their future.

Overall, the Selah programme provides an excellent platform for young immigrants from Ukraine to succeed academically, socially, and psychologically, while contributing to Israeli society and building connections with their fellow citizens.



EUROPE

I-WELCOME

Sinem YILMAZ

Migrant women often face stronger discrimination and specific challenges in accessing employment and training opportunities. The [i-WELCOME](#) project aimed to ease third country national (TCN) women's entry to the host society's labour market and social life by organising up-skilling courses, mentoring programmes and job shadowing schemes. Its comprehensive approach to labour market integration was innovative and inspiring, as it included: raising TCN women's awareness of their rights (access to education, work); developing self-confidence and self-determination; providing opportunities for vocational training soon after arrival in the host country; and integrating gender equality and diversity management into the training courses.

The i-Welcome project started in November 2020 and lasted 26 months. The project was implemented in France, Germany, Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus and Italy, where it directly targeted low-skilled TCN women who had not yet been integrated socially and economically into the host community and its labour market stakeholders (employers, managers, owners, entrepreneurs). Indirect target groups included mentors – native-born women who joined the project to support TCN women throughout the job shadowing phase – and the general public, who were informed of the project activities.

Though Europe remains a favourable destination for people seeking international protection, little attention is given to the integration of TCN women. Large numbers of TCN women find that their rights are not respected, and many fall victim to trafficking, slavery and sexual abuse. Compared to men, TCN women face more obstacles to community integration, such as child care obligations and gender discrimination – they are often subject to 'triple discrimination'. The lack of policies focused on TCN women highlights the need for labour market stakeholders to better understand the integration

barriers this group faces and the need to invest in their integration, as TCN women are key actors in promoting integration among their families and social circles. In this sense, i-WELCOME is in line with the resolution 2244 (2018) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe¹⁸, as it aims to ease TCN women's entry to the host society's labour market and social life by organising up-skilling courses and job shadowing schemes.

The first activity of the i-WELCOME project was a needs analysis to identify the characteristics of TCN women in each partner country and their needs. The results of this analysis were presented in the form of an [EU Infographic Report](#). The project partners then designed the [i-WELCOME Syllabus](#) which became the basis for the development of the Upskilling Course Material and [guidelines](#) for adult educators to ensure efficient delivery of that material.

After this first phase, the project turned its focus to key labour market stakeholders, carrying out an analysis of employers' perspectives on recruiting migrant women, multicultural workplaces, and gender equality policies. That analysis led to the development of an educational pack designed to raise employers' awareness of prejudices and stereotypes related to TCN women. These activities formed part of the employers' preparation for offering 2-month job shadowing schemes helping low-educated TCN women integrate into the local labour market more effectively.

As part of its activities, the partners created the [i-WELCOME PORTAL](#), offering TCN women, labour market stakeholders, and the host community a powerful, dynamic and interactive multi-purpose tool based on advanced technology. The portal was designed to be easily maintainable, transferable, and adaptable to other contexts after the end of the project. It is a user-friendly and interactive portal, which is linked to the project's social media profiles and official website.

To pilot test and finalise all the project's products, the partners developed a comprehensive guide pack available online in 7 key languages and containing all the project's main off- and online products.

The i-Welcome project is particularly inspirational for its comprehensive focus on both labour market and social integration, maximising its relevance for the needs of its beneficiaries. As a transnational project, it is designed to be adaptable to different contexts. Ready-to-use materials produced during the project helps it to be transferable and sustain its impacts after the end of the project.

18 Migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration

IncluCities

Sinem YILMAZ

The [IncluCities](#) project aimed to improve the integration of third country nationals in middle-sized cities through city-to-city cooperation. The practice is particularly inspirational for supporting less experienced cities in carrying out concrete changes in local integration practices and reflecting the needs of local governments on the ground. The IncluCities project also sets a good example in transferability and upscaling good practices that are not in close geographical proximity.

The project was inspired by the [integrating cities toolkit](#) developed by Eurocities, and it aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between 4 mentor (Brussels, Mechelen, Fuenlabrada, Schaerbeek) and 4 mentee (Saint Jean de la Ruelle, Capaci, Livadia, Jelgava) small to medium-sized cities and their local government institutions, with a view to improving integration practices.

IncluCities seeks to enhance the integration of third country nationals by facilitating knowledge exchange between four small to medium-sized cities (Saint Jean de la Ruelle, Capaci, Livadia, Jelgava) and their local government institutions with four experienced cities (Brussels, Mechelen, Fuenlabrada, Schaerbeek). The project also aims to improve the participating cities' and local government institutions' policy-making abilities, also to support integration. Additionally, it aims to strengthen national institutions by enhancing coordination and knowledge-sharing among them.

Over the past ten years, thousands of migrants and asylum seekers have arrived in Europe to escape instability in their home countries and seek better opportunities. While migration policy is mainly handled at the national level, local and regional authorities play a crucial role in facilitating integration for migrants on the ground, providing housing and training, and promoting

dialogue with the host community. For small and medium-sized cities with limited resources and funding, creating inclusive cities for migrants and refugees is a challenge that requires coordinated local community effort.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and national associations of local and regional governments have long recognized the importance of addressing these integration needs at the local level. To address this issue, they have collaborated with eight cities and eight national institutions to establish IncluCities¹⁹, a three-year project led by CEMR.

Participating cities (and their local and regional government institutions) are paired into partnerships involving one mentor city and one mentee city. Mentor cities present good practice, while mentee cities adapt and implement this practice in their context. The final outcomes of the project are an online one-stop-shop for mentor cities and an action plan about good practice for the mentee cities.

The mentoring process began with a needs assessment, which informed the partnerships formed between the participating cities. The mentee cities' needs and the mentor cities' strengths were identified. For example, Saint Jean de la Ruelle in France suffered from a lack of awareness in the local community, a lack of gender-sensitivity in basic service provision and challenges related to social inclusion and migrants' active participation. Mentor city Brussels, on the other hand, has a reputation as a welcoming city and a wealth of experience in migrants' active participation and social inclusion.

After the cities had been paired up, the main topics of focus for each pair of cities were defined and good practices were collected. For example, the focus topic for the partnership between Capaci (Italy) and Mechelen (Belgium) was building a vision of a 'city for all', while for the partnership between Livadia (Greece) and Fuenlabrada (Spain) the main focus was on mobilising citizens to develop tools to support decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for migrants and refugees.

¹⁹ The project is funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF).

The initial mentoring and training sessions were then organised, and local support networks were established. During their first study visits, the partner cities created action plans. These action plans were then consolidated during the second study visits. These visits were followed by training academies and transfer workshops for all partners and cities. All action plans were reviewed during the third (final) study visits.

At the end of the project, each pair of cities produced an infographic explaining their mentoring process and outcomes. The city partnerships also produced 4 thematic toolkits (a [gender-sensitive integration](#) toolkit, a [building a city for all](#) toolkit, a [labour market integration](#) toolkit and a [language learning support](#) toolkit) based on their focus topics. In addition to these, the project participants contributed to the publication of a [methodological guide](#) for city-to-city mentoring.

Although the project aimed to transfer good practices from mentor cities to mentee cities, adaptations were necessary due to contextual differences. For example, Jelgava (Latvia) municipality planned to implement a successful project from mentor Schaerbeek (Belgium), 'La Maison des Femmes', which is a service provided to women that is run as a collaboration between the municipality and relevant institutions. This system of collaboration did not fit into the municipal structure in Jelgava and so the project required some adaptation to their structures prior to transfer. Similarly, one of the mentee cities (Capaci, Italy) wished to adopt the Buddies with Refugees initiative previously implemented in Mechelen, Belgium. This buddy project brings people together: in the refugee context, this means that each refugee (or asylum seeker) is paired with a volunteer who has lived in Belgium or Luxembourg for some time. The pair is then usually supported by a locally-anchored organisation and meets on a regular basis, during a jointly agreed time frame. Capaci faced challenges in adapting this practice since their migrant population largely consists of individuals who are not planning to settle in the local area, and who were thus less likely to be interested in such a buddy project. To overcome this challenge, they modified the scope of the buddy project, turning it into a mediator scheme between migrants and the municipality, which worked better for them.

Overall, the IncluCities project is a valuable initiative that seeks to address the integration needs of third country nationals by promoting knowledge

exchange and collaboration between small to medium-sized cities and their local government associations. By leveraging the experience and expertise of mentor cities Brussels, Mechelen, Fuenlabrada, and Schaerbeek, mentee cities Saint Jean de la Ruelle, Capaci, Livadia, and Jelgava can improve their integration practices and policies, ultimately fostering more inclusive and welcoming communities. The project also contributes to strengthening the national institutions of the participating countries by promoting greater coordination and knowledge-sharing among them. Through its three-year duration, IncluCities had the potential to create lasting positive impacts for both migrant communities and their host cities.

The Including Children Affected by Migration (ICAM) Programme

Sinem YILMAZ

The [Including Children Affected by Migration](#) (ICAM) programme is a comprehensive solution that addresses the educational and social needs of 10.5 million children affected by migration in Europe. The programme aims not only to increase educational opportunities for these children but also to support their social and emotional wellbeing. The programme's focus on building connections and collaborating with organisations and individuals to mitigate the consequences of migration and the pandemic in the short and long run makes it an innovative and inspirational initiative.

The ICAM programme targets all CAM – children affected by migration – whether they are refugees, asylum seekers, economic or social migrants, or children left behind by family members who have moved to another country. The programme operates in the UK, Spain, Italy, Romania and Belgium. ICAM also provides effective support to help schools address the learning gap caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, for all children who require it. Through the ICAM programme, these disadvantaged children receive the high-quality education they are entitled to, as per the European Child Guarantee and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The ICAM programme has recently created coaching workshops, guidance, and resource packs for primary and secondary schools throughout Europe to assist them in welcoming and integrating Ukrainian children and in addressing the social and emotional trauma those children may have experienced due to migration. Once children's immediate physical needs are met in their new environment, it is crucial to provide them with ongoing support to help restore their emotional and social wellbeing.

The core of the programme is centred around the notion of “convivencia”, a Spanish term that signifies “living together in harmony”. It is acknowledged that children cannot acquire knowledge effectively if they feel unhappy, insecure, or scared. The ICAM collaborators aspire to build connections with organisations and people who share their resolve to discover and execute measures that can minimise the consequences of the expanding humanitarian crisis created by migration, the Covid pandemic, and the war in Ukraine in the short and long run.

Children affected by migration are some of the most vulnerable children and can suffer from the effects of separation and sometimes trauma, which reduces their wellbeing and access to education. Racism, xenophobia, gender-based violence, and intolerance can also increase these children's trauma and result in their exclusion from education and learning. There is also strong evidence that a greater proportion of children in need, compared to other children, have been seriously affected by the disruption to education caused by the Covid pandemic. The education attainment divide across Europe is widening as a result.

The ICAM programme enhances the inclusion of children affected by migration by promoting a harmonious climate at school and home. The programme works by building networks of schools that receive ongoing support from National ICAM Facilitators trained by the ICAM partners in each country. The National ICAM Facilitators train communities of 10–20 School ICAM Leaders to deliver the programme in their schools. Alongside this training program, ICAM offers additional assistance to enhance the children's social and emotional wellbeing both at school and within their families, as well as educating them on their rights and the legal protection available to them. The programme promotes safe, secure, and responsible behaviour, reducing instances of bullying and preventing the misuse of the internet and social media.

ICAM offers schools a range of resources and support, including professional development for two school leaders in areas such as inclusion and social and emotional learning (SEL). This training involves a four-day workshop and ongoing coaching from ICAM National Facilitators, with a focus on supporting children affected by migration. Schools also receive a handbook and access to a database of ideas for ICAM development and teaching

and learning materials. A small group SEL programme is provided to help children adjust, and there are 20 workshop sessions for Parent/Carer Education to continue SEL in the home. ICAM also provides an online school review instrument that is easy to administer, with a helpline available for any technical issues. The results are fully analysed, with comparative data from other schools nationally and locally. Schools have access to a European network for sharing good practice in areas related to ICAM.

Participating schools are expected to identify two ICAM school leaders and allow them to take part in the ICAM training. They must also conduct an annual ICAM school review and share the results online. Based on that review the schools must develop an action plan, integrate it into their school improvement plan, and implement it to improve the inclusion of CAM. Participating schools must also share their experiences with other schools in Europe and become a Level 2 UNICEF Rights Respecting School. They must be prepared to offer expertise to promote ICAM nationally, and they will receive full funding for any release of staff to train as ICAM national facilitators.

The ICAM model is highly adaptable, from a small group of schools to a country-wide deployment. The ICAM program is flexible and can be customised to meet the specific needs of individual schools or groups of schools. The programme includes extensive coaching and training, along with handbooks, lesson plans, and parent workshops. Additionally, a wide range of resources is available in multiple languages to facilitate the implementation of the programme.

Magdas Hotel

Sinem YILMAZ

Magdas Hotel is the first social business hotel in Austria that aims to serve as a stepping stone to give people who have had to flee their countries access to the job market. Magdas Hotel is a unique and inspiring social business project, which provides a valuable model for how businesses can contribute to social and environmental sustainability while also generating financial returns. The project is particularly inspirational for being inclusive, relevant to the needs of its beneficiaries and able to sustain its positive effects. The Magdas Hotel project could also serve as a valuable model for supporting Ukrainian refugees by providing them with training and employment opportunities, while also offering sustainable and affordable accommodation.

Magdas Hotel aims to contribute to the long-term integration of recognized refugees by training them at a social business hotel. The hotel employs refugees from all over the world. Their talent, skills, languages, and cultural competences as well as their background add value to the hotel's business, since the hotel's guests are also travellers from across the world. The hotel is guided by industry professionals and provides jobs and training to refugees.

Finding a job as a refugee in Austria is very challenging and long waiting periods for asylum applications can intensify this challenge. In response to this, Magdas Hotel was initiated in Vienna. Magdas Hotel is a social business, for which the active integration of people who would only have reduced chances of successful participation in the regular labour market is essential. Magdas Hotel employs social workers to provide apprentices and other staff with assistance on a range of topics from inter-staff conflict to access to German classes, housing, and administrative issues. As well as training and employing refugees, the hotel has also run an apprenticeship programme

since 2017, providing young refugees with education, training, and long-term integration prospects.

Magdas Hotel operates as a normal hotel, providing accommodation services to guests. Its difference is in its vision and mission. The hotel gives its guests the opportunity to contribute to the social business concept and to support refugee integration. Even the design of the hotel reflects the colourful diversity of the Magdas staff. The dignity and equality of every human being is a core leadership principle of Magdas Hotel. Magdas proactively promotes an open-minded attitude among its staff and guests.

Magdas Hotel operates with mixed teams of professionals and refugee trainees. It fosters cultural exchange, both among the tourists it hosts and its staff. Magdas provides interculturally adapted apprenticeships and workplaces. All participants in Magdas programmes are paid in line with labour law regulations. Social workers act as a central mechanism for collecting feedback and voicing concerns or raising topics to be discussed. Systematic feedback on expectations and on problems encountered is collected at on- and offboarding. This information is complemented by an annual external consultation with all staff and is analysed in collaboration with the Vienna University of Economics.

Magdas Hotel is based around the identified and confirmed need for inclusive traineeship places and non-discriminatory workplaces for refugees on one hand, and the need for qualified staff in the tourism sector on the other. Social workers are also engaged in the project in order to ensure a holistic approach and to prevent problems in other areas of integration from negatively impacting integration into the labour market.

For a social business in a competitive market, comprehensive design and meticulous planning are key. Tourism expertise was provided through a specialised agency and in cooperation with the Austrian Association of Hotel Owners. Continuous collaboration with the Vienna University of Economics enables regular, high quality impact analysis.

The project is based on indicators that are measurable, achievable and relevant: financial figures; numbers of successful traineeships; qualitative feedback at offboarding; the results of the regular staff survey and systematic

impact analysis in collaboration with the Vienna University of Economics. Magdas has developed a staff management plan to balance different skills and experiences. Social workers also help by identifying additional needs.

Regarding sustainability, the project is based on a social business model that generates its own resources. Crowdfunding in the early stages helped to generate wider interest and support for the project. The Austrian Association of Hotel Owners provided expertise with regard to the concept.

Besides consulting with other professionals in the hotel industry, expertise on integration issues was provided internally through Caritas. The neighbouring Vienna Academy of Fine Arts also provided assistance with regard to the façade of the hotel and art in the hotel rooms. Besides an artist responsible for upcycling of the furniture, volunteers were involved in obtaining and restoring the hotel's furniture.

The ongoing transfer of the hotel to a new site and a restaurant with a similar concept in Carinthia and the development of catering and cleaning services branches demonstrate the transferable features of this initiative. Active labour market integration in a social business has been a success – especially in the tourism sector – and is transferable to other sectors of the labour market and other regions/countries. The project is the first social business model involving refugees in the tourism industry, and the concept — including the specialised support provided by social workers — can be transferred to other settings.

The Magdas Hotel project has received broad media coverage, both nationally and internationally, and serves as a flagship model for integration through a social business model. It has proven successful and achieved its objectives and therefore can be recommended as a model. The practice is suitable for replication by both public and private organisations. The long-term objective of this initiative is to generate its own funding and be financially independent.

NEW ABC Networking in the educational world: Crossing boundaries for community-building

Sinem YILMAZ

[NEW ABC](#)²⁰ is a project which has been implementing nine real-life pilots to promote the inclusion of immigrant children and youth in education. The practice is particularly inspirational because it creates interactions between stakeholders, empowers children with migrant and refugee backgrounds and makes their voices heard. Running pilots in two different settings helps to evaluate the adaptability of the NEW ABC activities to different contexts.

The NEW ABC project helps different groups of people work together better. It gives everyone, especially children, a chance to share their ideas. The project is designed to help groups who might be struggling gain more power and control, so that they can work together with others to make real change.

The project helps migrant students with more than just schoolwork. It also provides emotional support and help with fitting in. This means looking at everything that helps students learn, not just at their books. The project aims to create various kinds of learning places that can help families, communities, and everyone involved in education.

The project pilots are co-designed by the project partners and stakeholders, and serve as examples of good practice to be tested in the nine countries

participating in the project. Additionally, a virtual platform is established to facilitate sharing, discussion, and feedback on the co-design, as well as the evaluation of the pre- and post-implementation processes of the pilots.

Large-scale immigration to Europe has made it more challenging for migrants to integrate, as reported by the European Commission in 2016. According to UNICEF's 2016 data, there are approximately 5.4 million child migrants in Europe; this is around one-sixth of the world's migrants below the age of 18.

Although Europe has been considered a “continent of integration” in the past 50 years, recent socio-political turmoil at the national level has revealed significant challenges and conflicts related to the inclusion of immigrants. Children with refugee or immigrant backgrounds are particularly vulnerable to such conflicts because of their lower status, which makes them more susceptible to discrimination and integration barriers.

Research on national policies and measures for including students with migrant backgrounds reveals a wide range of policies implemented by EU member states, as documented by the EU in 2016 and Eurydice in 2019. Children with immigrant backgrounds continue to face barriers and inequalities in education, as well as other areas of their lives beyond school, as evidenced by research conducted by the EU in 2016 and OECD/EU in 2015. This represents a significant hurdle for their families' inclusion process and that of ethnic/linguistic groups, as well as an obstacle to their own future opportunities.

Education systems currently face numerous challenges due to increasing cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, as well as socio-economic inequalities. The NEW ABC aims to make a contribution through education, which is a very important factor in the successful overall inclusion of migrants.

To understand how people work together in education, the project looked at different examples from its partner countries. This process involved collecting data on the contexts of the call before the development actions of the project could start.

Prior to running the pilots, the consortium and pilot teams arranged regular meetings to facilitate ongoing discussions, ensuring that all participating were fully included and their ideas taken into account at all stages of the project.

²⁰ Funded by European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, the project has been piloted in Italy, Spain, France, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Cyprus, Greece and Finland.

The project tests out different initiatives in nine places to ensure as many people as possible are involved and able to contribute their ideas, especially people who don't usually get to speak up.

Pilot 1: [Empowering young translators](#)

The objective of this pilot is to collaborate with young translators who assist their peers, family, and local community with translation and interpreting, to create and design resources that enhance the cultural, social, emotional, and overall well-being aspects of being a young translator. This pilot project has been implemented in a secondary school with a culturally diverse student population ranging from 11 to 18 years of age.

Pilot 2: [the adventures of the Little Prince in the world](#)

The objective of this pilot project is to enhance the resilience of migrant children by changing the narrative of their experiences and facilitating their smooth integration into school life. The pilot caters to two age groups: primary school pupils and secondary school students. The pilot project involves creating a training toolkit that addresses the emotional requirements of migrant children and helps them integrate better.

Pilot 3: [Teacher training and family involvement in pluralistic approaches to language education](#)

The objective of this pilot project is to establish conditions and activities that recognize multilingual abilities as an asset and an opportunity in the school curriculum. The teams from the University of Turin and the University of Bologna are working in collaboration with schools and families to create and execute a range of activities.

Pilot 4: [Mentorship for better integration](#)

The aim of this pilot action is to directly respond to refugee and migrant youngsters' needs regarding the lack of integration in the school environment, and simultaneously to raise awareness among school actors about their role and responsibility in contributing to migrant pupils' integration at school.

Pilot 5: [Empowerment of unaccompanied migrant minors through multi-modal co-creation in situations of errant mobility](#)

The aim of this pilot action is to promote the empowerment of unaccompanied minors through various types of workshops, focused on music, video, photogra-

phy, and harm reduction. These activities are intended to foster the participants' expression and empowerment and will also help identify and reflect on the needs of this target group in the areas of informal and non-formal education.

Pilot 6: [My ideal school; the school I would like](#)

The aim of this pilot action is to help children/families/communities find their voice and bring their real needs in education to other stakeholders as well as policymakers at the local, regional and national levels.

Pilot 7: [Together we learn our worlds](#)

The aim of this pilot action is to set new professional standards for multicultural assistants as multi-disciplinary intercultural mediators working in the child environment. The initiators of this pilot believe that such individuals are well placed to become a major institutional form of integration support to children. Their role is to mediate between the school, its teachers, the children, their families and their peers in order to build dialogue and mutual understanding as well as competencies and cultural sensitivity.

Pilot 8: [Self-expression through poetry](#)

The aim of this pilot action is to provide concrete tools for children to use to help them express themselves and share their stories with their peers. This pilot will provide a hands-on environment with a cohort of volunteer children, who will engage in workshops.

Pilot 9: [International migrations & \(im\)mobilities: offline/online practices, identities, agency and voice of youth within temporary reception centres](#)

The aim of this pilot action is to collectively create good practices to overcome the conditions and experiences related to forced migration by developing young adults' personal autonomy and opportunities to find work, education, legal help and health care or language training.

The NEW ABC project empowers stakeholders and the wider community. This approach enables the project's initiators to express their ideas and opinions, take responsibility for future actions, and showcase integration challenges and the solutions to them that they have jointly created to policymakers and decision-makers. Following the initial pilot actions, the project partners carried out further test initiatives in different countries. Their aim was to find out which initiatives worked well and which could be used in other places.

Neighbourhood mothers (The Bydelismødre)

Sinem YILMAZ

[Neighbourhood Mothers](#) is a grassroots initiative that seeks to provide immigrant families with young children in Norway with access to resources and services that can help them. It is an innovative and inspiring initiative that recognizes the needs of isolated women from ethnic minority backgrounds who may not be reached by the established system. Neighbourhood Mothers serves as a bridge between these women and the appropriate resources, conveying vital information and acting as listeners to their concerns. The initiative is unique in its collaborative approach. Neighbourhood Mothers works in tandem with other local actors to provide comprehensive support to the community. Overall, the initiative is an inspiring example of how community-led initiatives can have a significant positive impact on the lives of marginalised women and their families.

The Neighbourhood Mothers are originally a German concept that started in Berlin under the name *Stadtteilmütter* in 2004. The concept was brought to Denmark in 2008, where it was developed in a new direction, based on voluntary work. Neighbourhood Mothers in Denmark has become a great success with over 900 active Neighbourhood Mothers distributed across 42 Neighbourhood Mothers associations across the country. In 2016, the concept was brought to Norway and was adapted to Norwegian needs.

Neighbourhood Mothers Norway coordinates volunteers, who are usually women from ethnic minority backgrounds, who voluntarily aid isolated women that the established system may struggle to reach in the local community. They serve as listeners, convey vital information, and act as a bridge between the women and appropriate resources or sources of

further assistance. Through their collaboration, Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers become an integral part of the local community's efforts to provide support. The assistance provided by these “mothers” strengthens the women, enabling them to better help themselves, their children, and their families.

Neighbourhood Mothers work in tandem with other local actors, which vary depending on the needs of the specific community. Integrating Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers into various local efforts helps to prevent redundancy or competition among different actors pursuing the same goals. Instead, these forces are unified to provide comprehensive support for women and families in the area. Additionally, collaboration with other actors ensures that Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers are anchored and engaged within the local community.

Neighbourhood Mothers' primary target group consists of isolated women from ethnic minority backgrounds who face challenges with the Norwegian language and the municipal system, along with social, economic, and health problems. This group is difficult for the public sector to reach, but Neighbourhood Mothers can reach them due to their linguistic diversity, local presence, flexible availability, and relatable nature. Through an equal and respectful dialogue, they pass on important information about society and point the way to other helpful resources.

Becoming a “Neighbourhood Mother” also benefits the volunteers themselves, as they gain self-confidence, motivation for further education and work, language skills, knowledge of Norwegian society, and a greater sense of belonging. They become more involved in their children's participation in leisure activities and education. Additionally, Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers develop professional skills during their training, which provides them with a sense of value and recognition.

The initial phase of the Neighbourhood Mothers initiative involves establishing a strong professional network of collaborators who see the benefits of having a group of Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers in the local area. The Neighbourhood Mothers national secretariat works to recruit women volunteers who are welcoming, open, resourceful, and proficient in Norwegian, with the energy and desire to help others.

To become “Neighborhood Mothers”, all volunteers must complete the [basic training](#) course, which is a comprehensive course provided by the Neighbourhood Mothers national secretariat consisting of 15 modules. The course provides professional knowledge, local networking opportunities, and practical experience.

Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers primarily use three methods: conversation, bridge-building, and networking. They engage in meaningful conversations with women, provide relevant information, and build bridges between them and the local community. They also support women in participating in various events to broaden their network and exchange experiences and knowledge.

After completing their training, new “Neighborhood Mothers” start practising their core task of supporting other women, outreach, and possibly creating meaningful activities and collaborations. They also spread awareness about the Neighbourhood Mothers initiative in their local area and take ownership of the group’s organisational aspects, such as planning and holding monthly meetings and keeping track of goals and activities.

At a later stage, the Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers are also encouraged to take on leadership roles and establish local associations to provide an organisational framework for their efforts and apply for funds for activities. This ensures the sustainability of the initiative and its continued success in supporting isolated women from ethnic minority backgrounds.

An interdisciplinary team of pro bono consultants has prepared a report to estimate the socio-economic value of Neighbourhood Mothers’ work, based on data collected via a survey of Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers. The [report](#) values Neighbourhood Mothers’ voluntary work and its effects in society and finds that Neighbourhood Mothers volunteers collectively contribute in excess of 49,000 volunteering hours a year, 16 % providing interpreting and translation services, and 84 % social counselling.

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Mothers initiative is to share knowledge, and what sets these volunteers apart from other voluntary initiatives is that the information they provide is not just based on personal experi-

ence but also on factual knowledge acquired through their basic training and presentations.

The Neighbourhood Mothers national secretariat offers a franchise-like package to interested parties who are interested in implementing the initiative in their own city or district. This package includes access to the training materials and support to establish a local network of “Neighborhood Mothers”. This approach allows the initiative to be replicated and adapted to different local contexts while maintaining a consistent standard of quality and professionalism.

Biographies

Karin AMIT (PhD) is an associate professor at Ruppin Academic Center, and as of 2020 serves as the dean of the Faculty of Management and Business at the center. She is also a senior researcher at the Institute for Immigration and Social Integration. For more than a decade, she was the chair of the Immigration and Demography Section of the Israeli Sociological Association. She is a member of the steering committee of the International Metropolis Project and is part of the international research group in the MINTE project focusing on facilitating digital communication tools for refugees. Her research interests include the economic and social integration of migrants, migrant's identity and sense of belonging, migrant's subjective well-being, social networks & leadership, and migration decision-making processes.

Agnieszka BIELEWSKA (PhD) is a sociologist. She holds her PhD from Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom. Since October 2023, she has been working as an assistant professor at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Wrocław. Her research focuses on international migration and migration policies. She has published with Peter Lang and in journals such as *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, *Ethnicities*, *International Migration*, and *Global Network*. She is a recipient of the Marie Curie Fellowship and a member of the steering committee of the MINTE project.

Marie JELÍNKOVÁ (PhD) is a senior researcher at the Department of Public and Social Policy, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. In recent years, her research has focused on local integration of migrants and multi-level governance. She has also addressed issues such as migrants' access to health care, the situation of undocumented migrants, and the situation of Ukrainian war refugees. In addition to her academic work, she is also an expert in applied practice. She has recently published a certified *Methodology for Field Social Work with Migrants* and has significantly contributed to the *Manual on Local Integration of Migrants in the Czech Republic*. She currently manages the MINTE project.

Mariola MAMCARCZYK (PhD) is an assistant professor at the Krakow University of Economics, Department of Applied Economics. She graduated from the Faculty of Economics and International Relations at the Krakow

University of Economics, specialising in real estate management. She obtained her doctorate in Economics in 2017. Her research interests include sports activities of different social groups, sports infrastructure development, and local development. In addition, her work focuses on promoting various forms of physical activity and health prevention.

Kamil MARSZYCKI is an assistant at the Department of Microeconomics at the Krakow University of Economics. He holds a master's degree in Finance and Accounting, a bachelor's degree in Philosophy, and is a PhD student in Economics and Finance. He has completed postgraduate studies in mediation and other methods of alternative dispute resolution, as well as in tax consulting. His research interests focus on social security, poverty, inequality, and alternative dispute resolution. He has authored publications in the fields of the philosophy of economics, basic income, and mediation. From 2019 to 2021, he was a member of the Polish Mediators Association. Since 2023, he has been the Secretary of the Political Ethics and Civil Liberties Committee of the Polish Ethical Society.

Ewa ŚLEZAK-BELOWSKA (PhD) is an associate professor at the Department of Economics at the Krakow University of Economics. Since October 2020, she has been serving as the head of the department. Her research interests focus on the labour market, migration, welfare state, ageing society and global political economy. She has participated in multiple international research projects, including those co-financed by the European Commission, addressing issues such as youth unemployment, information society, informal work, social economy and support for the elderly workers. Her research and expertise cover employment, education, social inclusion, and migration. She is an alumna of Erste Stiftung in Vienna, the European University Institute in Florence, as well as the Central European University in Budapest, the University of Limerick and the European Consortium of Sociological Research.

Sinem YILMAZ (PhD) is the integration policy analyst at Migration Policy Group, where she conducts research on integration policies for various projects. Her expertise covers labour market integration, socio-cultural integration, and gender. She holds a PhD in Sociology from Ghent University and a Master in Science degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Previously, she worked as a senior project and policy officer at the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW).