



Cooperation between Local Governments and Social Economy Actors in Crisis Management

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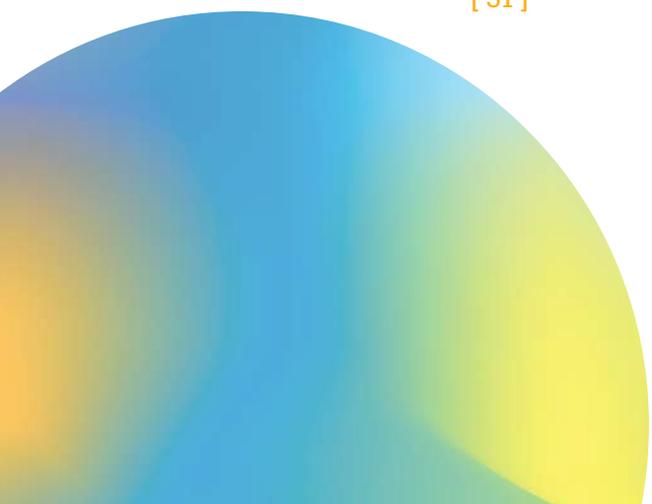
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Foreword

Europe has been hit by several crisis in recent years. The refugee crisis, the environmental crisis, the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis of confidence, the energy crisis, the inflation crisis, the crisis caused by the Russian aggression in Ukraine... These situations are interlinked and interdependent, and their intensity and frequency are so pronounced that the term polycrisis has come to be used in public discourse to describe the current situation. This term expresses a condition in which the different types of crises cannot be separated from each other and the crises are intertwined. Many see this situation as a contemporary phenomenon.

The loss of trust in public institutions, also referred to as a crisis of confidence, can also be described as a contemporary phenomenon. A loss of trust in public institutions poses a threat to values such as democracy, solidarity or trust in knowledge. Several studies have pointed out that people are losing trust in traditional institutions and are looking for an alternative, and this phenomenon is particularly pronounced in Slovakia. On the other hand, the results of surveys conducted in Slovakia have long indicated that local government is a stable axis of trust in institutions. According to the "How are you, Slovakia?"¹ survey, local governments are among the most trusted authorities in Slovakia and are trusted by 36% of respondents. They are surpassed only by employers in the trustworthiness ranking, who have the trust of 40% of respondents.

We are not aware of similar surveys being carried out in other countries, so it is difficult to provide international comparisons for the sake of argument. However, research on trust in institutions

1 SAV, 2022

argues that trust in institutions is largely shaped by perceptions of the fairness and (outcome-based) performance of those institutions.² Increasing trust thus depends on the quality of performance and fair and transparent behaviour.

Recent times have provided local governments in Slovakia, as in other countries, with a number of often unexpected (and possibly unwanted) opportunities to demonstrate their performance and fairness. These were mainly situations related to the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic or the influx of refugees from Ukraine, who found themselves in Slovakia as a result of Russian aggression in Ukraine.

In the context of the situation in Slovakia, it can be argued that the common denominator of these situations was that the local government was often forced to act in the face of the inaction of other institutions and to respond to the urgent needs of its residents or people who found themselves on its territory. Different municipalities have taken up the challenge with varying degrees of intensity. It should also be noted that the capacity of a municipality is also determined by its size to a significant extent, with large cities understandably having more capacity and capability than small municipalities, whose financial and human capacity is disproportionately smaller, but whose range of responsibilities remains the same.

2 Murtin et al, 2018

3 Viac info o projekte vid' www.ceea-cooperation.com

4 [tzv.quadruple / quintuple helix model](#)

The following texts provide examples of the response of local governments, illustrating the situation through examples from Košice, Ukraine and the example of the city of Kharkiv, and Norway, with the example of the town of Alta.

The countries and cities were not selected randomly. In all three cases, they are target localities or partner cities associated with the project "Cities in the Enlarged European Area: Joint Development of Capacities of Public Institutions by Slovak-Ukrainian Cross-border Cooperation and Improving Integrity in Public Affairs"³ funded by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism, under which this publication was produced.

Local government plays a central role in all the following texts. Although it has a different status and different competences and capacities in each country, it is highly respected in all three countries and is recognised and trusted by the population. However, local government, not unlike the best actor, is rarely able to deliver a full performance on its own. The following texts therefore also discuss cooperation with other actors, with an emphasis on social economy actors, and the benefits that this cooperation brings.

In social science theory, there is often a discussion of the effects of the so-called quadruple or quintuple helix,⁴ i.e. the effects brought about by the interlinking of key areas of society, which are politics, science, industry and civic engagement, or environmental determinants, and the cooperation of organisations representing these areas. The multiple helix effect is seen as the basis of innovation, including social innovation.

Social innovation comes at a time when old solutions to problems are failing and becoming obsolete. The presence of

a period of polycrisis is evidence of the failure of old solutions to problems and the need for new approaches. Theory offers a wide range of definitions of social innovation, but the common denominators of all of them are the basic characteristics of social innovation,⁵ which are:

- multisectoral approach (actors from several sectors are involved in the solution)
- multidisciplinary (the problem is approached in the context of multiple disciplines and the solution is viewed in a broader context)
- multidimensionality (problem solving is implemented at multiple stages)
- open co-creation process (relevant stakeholder groups bring and share their knowledge, information, experience and resources to achieve change that is relevant to these groups)
- the ability to scale up (i.e. to bring about systemic change that impacts a wider group of people than just the immediate environment of the implementer)
- the ability to redefine relationships (new rules are set, changing established ways, hierarchy and departmentalism)

The following text presents five case studies on the challenges faced by local governments. Case studies from Košice relate primarily to social issues and topics such as housing affordability for the most vulnerable groups, response to the pandemic situation and response to the dramatic influx of refugees from Ukraine caused by the military conflict. There is one case

study from the city of Kharkiv, which, like Košice, is involved in the implementation of the aforementioned project. Since the beginning of the project, however, the situation in Kharkiv has changed dramatically and security issues in the broadest sense of the word and issues related to the physical rescue of the city and its inhabitants have come to the fore. The case study from the city of Kharkiv therefore concerns energy security and the promotion of the green economy. The fifth case study is from a small town of Alta in the northernmost part of the country, and discusses how the town has responded to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine who have chosen to seek safety in Norway.

As already indicated, local government is the main actor in all the texts. However, the key role is always played by social economy actors, which are usually the result of civic engagement. These are organisations whose legal form usually belongs to the non-profit sector and are often referred to as non-governmental non-profit organisations (NGOs)

The roles of these organisations and the extent of their involvement vary in each of the cases described in the following texts, but they always play a key role in identifying the problem, designing solutions and participating in the implementation thereof.

In each of the following case studies, organisations representing the social economy sector have initiated cooperation with other actors and have sought to ensure that proposals for solutions to the problem are identified in a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaboration. In each of the cases there has also been a change in the relationships and hierarchy of the organisations involved, making it possible to reach new target

5 Poláčková a Pongrácz, 2021

groups and address the problem on a larger scale. Each of these examples can therefore also be seen as an example of social innovation.

The cooperation between local governments and social economy actors is undoubtedly beneficial for both parties involved, where their resources and competences of the parties involved can be effectively combined. Social economy actors usually bring new approaches and expertise, while local governments offer a space for the implementation of these approaches. However, the prerequisite is the active participation of local government and the genuine application of the partnership principle, where no party is underestimated.

The ambition of the following texts is to offer inspiration for other local governments, whether from Slovakia or Ukraine, in dealing with different types of crisis. In some cases, these are situations that have been present for a long time, such as housing unaffordability for vulnerable groups and the problem of homelessness, the integration of foreigners or the issue of energy security. Others are situations that have arisen unexpectedly, without any preparation, and whose resolution exceeds the primary or transferred competences of local government, but the response of local government is in many ways crucial and directly affects the human dignity of the people concerned. For example, the response of local government during the pandemic to the situation of homeless people, or the situation of people fleeing the military conflict in Ukraine.

These case studies can also serve as inspiration for strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation in public-private partnerships between local governments and social economy actors, which

have repeatedly demonstrated their strength and benefits, not only in times of crisis.

The main message of this publication is to call for stable cooperation and mutual respect between local governments and social economy organisations. It seems that only cooperation built on the principles of fairness, performance and the pursuit of positive social change can meet the challenges that polycrisis brings to the everyday life of local governments.

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Housing First pilot project for homeless families in Košice

Alena Vachnová⁶

The state of homelessness in Košice

In Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia, nearly 5,000 residents,⁷ including 309 families with children,⁸ are experiencing homelessness or housing need according to a qualified estimate by the City of Košice. Homelessness and housing need in Košice does not concern one homogeneous group of inhabitants, quite the opposite. Individuals and families, children, young people and seniors, men and women, all experience homelessness. These are the inhabitants of Košice who live without shelter, without housing, in insecure or unsuitable housing, which are the living situations defined in the ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion.⁹ Homelessness in Košice has its own specific characteristics; it is largely chronic rather than episodic and it affects families with children, being experienced

- 6 JUDr. Alena Vachnová, PhD., MPA, Nadácia DEDO, predsedníčka správnej rady, vachnova@nadaciadedo.sk
- 7 Mesto Košice, „Konceptia postupného ukončovania bezdomovectva a riešenie nelegálnych osídlení na území mesta Košice 2022 – 2030“, 2022, https://static.kosice.sk/meeting/point/W9hy4w6gYqT6GuzT6i/waimaEde00cHzuQ4JFw/F6r9jfSACQh5utAGWF/bod_42_koncepcia_bezdomovectvo_2022_2030.zip.
- 8 Daniel Gerbery, Zuzana Turkovič, a Darina Ondrušová, „Záverečná správa z registračného týždňa rodín v bytovej núdzi v Košiciach“, 2021, https://ivpr.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Z%C3%A1vere%C4%8Dn%C3%A1-spr%C3%A1va_RT_final.pdf.
- 9 “ETHOS Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion”, cit 14. január 2023, <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>.

by the second generation of children in these families.¹⁰ This means that many children in Košice are born into homelessness. According to the findings of the Registration Week for Families with Children in Housing Need in Košice, organized by the DEDO Foundation in collaboration with the City of Košice and other partners in May 2021, a conservative estimate of the number of children in registered families at the end of May 2021 was at least 746.¹¹ Other key findings of the registration week are that 61% of registered families live in illegal settlements, 24% live in shelters, and nearly a quarter of families are single-parent families. It was found that a large proportion of the families are young families (up to 42% of families have parents under the age of 29, 72% under the age of 39) with young children (20% of the children are under the age of 3, another 14% under the age of 6).¹² Two groups of families experiencing homelessness are potentially highly vulnerable. These are mainly single-parent families, predominantly single mothers, and large families (with 5 or more members). Both groups are particularly vulnerable due to low parental income (up to 42% of both single-parent and large families are financially dependent on maternity/parental allowance) and their low attained education, with both groups potentially facing greater barriers to accessing housing.¹³

There are 13 localities in Košice with illegal settlements, with up to four of them having more than 40 families.¹⁴ The types of dwellings vary, and include garden huts, trailers, and various shelters, often of a very simple nature, without windows or lockable doors. Access to energy is critical in illegal settlements – apart from families staying in shelters or emergency housing facilities, up to 52% of homeless families have no access to drinking water, 48% to gas and 32% to electricity.¹⁵

The decrease in housing affordability in Slovakia today affects not only low-income households, but increasingly a broader spectrum of the population. Housing policies in Slovakia have long been focused on owner-occupied housing, which was the focus of most national government policies. Combined with the massive privatisation of housing in the 1990s, this has meant that cities and municipalities now have extremely small housing stocks with which to address homelessness or housing need among vulnerable groups. Moreover, municipalities have built very few additional housing units to supplement the capacity of rental or social rental housing with the available financial resources allocated from the state budget. Affordable housing has thus become scarce and, where it does exist, for example in the form of social rental housing, it is often inaccessible to the most vulnerable groups of the population, not least because of the strict rules set by local government.

In 2022, the city of Košice had 1208 social flats, 678 of which were intended for the housing of seniors (the so-called small area flats) and 500 flats for the housing of families (the so-called

10 Pozn. 9 % respondentov/respondentiek, rodičov detí, uviedlo skúsenosť so životom v detskom veku v prístrešku v osade a 3,2 % v zariadení núdzového bývania.

14 % respondentov/respondentiek uviedlo, že časť detstva strávili v detských domovoch. Viď str. 27 – Gerbery, Turkovič, a Ondrušová, „Záverčná správa z registračného týždňa rodín v bytovej núdzi v Košiciach“.

11 Gerbery, Turkovič, a Ondrušová.

12 Gerbery, Turkovič, a Ondrušová.

13 Alena Vachnová a Matej Hajdu, “Policy Memo: Comprehensive Services for Homeless People in Kosice (Slovakia)”, 2022.

14 Mesto Košice, „Konceptia postupného ukončovania bezdomovectva a riešenie nelegálnych osídlení na území mesta Košice 2022 – 2030“.

15 Gerbery, Turkovič, a Ondrušová, „Záverčná správa z registračného týždňa rodín v bytovej núdzi v Košiciach“.

compensatory and other social flats).¹⁶ In Košice, the majority of flats intended for family housing are located in ghettoised zones (mostly on the outskirts of the city, with reduced access to public transport or employment), characterised by a high level of segregation and flats with poor technical condition. Furthermore, the conditions for obtaining social rental housing are high threshold (the City of Košice has one of the strictest local legislations for obtaining social rental housing), therefore a large proportion of vulnerable households are completely excluded from it. In addition, the share of social rental housing has decreased by a total of 305 housing units over the last 15 years, due to the demolition forced by their critical technical condition.¹⁷ As stated by the City of Košice in the Concept of phasing out homelessness and addressing illegal settlements on the territory of the City of Košice 2022 – 2030, “the emergence of illegal settlements is mainly related to the demolition of block of flats on LIX (Luník IX). 305 housing units were demolished between 2008 and 2019. In addition to the inhabitants of the demolished blocks of flats, illegal settlements were also established by newly created, mostly young families from overcrowded flats, families who lost their housing due to invalid lease contract, etc.”¹⁸

16 Mesto Košice, „Konceptia postupného ukončovania bezdomovectva a riešenie nelegálnych osídlení na území mesta Košice 2022 – 2030“.

17 Mesto Košice.

18 Mesto Košice.

19 Vachnová a Hajdu, “Policy Memo: Comprehensive Services for Homeless People in Kosice (Slovakia)”.

20 „Nadácia DEDO – Rodina patrí domov“, cit 14. január 2023, <https://www.nadaciadedo.sk/>.

Social services, namely outreach, outpatient and residential services serve as the basic infrastructure of assistance to homeless people nowadays. In Košice, there are at least 25 organisations, institutions or associations of citizens operating mainly dormitories and shelters, counselling and community services of both outpatient and outreach nature (some providers are non-governmental organisations or civic associations that work as voluntary organisations and are not registered providers of social services).¹⁹ A new type of services are independent housing support services and projects to make housing more accessible, which are a response to the growing need and trend to focus on ending homelessness as opposed to the current majority approach to homelessness management. The social services system, funded by local and regional government, as well as the state budget, is characterized, as in other Slovak cities, by fragmentation, insufficient capacity, high service thresholds, and only a very limited ability to address the needs of homeless people with high levels of complex needs. Particularly in the case of residential social services, providers and recipients of social services in Košice struggle with the inadequate technical condition of the facilities. Due to the unavailability of housing, residential social services are replacing the role of housing, resulting in the long-term use of crisis intervention services and the “looping” of beneficiaries in the social services system, especially dormitories and shelters.

DEDO Foundation is an organisation that has been helping homeless families in Košice for a long time.²⁰ In its 25-year history, its mission has evolved from helping children growing up in residential child care communities to preventing the removal

of children to foster care to the current end to homelessness of families, the Foundation has brought about a number of social innovations that have subsequently become part of national legislation and have been scaled up throughout Slovakia, primarily in the area of social services for crisis intervention. As the founder of several organisations providing direct services to young adults and homeless families,²¹ inspired by experiences from abroad, the DEDO Foundation started building the Housing with Professional Support Program in 2018 based on the Housing First approach. At that time, the Foundation had housing units that it owned or leased from a partner organisation with the possibility to sublease them to homeless families, and thus started building a housing stock designated as affordable rental housing for families experiencing homelessness. In 2019, the Foundation established a non-profit organisation, Všetci pre rodinu, n.o (All for the Family),²² which subsequently registered a social service, Independent Supported Housing, aimed at helping settled families maintain their housing. It was the first organisation in Slovakia to register this type of service focused on the target group of homeless families. Housing support was provided by a multidisciplinary team integrating health and social care, also thanks to the financial support of Active

21 DORKA, n.o. a Domovské vzdelávacie centrum, n.o.

22 „Všetci Pre Rodinu, n.o.“, Všetci pre rodinu, n.o., cit 14. január 2023, <https://vsetciperrodinu.sk/>.

23 „Platforma pro sociální bydlení | ukončujeme bezdomovectví V ČR“, cit 14. január 2023, <https://socialnibydeni.org/>.

24 Nicholas Pleace, *Evropská příručka Bydlení především*, prvě (Praha: Úřad vlády ČR – Sekce pro lidská práva, 2017), <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/housing-first-guide-czech.pdf>.

Citizens Fund (EEA grants) and a contribution to the provision of social services from the Košice Self-Governing Region. The mentor in the design of the supported housing programme and the application of the Housing First approach from the beginning of the programme design was Platforma pro sociální bydlení (Platform for Social Housing)²³ from the Czech Republic, with several years of experience in ending homelessness in Czech cities.

Housing First approach uses housing as a starting point rather than a destination. In Housing First, the immediate focus can be on providing people with possibility of living in their own home and in the community. Housing First also focuses on improving the health, wellbeing and social support of the homeless people it works with. This very different from the homelessness services, which seek to prepare people with high support needs for housing before they can move into a home (an approach known as Housing Ready, or Transitional Housing). Some existing service models for homeless people require the client to demonstrate abstinence or a willingness for rehabilitation and undergo independent living training before housing is provided. In these types of homeless services, housing comes last.

The Housing First concept is designed for people who need intensive social support to be able to abandon homelessness. Target groups include homeless people with serious diagnoses or disabilities, homeless people with serious mental illnesses or diagnoses, homeless people with drug or alcohol addictions, homeless people experiencing homelessness long term or repeatedly, as well as young adults or families with children. The principles of Housing First, applied to the European context, have been developed and published by FEANTSA in the European “Housing First” Handbook.²⁴

Creation and basic parameters of the Housing First project in Košice

In the autumn of 2019, the City of Košice started to prepare the Concept of Prevention and Ending of Housing Need through a participatory process. During the initial meetings of the working group, the DEDO Foundation presented the Housing First approach and the idea of cooperation between the City of Košice and the Foundation to create a pilot project Housing First for families in Košice was considered. In May 2020, shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a document defining the details and timeline for cooperation on the pilot project was discussed and approved by the Košice City Board, which was subsequently discussed and approved by the Košice City Council on 30 July 2020. The material also included a Memorandum of Cooperation, which was subsequently signed for a period of 10 years. The Memorandum frames the cooperation of the partners in the pilot project Housing First for families in Košice, but also defines other areas of potential cooperation, mainly focused on the development of concepts and policies for ending homelessness. The pilot project has been defined as one of the activities of the forthcoming city concept to address homelessness.²⁵

The Housing First pilot project for families has three main components: housing, professional support and research.²⁶

In terms of housing, the City of Košice undertook to lease to the DEDO Foundation 10 city flats in various city districts (the list of flats has been defined) in a suitable condition for a period of 10 years. The DEDO Foundation, as the manager of the flats, undertook to provide housing, based on a lease contract, for 10 families

who have experienced homelessness for a minimum period of 2 years with the possibility of repeated extension. Conditions of participation in the project for families included paying the rent, being good neighbours and willingness to accept professional support (through the Independent Supported Housing service provided by Všetci pre rodinu, n.o. on a regular meeting basis), which was provided to them in order to maintain their housing (standard conditions of the Housing First approach). In addition, the DEDO Foundation undertook to provide, also through partner cooperation, assistance to families in furnishing and equipping their homes, and was to guarantee the payment of rent from their position of a tenant.²⁷

In the area of professional support, the DEDO Foundation undertook to ensure the selection of families and the allocation of flats, the preparation, settlement, professional accompaniment and long-term support of families selected for the project through an integrated multidisciplinary team (part of the organisation Všetci pre rodinu, n.o.), providing social, health, legal and other necessary counselling in order to ensure that families successfully maintain their housing. Professional support was to be provided with intensity, scope and in a manner tailored to each family (even with intensity higher than on a weekly basis). The integrated multidisciplinary team was to provide profes-

25 Mesto Košice, „Projekt Housing First pre rodiny v Košiciach“, 25. jún 2020, https://static.kosice.sk/meeting/point/011ywAdRnBw4ewgH1Vw/xdWUMw66t6KQTOzB/gCcsDyuTz1iNeAd/bod_19.zip.

26 Mesto Košice.

27 Mesto Košice.

28 Mesto Košice.

sional support by means of field social service Independent Supported Housing, which was at that time the first registered social service of this type in the Košice Self-Governing Region.²⁸

Research was an essential part of the pilot project, as Housing First is an evidence-based approach. The DEDO Foundation undertook to implement this project in cooperation with expert partners (Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, Platforma pro sociální bydlení) and the City of Košice, and it was to consist of several parts: the initial activity was to be a mapping of the housing need of families in the territory of the City of Košice through the so-called registration week with the involvement of entities and experts working in the field of care for families in housing need. The aim of the mapping was to determine the number, characteristics and needs of families in housing need in Košice, which was to be subsequently summarised in a written mapping report. This was to be followed by a two-round selection of families into housing and into a control group. The selection process included identifying the level of vulnerability of families, motivational interviews with families, selection of a shortlist of families, and random selection of families into housing (10 families) and a control group (tentatively about 30 families). A separate comprehensive part of the research was to be a survey to determine the effects and impact of the project and ongoing monitoring of the project using the control group, which would result in a report of findings at each stage (Stage 1 during the settlement, Stage 2 6 months after the settlement, Stage 3 12 months after the settlement). At the end of the project, a final project evaluation report was to be elaborated with data collected during the project implementation and evaluation. This was to be sub-

sequently made available to the City of Košice as expert material for evaluation and decision-making on further or wider application of the approach.²⁹

The project created a space for intensive and long-term cooperation between the DEDO Foundation as a representative of the non-governmental sector and the City of Košice as a self-governing entity. The City of Košice, as the main partner of the project, contributed into cooperation with 10 flats of different sizes (from a studio to a two-bedroom flat), renovated at its own expense, scattered in different parts of the city, and also the participation of its staff in coordination and research activities. The DEDO Foundation became the implementer and leader of the project, not only taking over the coordination tasks, but also providing the management of the flats for the project, including guarantee of the payments for rent and energy, a comprehensive professional support service (through Všetci pre rodinu, n.o.) and also the implementation of research activities, in cooperation with partners. The professional partners, especially in terms of consultation on the application of the Housing First approach, were the Platforma pro sociální bydlení³⁰, and the Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny³¹, which was to ensure the implementation of mainly qualitative research.

The City of Košice entrusted the renovation of the flats to the Housing Authority of the City of Košice (BPMK), which ensured its implementation over the next 6 months. BPMK was willing

²⁹ Mesto Košice.

³⁰ „Platforma pro sociální bydlení | ukončujeme bezdomovectví V ČR“.

³¹ „Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny – Štátna príspevková organizácia“, cit 28. január 2023, <https://ivpr.gov.sk/>.

to meet the requirements of the DEDO Foundation regarding the layout changes in the flats and also the materials and overall standard of the flats' furnishing. This made it possible to ensure that even in flats with a small area, a separate room was created for the children as a space for their education, play and privacy.

In the last week of November 2020, the DEDO Foundation carried out a mapping of the housing need of families in family shelters and emergency housing facilities in Košice. This was a shortened form of the originally planned registration week, which was supposed to focus on all forms of homelessness and housing need of families, but was prevented by the strict measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The mapping, which was focused only on families living without housing (ETHOS 2 category, i.e. in the aforementioned residential crisis intervention facilities), took place over five days and was open to all families habitually residing in Košice with at least one minor/dependent child accommodated in one of the five facilities during the week of 24-30 November 2020. The structured interviews were conducted by the staff of the DEDO Foundation, Všetci pre rodinu, n.o. and the Košice City Hall (Social Affairs Department).

The mapping revealed that 86 families with children lived in Košice shelters in the given period, of which 83 families agreed to participate in the mapping and subsequently in the project. It was also found that single-parent families with single mothers accounted for 72% of the families living in the shelters during

the given period.³² The mapping was not only a tool to determine the number and characteristics of families living in shelters during the given period of time, but also to determine the structure of families, their history of homelessness, income level and structure, health status, and other data in order to gradually settle these families in affordable rental housing and provide them with support to maintain it. The first ten families were to be given the opportunity to be housed like this based on a lottery draw and subsequent offer of participation in the Housing First project for families in Košice. "In order to ensure the transparency and objectivity of the entire selection process, the data on the families has been anonymised as much as possible, the questionnaires are safely stored. Each questionnaire was assigned a separate code, under which the questionnaires were further processed so that the family could not be identified, and under which the family was subsequently included in the draw. The coding of the questionnaires and the draw was also carried out in such a way that the number of family members corresponded to the size of the housing offered or reflected the need of the family in relation to the size of the housing."³³

The lottery draws of families for the project took place in the presence of the leadership of the City of Košice at the Košice City Hall, in the presence of the media and a notary who supervised the draw and elaborated a report on its course and results. In the lottery, 10 families were drawn and offered participation in the project. For the event of unexpected circumstances (e.g. the selected family refuses to participate in the project for various reasons), substitute families were drawn as well, one substitute family per one family drawn in the lottery.

32 Nadácia DEDO, „Správa z mapovania rodín v bytovej núdzi (Kategória ETHOS 2 – bez bývania – rodiny žijúce v útulkoch v Košiciach) 24. - 30.11.2020“, december 2020.

33 Nadácia DEDO.

34 Nadácia DEDO.

The families were notified personally of the outcome of lottery by the DEDO Foundation and Všetci pre rodinu, n.o. staff within 3 days of the draw. Since one family that was drawn declined the offer to participate in the project after the results were announced, participation in the project was offered to the first substitute family for the given size of the flat.³⁴

The whole process of project preparation, mapping of families in shelters and especially the selection of families was communicated with the public, especially through the media. In addition to the representatives of the city districts, the residents of the neighbourhoods where long unoccupied and often stigmatized flats associated with negative experiences became the subject of renovation carried out by BPMK were very interested in how the project would be carried out. In one case, the residents of a block of flats where one of the flats involved in the project was located had written a petition against its inclusion. At the time, no family was living in the flat, and the negative response from the neighbours was due to the negative experience with the previous tenants, which lingered for several years after the flat had been vacated. The DEDO Foundation communicated with the residents of the block in order to explain not only the intention of the project, but especially the mechanism. It was an opportunity for the project implementers to set up rules regarding communication about the project with the neighbours, including the process of resolving any questions or complaints, which they then applied in the long term.

Project duration 2021 – 2022

After the announcement of the results, initial personal interviews were conducted with the families in order to find out as much information as possible about the family, their capabilities and resources, preferences, and other information needed to set up the process of housing the family in a suitable flat and also to research the effects and impacts on the families involved in the project. At this stage of the project, there was space to answer and clarify any questions or uncertainties that may have arisen and define the expectations of mutual cooperation. After the initial consent of the family to participate in the project, the individual families were informed of the clear rules and conditions for joining the project. The terms and parameters of the tenancy relationship was emphasized, as well as setting the rules of cooperation between the family and the support team. Afterwards, selected families were matched with flats and then with social workers. Prior to the point of moving in, families had the opportunity to view the flat, discuss housing costs, and decide if they were interested in the flat. The families then signed a sublease agreement with the DEDO Foundation for a period of two years for a specific flat and also signed a contract with Všetci pre rodinu, n.o. for the provision of the social service Independent Supported Housing. The separation of housing and support as well as the control of clients over their involvement in the project are two of the eight principles of Housing First, and the project implementers have emphasized their observance from the beginning of the application of this approach. This was followed by the process of preparing for and conducting the move, and

a period of settling and provision of specialist support to maintain housing in line with the Housing First approach.

In the first year of the project implementation, the emphasis was placed on the creation of processes in the field of housing (housing management, assistance with furnishing and using of flats, neighbour relations) but also in the field of professional support in housing, where a multidisciplinary team, composed of social workers, psychologist, health worker and lawyer, focused mainly on the stabilization of families in their housing. In addition to practical issues related to the provision of schools and nurseries for children, or health care and routine household needs, the professional support focused on strengthening of neighbour relations. Building a relationship of trust between the support team and the members of the household, who perceived the regular weekly visits, especially initially, as more of an inspection, was key to addressing the needs of individual families. The specialist team continuously worked with families to maintain their housing by meeting the three aforementioned rules – paying rent and having good neighbourly relations (resulting from the sublease agreement) and receiving social services (resulting from the social service agreement). The Institute for Labour and Family Research interviewed the family in semi-annual cycles as part of qualitative research, the results

35 Darina Ondrušová a Zuzana Turkovič, „Housing-first pre rodiny v Košiciach. Priebežná správa z výskumu“ (Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, n.d.), <https://ivpr.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Ke-priebezna-sprava-final.pdf>.

36 „Výzva OP LZ DOP 2021/4.1.1/01 – MPSVR SR“, cit 28. január 2023, <https://www.employment.gov.sk/esf/programove-obdobie-2014-2020/dopytovov-orientovane-projekty/socialne-zaclenenie/housing-first/>.

of which, supplemented by interviews with first contact workers and project managers, were subsequently compiled after the first year in the form of an interim report.³⁵

In 2021, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic announced a call for proposals funded by the Operational Programme Human Resources called Affordable Housing with elements of Housing First,³⁶ aimed at piloting projects to make housing more accessible for vulnerable groups. It was the successful project securing funding for the Všetci pre rodinu, n.o. team and enabling the provision of a housing allowance to participating households for one year that allowed for the expansion of the Housing with Professional Support Programme implemented by the DEDO Foundation. Together with the funding of three positions as part of the allowance for the provision of the social service Independent Supported Housing from the Košice self-governing region, the non-repayable financial contribution made it possible to strengthen the multidisciplinary team by increasing the number of social workers and psychologists and to add the position of peer worker to the support team, and also build a housing team, which, in addition to housing management, focused on the search for commercial flats and management of their rental to homeless families.

At the beginning of 2023, more than two years after the launch of the Housing First approach, there were 25 flats in the affordable rental housing stock managed by the DEDO Foundation or Všetci pre rodinu, n.o.; the relationship to the flats varied (ownership, rented flats, managed flats), and the organisations' goal is to expand the housing stock to 45 flats by the end of 2023. This number is mainly defined by the capacity of the support

team built to be able to find, settle and support approximately this number of households. The acquisition of additional flats is planned by developing cooperation with the City of Košice and also by acquiring flats on the commercial housing market. These are activities typical of social rental agencies, which are a standard tool for making housing affordable in European countries, but also in the USA. The DEDO Foundation plans to develop this activity with the aim of gradually formalising it into a separate specialised entity.

Research activities form a large part of the Housing First project for families with children in Košice, which is part of the Foundation's Housing with Professional Support Programme. One of the key activities was the Registration Week for Families in Housing Need in Košice, held in May 2021 (originally planned at the beginning of the Housing First for Families in Košice project). With the participation of more than 20 partner organisations and almost a hundred volunteers, its aim was not only to map families in acute housing need in Košice, but more importantly to offer a solution in the form of social rental housing with professional support. Other objectives included raising awareness on the issue of homeless families among the general public and seeking consensus on the need to address it, but also to develop the methodology of the registration week so that it could be used in other cities or for other groups of homeless people. The results of the registration week showed that there were

37 Gerbery, Turkovič, a Ondrušová, „Závěrečná správa z registračného týždňa rodín v bytovej núdzi v Košiciach“.

38 Mesto Košice, „Konceptia postupného ukončovania bezdomovectva a riešenie nelegálnych osídlení na území mesta Košice 2022 – 2030“.

at least 309 homeless families or families in housing need with at least 746 children living in Košice at the end of May 2021.³⁷ The registration week provided insight into the situation of homeless families and highlighted the long-term, even multi-generational nature of homelessness. One of the key outcomes of the registration week is a list of registered families who need to be housed in affordable rental housing, which is what the DEDO Foundation, as well as other organisations dedicated to homeless families and individuals, including the City of Košice, are striving to achieve. The results of the registration week were used in the development of the Concept for phasing out homelessness and tackling illegal settlements in the territory of the City of Košice 2022 – 2030,³⁸ but also in the preparation of the National concept for preventing and ending homelessness, prepared by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic at the end of 2022.

Preliminary results and experience with the application of the Housing First approach in Košice

The implementation of the Housing First project has provided the DEDO Foundation and its main partner, the City of Košice, with practical experience in applying this approach in both local and national context. It must be noted that this project was not implemented in ideal conditions. Three basic prerequisites for the implementation of Housing First projects may be summarised from experience in the application of the approach in different countries: existing housing stock of affordable rental housing,

housing allowance and housing support. The City of Košice manages only a limited number of social rental housing (concentrated in a few segregated localities) and the commercial housing market is not accessible to vulnerable households. The housing allowance, linked to the material need allowance, is very low, so it does not even remotely cover the difference between the level of commercial rent and household income available for housing. Moreover, it is only available to households in material need, excluding those households who are subletting (ironically, it can be used for shelter or retirement home stays). Housing support services are only starting, also as a result of the aforementioned pilot European funding call, but their standards and adherence to Housing First principles are still in the early stages of the expected standardisation process. In this context, it is the pilot implementation of the Housing First project for families in Košice that has provided the project partners with insight into the need for necessary changes in the ecosystem in which the project is implemented. As a result, the DEDO Foundation was conducting advocacy activities aimed at creating favourable conditions for the application of the Housing First approach. In this area, partnerships not only within the non-governmental sector, but also between sectors (public administration and academic sector/research) have proven to be natural and effective, with the potential to gradually change conditions, also with the support of commercial partners who perceive the need to help vulnerable groups of people, but also the need for a systemic change leading from managing homelessness

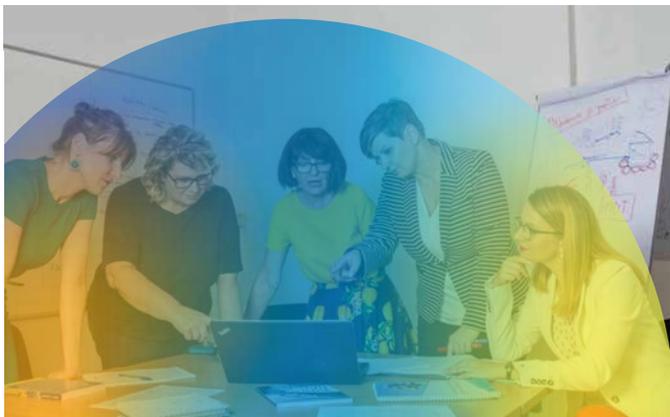
39 Platforma pro sociální bydlení, „Víme, jak řešit bytovou nouzi. Pojďte do toho s námi!“, Bytová nouze, cit 30. január 2023, <https://www.ukoncovani-bezdomovectvi.cz/>.

to its ending. From this perspective, the implementation of the elaborated national conception and the effective use of European funding of the new programming period will be crucial to bring about a significant change towards ending homelessness.

In the local context, the city of Košice will be able to use the results of the pilot project to develop a systemic approach to ending homelessness. The results of the qualitative research, conducted by the Institute for Labour and Family Research, as well as the results of the planned cost-benefit analysis, will provide data that will be the basis for the development of local strategies, but also for advocacy activities at the national level. However, the particular experience of the DEDO Foundation and Košice City Hall with the process of project preparation and implementation is as important as the data. However, a significantly higher level of cooperation between the city and actors in the field of social services and housing is needed for a more extensive application of the approach led by the City of Košice, leading to the creation of an integrated city system for preventing and ending homelessness, for example following the model of local governments in the Czech Republic.³⁹

In the national context, the Housing First project for families in Košice, together with the programmes of other organisations, such as the civic association Proti prúdu, the non-profit organisation De Paul Slovensko, the civic association Vagus or several charities, not only provides valuable experience in the application of the Housing First approach, but specifically in the context of support for the development of this approach from European funds, valuable data and practice for the design and implementation of ongoing EU-funded projects. These projects have

the potential to lay the foundations for building a broader movement focused at developing a Housing First approach to ending homelessness in Slovakia. Together with cities, particularly Bratislava and Košice, and self-governing regions, this potentially creates a broad platform that, in conjunction with the public administration and the private sector, has the potential for system change aimed at systematically ending homelessness. The element necessary for a more fundamental change that is currently missing is a unified political will at all levels of government and a clear political declaration, including concrete steps,



leading to ending homelessness (e.g. changing the housing allowance to make it more functional). However, the Housing First approach is beginning to gain attention from a wider range of NGOs and also the media. It was the application of a systematic approach to ending homelessness in Košice through Housing First that was recognised by the SDGs 2022 Award for Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, awarded by the Pontis Foundation to the DEDO Foundation. The Registration Week for Homeless Families in Košice also received attention and was awarded the Carpathian Award for Social Innovation. The implementation of the Housing First project in Košice also came to the attention of the European Commission at the end of 2022, when it was presented to the representatives of the European Commission during their visit to the east of Slovakia on the occasion of the official opening of the Slovakia 2021 – 2028 Programme. Commissioner Schmit, one of the initiators of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness,⁴⁰ praised the direction and ambition of the Košice project in the field of ending homelessness.⁴¹

40 European Commission, "European Platform on Combatting Homelessness", cit 31. január 2023, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1550&langId=en>.

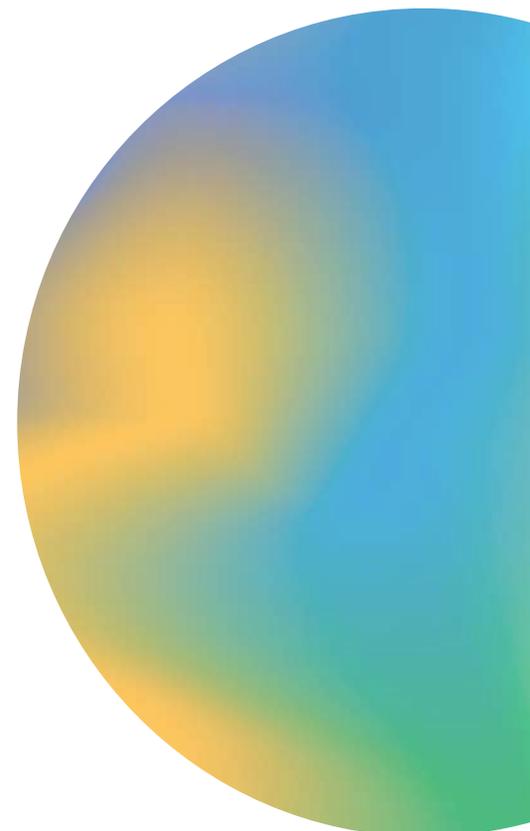
41 European Commission, "Košice visit highlights ESF dedication to tackling homelessness | European Social Fund Plus", cit 31. január 2023, <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/news/esf-dedication-tackling-homelessness?fbclid=IwAR1GsQ4bQ1iXbYg5jDMvIKhKlqGrYUUpHiW8HH8MN9Y8hEuabjfBaiG7mY>.

Conclusion

Based on the Housing First approach, the Housing with Professional Support programme is inspired by examples and practices from European and American cities as a constant source of knowledge. As Housing First is a tool for systematically ending homelessness, it would not be possible to apply it without the mentoring from partners such as the Platforma pro sociální bydlení,⁴² or the Social Innovation and Change Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School.⁴³ The programme has been developed on the basis of a broad partnership with the public, non-governmental and private sectors, in particular donors, who created the conditions for its implementation, whether in the areas of housing stock building, housing allowance provision, housing support, or research and advocacy activities. In order to scale up the programme, either locally or nationally, a fundamental change in the ecosystem that is conducive to the implementation of similar projects will be necessary. For local scaling up, a significantly higher level of cooperation, up to the level of integration, between the city and social services and housing actors will be necessary, leading to the creation of an integrated urban system for preventing and ending homelessness, which will create an infrastructure targeted at preventing and ending homelessness in Košice.

42 „Platforma pro sociální bydlení | ukončujeme bezdomovectví V ČR“.

43 Harvard Kennedy School, “Social Innovation & Change Initiative, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School”, Social Innovation + Change Initiative, cit 31. január 2023, <https://sici.hks.harvard.edu/>.



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Zuzana Katreniaková⁴⁴

The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and people in housing need

In the autumn of 2019, the City of Košice launched a participatory process to develop the Concept for Preventing and Ending Housing Need (hereinafter referred to as the “Concept”). One of the approaches adopted by the City in the process of developing the Concept was the Housing First approach presented by the DEDO Foundation. The inclusion of the pilot project Housing First for families in Košice (for more information see the previous text “Housing First pilot project for homeless families in Košice” prepared by A.Vachnová) opened the door to more intensive cooperation of the City of Košice with the DEDO Foundation and with several other actors active in various forms of assistance to people in housing need in the city of Košice and its vicinity. However, the outbreak of the 1st wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovakia in early April 2020 interrupted the process of preparation of the Concept and redirected the cooperation towards the provision of comprehensive short-term and long-term assistance to this target group in the context of acute emergency.

Given that neither a proven treatment nor an effective vaccine against COVID-19 existed at the time, ensuring the implementation of non-pharmacological interventions (adherence to physical/social distance, voluntary isolation, hand and envi-

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Provision of care for people
in housing need in the city of Košice
and its surroundings in the context
of the COVID-19 pandemic

ronmental hygiene) was critical to reducing the number of infected persons, particularly in at-risk groups and groups with limited access to care and services. A combination of several risk factors for the emergence and more rapid spread of COVID-19⁴⁵ has been identified for people in housing need (especially people without shelter, homeless people and people in substandard housing). These include:

- poorer health condition – chronic physical and mental conditions (3 times more likely to have chronic diseases than the general population, especially respiratory and heart problems, type 1 diabetes, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia); high rates of substance abuse; under 65 years of age – 5 to 10 times higher overall mortality rate than the general population;
- Risk behaviours – forced “migration” to secure life necessities; contamination of public spaces also due to unavailability of public sanitation services (vs. faecal-oral transmission of disease);
- Risky living conditions – “shared” housing and “close” social contact (vs. social distance); limited access to basic sanitation (vs. hand hygiene); limited access to health care and information (vs. testing, quarantine, treatment).

Early projections in the U.S., according to then-available findings, predicted that homeless persons infected with SARS CoV-2 would, compared to the general population, be twice as likely to be hospitalised, two to four times more likely to require intensive medical care, and two to three times more likely to die ⁴⁶.

Also in the territory of the city of Košice and its vicinity, the expected specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for people in housing need could include an explosive spread of the infection with an unfavourable prognosis and/or a mass outbreak of COVID-19 cases in the field with severe clinical courses arising in a short period of time, which could lead to a rapid exhaustion of the capacity of the emergency inpatient care in the catchment hospitals at the local level.

The number of people in housing need in Košice according to the FEANTSA typology was estimated at around ten thousand. The long-standing high representation of the Roma population remains a specific feature of the city of Košice. There are about 20,000 Roma living in the city, more than half of whom are scattered in flats in the city’s housing estates, and their way of life does not differ from that of the rest of the population. However, some localities where predominantly marginalised Roma families live are problematic. These are mainly the Luník IX housing estate and numerous illegal Roma settlements in the city. According to the 2011 Census of Population, Flats and Houses, there were almost 4,000 homeless people in the Košice Region and 17 crisis intervention service facilities with a total of 432 places were registered.

Based on the above, the actors involved in the process of preparation of the concept initiated the creation of the Advisory Group of the Crisis Management of the City of Košice to tackle the issue of people in housing need in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (hereinafter referred to as the “Advisory Group”).

45 Think Global Health, 2020

46 Culhane et al, 2020

Representatives of the following organisations participated in the creation of the Advisory Group:



The DEDO Foundation⁴⁷ is a non-profit organisation that has been systematically focused on innovations in implementing the rights of people and families in housing and complex need for 25 years. Based on the Housing First principle, it provides families experiencing homelessness with a home with professional accompaniment. It currently has 23 families housed in Košice and plans to house another 20 families by the end of 2023. All families are professionally accompanied by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a lawyer, a social worker, a psychologist and a peer worker. Through Dorka Bags, n.o., it also creates the right conditions for people in housing need to enter the labour market in order to maintain their “new” housing.



ETP Slovensko – Centrum pre udržateľný rozvoj⁴⁸ is a civic association that has been dedicated to promoting regional development, protecting the environment and assisting



in the development of the social, economic, educational and cultural potential of individuals, organisations and communities, with an emphasis on disadvantaged regions, socially disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities for almost 25 years.

Arcidiecézna charita Košice⁴⁹ is a purpose-built facility of the Church that has been helping individuals and families in need for almost 30 years through 60 types of social, health and support services. It helps the lonely elderly, the sick without professional care, people without a home of their own, children and young people with disabilities, the dying and those who suddenly find themselves in the midst of adversity in their lives. Through 34 centres in 16 towns and villages and field services in the Košice and Prešov regions, it mitigates the impact of illness, accompanies, activates and motivates these people so that they do not feel alone in the difficulties of life.



OÁZA – nádej pre nový život, n.o.⁵⁰ is a non-profit organisation that provides shelter to homeless people in extreme need and. It operates a shelter and night dormitory for adults, a shelter for individuals with children or families with children and a low-threshold night dormitory in the village of Bernátovce near Košice.

47 Viac info: <https://www.nadaciadedo.sk/>

48 Viac info: <https://etp.sk/>

49 Viac info: <https://www.charita-ke.sk/>

50 Viac info: <https://new.oaza-nadej.org/>



The Institute of Social and Behavioural Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine of UPJŠ in Košice (ÚSBM LF UPJŠ)⁵¹ focuses its scientific and research activities on social and behavioural determinants of health and quality of life of medically and socially disadvantaged groups of the population, mainly chronically ill, ethnic minorities and the elderly. She is particularly interested in exploring the biobehavioural and psychosocial factors that promote self-management, coping strategies, adherence, and adjustment to illness in patients with chronic illness. Transfer of research findings into recommendations for policy makers, especially in the context of integrated health care and support for public health systems is an important component.

The City of Košice responded positively to the offer of cooperation from the participating organisations and the Head of the Strategic Development Department (1st Deputy Director of the City Hall) and the Head of the Social Affairs Department became members of the Advisory Group on behalf of the city. Two members of the City Council also expressed an interest in joining this cooperation. The Advisory Group was presented to the Mayor of Košice on 21 April 2020.

Pilot Mapping of Needs and Emergency Action Plan

Based on a joint assessment of the seriousness of the epidemic situation in the city of Košice and the surrounding area, the advisory group quickly agreed on the immediate need for continuous mapping of the situation and collecting information at the level of entities involved in helping people in housing need and formulating specific measures to protect the health of the population.

The DEDO Foundation, ETP Slovakia and the ÚSBM LF UPJŠ assumed responsibility for creating a database of entities involved in helping people in housing need in Košice and the surrounding area and for the implementation of a pilot mapping of their needs resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

They identified 69 entities (24 crisis intervention service facilities, which are registered providers of social services and other NGOs, 22 city parts, 13 providers of specialized counselling, 9 Churches and 1 theological faculty) and asked them to fill in an online questionnaire, the collection of questionnaires took place from 30 April to 07 May 2020. The questionnaire included:

1. basic information about the entity such as name, legal form, type of registered social service, contact person for emergency, target groups;
2. needs related to ensuring the prevention and spread of COVID-19 – 11 areas (such as hygiene items, protective equipment, food, clothing) of specific needs with answers “have enough/need/offer/not applicable”; and
3. awareness related to ensuring the prevention and spread of COVID-19 – availability of facilities suitable for emergency housing – preventive or as a place for isolation.

51 Viac info: <https://www.upjs.sk/lekarska-fakulta/ustav/socialna-a-behavioralna-medicina/>

The questionnaire was completed by 27 out of 69 respondents (39.1% return rate). The key findings were presented to the Advisory Group at an online meeting on 11 May 2020. The entities that completed the questionnaire provided various forms of assistance to nearly 3,000 people in housing need as part of their activities (Table 1).

Table 1: Estimated number of people in housing need (PiHN) - beneficiaries of 27 different entities (2020)

Estimation of the number of homeless people in Košice and its surroundings	number	%
Homeless (on the street, dormitories)	426	15,5
Without housing (stay in a crisis intervention service facility)	644	23,4
In insecure housing (e.g. single parents. debtors on rent)	127	4,6
In substandard housing (excluded communities. settlements)	806	29,3
In social rental flats (city of Košice)	752	27,3
TOTAL – indicative number	2755	100,0

The members of the advisory group subsequently drafted a Plan of Measures for Emergencies – Provision of Care for People in Housing Need in the City of Košice and its Surroundings in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan of Measures”), which was handed over to the City of Košice in mid-June 2020 as an open document, with the possibility of continuous updating.

The pilot mapping of needs and the individual activities proposed in the Plan of measures covered seven areas according to the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless:⁵²

1. Testing and awareness

People experiencing homelessness should be tested as a priority. This is a medically vulnerable group. They are forced to live in places that are unsafe during a pandemic – public spaces, camps, shelters, temporary and unsuitable accommodation. Testing is the only way to prevent these places from becoming outbreaks.

2. Housing

State and local authorities should take all possible measures to provide adequate emergency housing for homeless people, including those in unsuitable and insecure housing. It should allow for self-isolation, i.e. they should have a private space for eating, sleeping and personal hygiene. For this purpose, they should urgently mobilise suitable housing: free housing, tourist flats, hotels, student dormitories, barracks, etc.

3. Safe services

All measures should be taken to ensure that services for homeless people (such as shelter or food distribution) are provided as safely as possible. State and local authorities should provide guidance and resources to facilitate social distancing and hygiene measures. They should ensure crisis management and planning. Urgent measures are needed to protect staff and volunteers working with homeless people.

52 FEANTSA, 2020

4. Access to healthcare

It is well known that homeless people struggle to access health services, particularly primary health care and public health information. There is a need to ensure that homeless people have direct access to health care during a pandemic.

5. Access to food and hygiene

Access to food and hygiene can be a daily problem for homeless people. Many of the services they rely on – public toilets, soup kitchens, day centres – have been disrupted by the pandemic or are at risk of spreading disease. State and local authorities must act urgently to ensure that homeless people are not left without access to safe hygiene or food.

6. Stop the increase in homelessness

The economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis will put many people at risk of homelessness. State and local authorities must act quickly to prevent a wave of people losing their homes as a result of the pandemic. They must take action to prevent evictions, to provide income, to provide support for those struggling with the cost of rent or mortgage. They must ensure that support and alternative housing is available to victims of domestic violence and abuse who do not find their home a safe place during a pandemic.

7. Protection from repressive measures

Homeless people must not be punished for not staying at home. They must be protected from fines and other sanctions and be provided with safe alternatives.

In addition to the proposed short-term and long-term activities and an overview of the status of their implementation (as of 15 June 2020), the Action Plan also included other documents and information prepared by the members of the Advisory Group based on the identified needs, such as:

- algorithm for preventing the emergence and spread of COVID-19 among people in housing need in the city of Košice and its surroundings;
- sample forms – Record of screening of a person prior to admission to a crisis intervention services facility and Record of daily monitoring of the health status of clients in a crisis intervention services facility;
- overview of current decrees, guidelines and procedures at the level of state administration (Government of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, Institute of Public Health of the Slovak Republic);
- overview of available information on COVID-19 prevention and the use of personal protective equipment;
- overview of fundraising opportunities, staffing capacity, food and hygiene, availability of preventive accommodation and storage (food, hygiene items, medicines, medical supplies) facilities.

The implementation of the pilot mapping of needs and the elaboration of the Plan of measures for Emergencies were financed from the resources of the City of Košice (Mandate contract with the DEDO Foundation) and from the own resources of the individual organisations involved, especially NGOs.

The second wave of the pandemic COVID-19 and the isolation facility for homeless people in Košice

In early April 2020, the organisations involved in the advisory group joined an appeal called “Staying at home” is not an option for homeless people. The joint appeal by more than 30 organisations working with homeless people and in other social services with a national scope was addressed to members of the national Crisis Management. A request for support was also sent to the President of the Slovak Republic. The appeal contained a request to provide dignified and epidemiologically effective accommodation for people who do not have a home or are at risk of losing their home, in single or double rooms with personal hygiene facilities, which remained vacant in accommodation facilities due to the lockdown. Other requirements were also put forward relating to prevention, a moratorium on evictions and the provision of personal protective equipment to protect people at risk of losing their housing or experiencing homelessness and their service providers.

- On 14 April 2020, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted Resolution No. 220/2020 (later amended by Resolution No. 343/2020 of 04 June 2020) on the Plan to address the reduction of risk of the emergence and spread of COVID-19 among homeless people and the admission of individuals to selected public or non-public social service facilities subject to dependency and centres for children and families. This resolution directed:
 - presidents of self-governing regions, mayors of towns with a population of more than 20 000 inhabitants to

- designate facilities in which the isolation of homeless people will be carried out
- ensure the presence of health workers and staff providing social services and the operation of the isolation facility for homeless people
- the Minister of the Interior, mayors of towns, mayors of municipalities to – ensure order and security in facilities for isolation for homeless people
- presidents of self-governing regions, mayors of towns, mayors of municipalities to – ensure that the above tasks are carried out according to the current epidemic situation and in accordance with the minimum material, personnel and hygiene conditions for quarantine facilities

In accordance with this resolution, at the end of May 2020, the City of Košice purchased 12 office containers, four sanitary containers and one residential container with a total value of 199 000 EUR. The containers were placed on the premises of the Housing Authority of the City of Košice (BPMK) at Južné nábrežie 13 in Košice and were to start operation as an isolation facility for homeless people. In early summer 2020, the epidemic situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic slowly began to calm down and the state lifted the national state of emergency. Therefore, the City of Košice did not start the operation of the isolation facility due to lack of financial and staffing resources. However, due to the duration of the emergency situation, it was decided that all containers would remain on the premises of the BPMK, which was closed and guarded by the municipal police. The organisations involved in the advisory group submitted a request

to the city of Košice in early autumn 2020 to start the operation of an isolation facility for homeless people. The reason was the escalation of the epidemic situation in neighbouring countries (earlier onset of the 2nd wave than in Slovakia) as well as the available data on the development of the pandemic in marginalised Roma communities (MRC) in Slovakia. Since March 2020, long-term monitoring was provided by the state contributory organisation of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, Healthy Regions, through a network of field workers in approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of Roma settlements and ghettos with substandard conditions for health (approximately 450 communities in 255 municipalities). The data indicated a significant worsening of the pandemic situation during October 2020.

Based on the available estimates and the development of the epidemic situation in the city of Košice and the surrounding area, the organisations involved in the Advisory group offered the city of Košice to develop a Project Plan for the Isolation Facility for Homeless People of the City of Košice. The first working version was submitted to the city on 15 December 2020 and included a description of the purpose of the facility and the possibilities of spatial use of individual containers in the BPMK area (zoning); definition of the target group (people in housing need with habitual residence in Košice (including families with children); identification of frontline organisations that could capture potential clients; proposal of the composition of the multidisciplinary team and the processes of operation; the scope of the services provided.

The organisations involved were ready to participate in the implementation of the submitted project plan by providing their own personnel and material resources on a limited scale. However,

none of the organisations involved could assume full responsibility for the launch and longer-term maintenance of the isolation facility. It was therefore necessary for the city to allocate its own personnel and financial resources, to include the costs of salaries (coordinator, dispatcher and other members of the expert team), the necessary material and technical equipment of the premises, including medical supplies and personal protective equipment, food, transport and personal hygiene of the clients of the isolation facility.

Of the 12 office containers, nine were adapted for accommodation with a total capacity of 17 beds, and three containers served as storage, an examination room for the doctor and as facilities for social workers. The other four sanitary containers were available for personal hygiene (toilets, showers). During February and March 2021, 18 clients used the temporary accommodation. All clients of the isolation facility were provided with hot meals, drinks, clean clothes and toiletries. At the same time, their health condition was regularly monitored by a doctor and social counselling was also available. After the period of isolation, they were placed in social service facilities, if they expressed interest, returned to shelters or to their previous lives. The total cost of setting up and running the isolation facility amounted to EUR 50 000. As of 1 April 2021, the operation was discontinued and the quarantine facility remained in 'dormant' mode.

In March 2022, after the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the city of Košice moved the containers to the Červená hviezda swimming pool in Košice, and established a humanitarian first contact centre for people fleeing the hardships of war in Ukraine. Until June 2022, this centre served for registration, meals, emergency accommodation and transit of refugees through the city of Košice.

Conclusion

From its outset, the socio-economic crisis triggered by the global pandemic COVID-19 had a strong territorial dimension, with a significant impact on local governments. The findings of one of the first online surveys (“The impact of COVID-19 on regional and local governments: governance, finance and recovery plans”) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Committee of the Regions between June and July 2020 showed a very negative impact on regions and cities in the European Union. Almost half of local and regional governments (46%) said at the time that the main challenge in dealing with the crisis was a lack of material and technical equipment and 39% said it was a lack of funding. At the time of the survey, only around half of respondents said that coordination between local and regional governments or with national governments was effective.⁵³ The experience of poor coordination at the national level was also experienced in Slovakia and was continuously being highlighted by the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS) and the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia (UMS). They repeatedly pointed out that the state’s management of the COVID-19 pandemic was unclear and chaotic from the beginning, with cities and municipalities being helpless and frustrated due to the variety of constantly changing instructions (lockdowns, antigen testing, COVID-19 monitoring).

53 EVR, 2020

Utilizing the potential of the existing cooperation between the City of Košice and several social economy actors working in the field of social inclusion, education and population health allowed for better provision for people in housing need in the City of Košice and the surrounding area in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mobilisation of key actors and their mutual coordination at local level was an important prerequisite for achieving synergies in addressing this crisis.

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Helping refugees from Ukraine in Košice

– from first contact
to long-term support

Veronika Poklembová⁵⁴

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the description of the assistance to the refugees from Ukraine in Košice and its surroundings, especially during the first months after February 2022. The description is set in the context of the previous activities of the City of Košice, the Košice Self-Governing Region as well as the non-profit sector in the field of integration of foreigners and assistance to vulnerable groups and individuals.

Between 2018 – 2020, Košice was involved in the international project INTEGRA – Integration of Third Country Nationals through Urban Partnerships, As part of the project, the Concept of Integration of Foreigners in Košice was developed, in cooperation with ETP Slovakia and project partners.⁵⁵ Several awareness raising activities about foreigners and for foreigners living in Košice were implemented within the framework of the project. These included, for example, a photography competition, city walks, talk shows and similar. Two maps of restaurants where with different world cuisines and a practical map for foreigners with a list of places to visit in Košice were also created in cooperation with Východné pobrežie. A special subpage on the Košice

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55 Konceptia integrácie cudzincov v meste Košice, <https://etp.sk/koncepcia-integracie-cudzincov-v-meste-kosice/>, cit. 30.4.2023

city website for foreigners.⁵⁶ has also been launched. In the same period, the Košice Self-Governing Region was involved in the KapaCITY project,⁵⁷ together with the cities of Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Trnava. The aim of the project was to support the integration of foreigners at the local level. The activities focused on “development of professional capacities of local governments, transfer of good practice at local, regional and national level and also with foreign countries, development of communication skills of local governments in order to support inclusion of foreigners at local level and support of local governments in making services provided to foreigners a stable part of their activities.”⁵⁸

In 2019 – 2021, an informal platform of organisations to help people in housing need was also established in Košice, its members participated in the Registration Week organized by the DEDO Foundation in May 2021 (more info in the previous text “Pilot project Housing First for homeless families in Košice” prepared by A. Vachnová). After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this informal platform was contacted to coordinate pandemic assistance for people in housing need (for more info

56 Mesto Košice má vlastnú stránku pre cudzincov, bude slúžiť ako informačné centrum vid' <https://www.kosice.sk/clanok/mesto-kosice-ma-vlastnu-stranku-pre-cudzincov-bude-sluzit-ako-informacne-centrum> a <https://www.kosice.sk/city/foreigners>, cit. 30.4.2023

57 Spolupráca KSK na projekte KapaCITY – podpora integrácie cudzincov na lokálnej úrovni, <https://web.vucke.sk/sk/kompetencie/regionalny-rozvoj/aktuality/spolupraca-ksk-projekte-kapacity-podpora-integracie-cudzincov-lokalnej-urovni.html>, cit. 30.4.2023

58 viac info o projekte vid' <https://www.hrl.sk/sk/co-robime/projekty/aktualne-projekty/kapacity-podpora-integracie-cudzincov-na-lokalnej-urovni->, cit. 30.4.2023

59 Pri hraničných priechodoch s Ukrajinou začnú fungovať hotspotsy pre urýchlenie administratívneho procesu prichádzajúcich z Ukrajiny, <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava-pri-hranicnych-priechodoch-s-ukrajinou-zacnu-fungovat-hotspotsy-pre-urychlenie-administrativneho-procesu-prichodzich-z-ukrajiny>, cit. 30.4.2023

see the previous text “Provision of care for people in housing need in the city of Košice and the surrounding area in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic” prepared by Z. Katreniaková). From the beginning of March 2022, this informal platform, under the leadership of A. Vachnová from the DEDO Foundation, also started to coordinate the provision of assistance in the context of the situation in Ukraine and gradually linked up with other organisations and partners.

First days of assistance and first contact in Košice

Right after Russia launched a large-scale military attack on Thursday 24 February 2022, with the aim to occupy the entire territory of Ukraine, large groups of people started fleeing the country. They came to Slovakia across the eastern border, through the border crossings of Ublá, Veľké Slemence (pedestrian-only crossing) and Vyšné Nemecké. Large number of volunteers, non-profit organisations in cooperation with the Migration Office of the Slovak Republic and other state forces provided assistance at the border from the outset. From Sunday 27 February 2022, the Migration Office of the Slovak Republic started setting up hotspots at the border.⁵⁹ Material assistance and volunteers also came from abroad. Shuttle buses transported people from the border to other facilities that provided crisis accommodation (e.g. dormitories) or to larger towns (e.g. Michalovce, Humenné) and to important hubs, such as Košice and Prešov. Other regional and district towns, businesses, non-profit organisations, parishes and individuals also started to organise aid.

The city of Košice became an important transit hub for people fleeing Ukraine. During the first days and weekend, the first contact was centred at the railway and bus station. Volunteer assistance at the railway station was coordinated by the Košice Self-Governing Region (hereinafter referred to as “KSK”), while assistance at the centre near the bus station was coordinated by the city of Košice. In the first days, solidarity streamed from many sides. People arrived to volunteer at the border and at other places of “first aid” for the refugees.

Collections were organized under the auspices of organisations helping in the field (e.g. People in Need, Mareena, Charita), several non-profit organisations, companies and individuals joined together under the Who Will Help Ukraine appeal, local financial and material collections were organised – in Košice at the level of the region, the city and the Košice-Staré Mesto city part. Residents of the towns started to spontaneously organize themselves through social networks – self-help groups were created for inquiries and offers of help, searching for transport and accommodation – e.g. self-help group Pomoc Ukrajine in Košice.⁶⁰

A number of organisations have started calling for better coordination of aid, for the need for long-term assistance, for the better distribution of volunteers or for the need to collect and redistribute humanitarian aid according to actual need.

From the very first days of the conflict, there were two first contact points in Košice, providing 24/7 assistance:

- **Hotspot Železničná stanica, Košice**
The organisations on site were coordinated by KSK, volunteers were supplied primarily by the KSK Volunteer Centre and the Greek Catholic Eparchy. During the first days, other organisations and individuals also came to help, they could get in contact via Kto pomôže Ukrajine (Who Will Help Ukraine) database. The following types of assistance were provided on the spot: information, assistance with buying tickets and escorting to the train, transfer to the “Červená hviezda” Hotspot, finding accommodation and transfer there, emergency medical services (if needed), searching accommodation (high demand especially in the first weeks).
- **Hotspot Červená hviezda, Košice**
The organisations on site were coordinated by the City of Košice in cooperation with the city organisation K13, the Red Cross and other organisations, especially social economy actors.
- The following types of assistance were provided on site: information, refreshments, waiting room with electricity connection, finding accommodation and transfer there, etc. A container town was also set up on site to provide facilities for aid organisations, testing and vaccination against COVID-19 was also carried out on site. Temporary crisis accommodation was also available in the container town.

Both the city of Košice and the KSK provided emergency accommodation in gymnasiums and dormitories for the refugees who arrived at the first contact points. Capacities for long-term accommodation were published through the website of the Min-

60 Viď stránku na sociálnej sieti Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/groups/481306733576550>, cit. 30.4.2023

istry of Transport SR <https://pomocpreukrajinu.sk/>, the initiative Kto pomôže Ukrajině also created a database of mostly private persons willing to provide accommodation at <https://ktopomoze-ukrajine.sk/>.

The most common questions and needs related to first contact are formulated below in the form of "help sheets" for the refugees and for the people providing help.

In addition to the continuous operation of two hotspots, several crisis telephone lines were set up, operated by the City of Košice, the KSK and other organisations. The list is as follows:

- Košice City Call Centre – 055/64 19 955
- Call Centre of the Košice Self-Governing Region – 0800 222 550
- League for Human Rights 0800 222 350 – legal aid helpline
- Intervention team of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic – contact in Eastern Slovakia to call in case necessary medical care (except emergency – scope of medical care set out by law)
- UNLP – NONSTOP psychological helplines – 055 6222323, 055 6441155
- Nezábudka Helpline (anonymous psychological counselling daily 1:00pm – 9:00pm in Ukrainian) – 0800 222 450
- Ministry of Interior helplines for Ukrainian speakers
– +421 513 816 111, +421 259 765 111

To implement the above activities, the City of Košice, KSK and other organisations announced public collections of money and materials. The list of collections in Košice is below:

- The City of Košice – set up a transparent account and conducted a material collection in Kulturpark (managed by the

municipal organisation K13). The City of Košice established the position of the Plenipotentiary for Humanitarian Aid to Refugees from Ukraine and provided contributions from the transparent account to the partner city of Uzhhorod and to organisations assisting refugees from Ukraine in Košice.

- Košice Self-Governing Region – conducted a fundraiser through the KSK Foundation and a material collection at the Secondary Vocational School of Information Technology
- The Košice – Staré Mesto city part announced a fundraiser and coordinated humanitarian aid in the premises of their office.
- The Carpathian Foundation launched the "We Love Ukraine" fundraiser and provided humanitarian aid from eastern Slovakia to Transcarpathian Ukraine in cooperation with the Carpathian Foundation Ukraine
- The "Kto pomôže Ukrajině" initiative announced a nationwide fundraiser, coordinated and provided various forms of assistance through volunteers, cooperating companies and non-profit organisations across Slovakia.

The fundraisers and the above-mentioned aid were promoted through social networks as well as specialised websites.

It is necessary to mention in particular:

- <https://kosicepreukrajinu.sk/>
- <https://web.ukrainak.sk/>
- <https://www.ukrainslovakia.sk/sk/>
- <https://ktopomozeukrajine.sk/>
- www.ua.gov.sk
- www.pomocpreukrajinu.sk

Over time, the need for methodological support for the assistance arose. The basic tool was the so-called help sheet for people displaced from Ukraine in Košice and for those helping in Košice. These were created based on questions from the self-help group Pomoc Ukrajine v Košiciach. They were also inspired by the information materials that were created as part of the previously implemented INTEGRA and KapaCITY projects (mentioned above) and were partly used as a foundation for the content of the website www.kosicepreukrajinu.sk

Table 2: Help sheets for people displaced from Ukraine in Košice and for those helping in Košice (version April 2022)

Help sheet – FAQ for displaced people from Ukraine in Košice	Help sheet – FAQ for those helping in Košice
<p>Prvý kontakt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I get basic information about staying in Slovakia? • Where can I call in Košice to get more information? • Where are the first contact points (Hotspots) in Košice? • Where can I find the latest news in Slovakia in Ukrainian? • Where can I arrange a temporary shelter in Košice? • Where can I arrange temporary shelter in other cities in Slovakia? • Where can I get free SIM cards for people displaced from Ukraine? • Where can I change hryvnia to euro in Košice? • How can I send money from abroad via Western Union? • Which banks offer discounted services for people coming from Ukraine these days? 	<p>First contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who provides first contact points in Košice? • Where can I sign up if I want to help as a volunteer at the first contact points in Košice? • Who should I report to if I want to bring material aid to the first contact points in Košice?
<p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I get from Ukraine to Košice? • How do I find my way around Košice? • How can I get from Košice to other cities in Slovakia? 	<p>Material and financial assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I financially support the Ukrainians in Košice? • Where can I bring material aid?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I get abroad from Košice? • Where can I find accommodation in Slovakia? • Where can I find accommodation in Košice? • Do you know of other accommodation options? • Where can I get material assistance? 	
<p>Residence and related legal assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I get basic information about staying in Slovakia? • Where can I get free legal advice? 	<p>Accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to provide accommodation, where can I register? • I am hosting people displaced from Ukraine, where can I get material assistance? • I am hosting people displaced from Ukraine and have specific requirements for material assistance – e.g. wheelchairs, medical compensatory aids
<p>Children and youth education, leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should I proceed if I want to enrol my child in a school or kindergarten in Košice? • I have not yet been able to enrol my child/children in school or nursery, what are my options? • Where (in Košice) can I get books or other materials for children in the Ukrainian language? • How should I proceed if I want to enrol my child in a secondary school in Košice? • What colleges/universities are there in Košice? 	<p>Childcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you taken in a family with children from Ukraine? • Have you taken in a CHILD from Ukraine?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities for leisure and talent development do I have in Košice? 	
<p>Adult education</p> <p>– Slovak language courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I find resources for self-study of the basics of the Slovak language? • Where are Slovak language courses available in Košice? • Where can I find online Slovak language courses? 	
<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I find job offers suitable for people who came to Košice from Ukraine these days? • Where do I get the material hardship allowance if I don't have a job yet? 	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to offer jobs to people from Ukraine, how should I proceed?
<p>Guidance (social, psychological and other counselling)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social counselling • Psychological counselling • Interpreting and translation services 	<p>Volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sting resources and databases:
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing resources and databases: • Information on the pandemic situation: • Vaccination COVID-19 in Košice • Free treatment at the dentist • Free gynaecological examination • Free eye examination 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where can I find a doctor who speaks Russian/Ukrainian? • Where can I donate blood to help Ukraine? <p>Culture and community</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get to know Košice / Get to know the region • Foreigners in Košice • Where can I meet the Ukrainian community in Košice? • Where can I find information about programmes organised for Ukrainians coming to Košice? • What churches and religious societies are active in Košice? • Where is help available for LGBT+ people? 	

Assistance coordination

Assistance was coordinated at the municipal level through the city and regional crisis management. Actors involved in the assistance to displaced families and individuals from Ukraine in Košice met regularly at the crisis management at the Košice District Office.

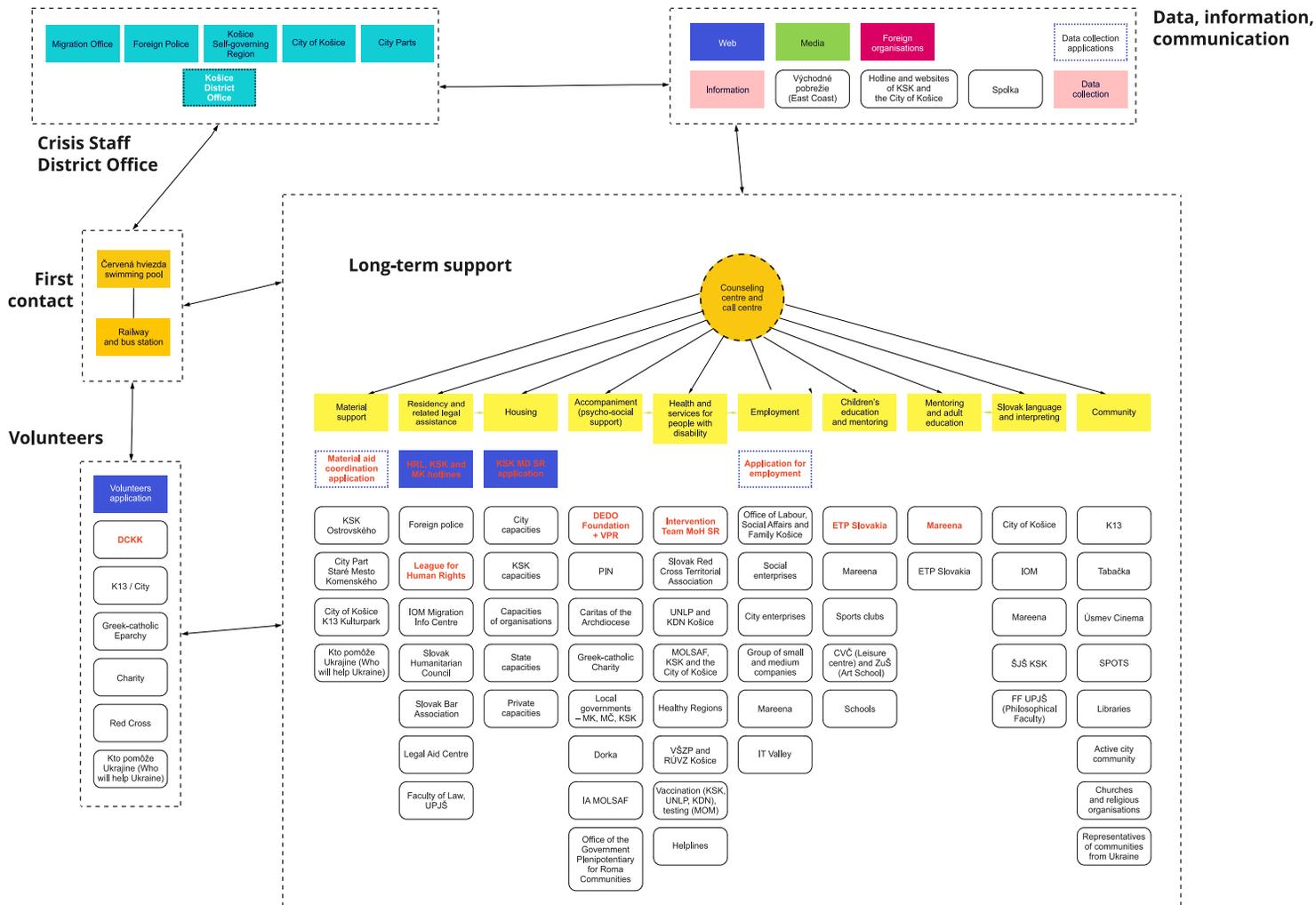
The NGOs in Košice coordinated through the informal *Platforma organizácií na pomoc vysídleným rodinám a jednotlivcom z Ukrajiny v Košiciach*, which, after previous experience of cooperation in addressing housing need and assistance during the pandemic period, cooperated and coordinated their actions in this newly emerging situation. The main objective of the

cooperation was to coordinate and provide integrated short-term and long-term assistance and information to displaced individuals and families in Košice as well as to the residents of Košice in cooperation with the municipality, NGOs and other partners operating in Košice and its surroundings to create a safe and dignified environment for the people arriving from Ukraine and their active integration into life in the city.

Representatives from a wide range of organisations and sectors attended the meetings. These included representatives of the City of Košice, KSK, Volunteer Centre of the Košice Self-Governing Region, Intervention Team of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, Healthy Regions, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice IT Valley, DEDO Foundation, ETP Slovakia, League for Human Rights, platforms *Východné pobrežie*, *Carpathian Foundation*, *Spolka*, *Archdiocesan Charity Košice*, non-profit organisations *Oáza Bernátovce*, *DORKA*, *Mareena*. Other organisations were also consulted, too many of them to list. In the period from March to May 2022, these actors met weekly for online coordination calls. In addition to addressing assistance at the points of first contact, participants discussed setting up a system of long-term integration support and communication, data collection and information availability in the coordination meetings.

The graph below shows the proposal for coordination of the assistance provided by the different partners and the proposal for communication and cooperation between the partners involved. The graph demonstrates the wide range of areas of assistance and the wide range of actors providing it. The authors of the proposal are members of the Platform led by the DEDO Foundation.

Coordination of assistance for displaced families and individuals from Ukraine in Košice



Long-term assistance

From 1 March 2022, Slovakia began to grant temporary refuge status to people fleeing Ukraine.⁶¹ It was possible to apply for it at the Foreign Police Department, at the Asylum Department in Humenné and in large-capacity centres in Michalovce, Humenné or Bratislava. In 2023, the validity of the temporary refuge status was extended for a further period until at least March 2024.⁶² As of 6 February 2023, the data regarding the number of refugees from Ukraine was as follows:⁶³

- Total number of entries into Slovakia from Ukraine from 24 February 2022 – 1 190.689.
- Total number of exits from Slovakia to Ukraine as of 24 February 2022 – 977.606.
- Total number of temporary refugees granted from 1 March 2022 – 108.289.
- Total number of asylum applications in 2022 for citizens of Ukraine: 154

61 Slovensko od 1. marca poskytuje dočasné útočisko občanom Ukrajiny a ich príbuzným, k dispozícii je informačný leták <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=slovensko-od-1-marca-poskytuje-docasne-utocisko-obcanom-ukrajiny-a-ich-pribuznym-k-dispozicii-je-informacny-letak> alebo Rozširuje sa okruh osôb, ktoré môžu na Slovensku požiadať o dočasné útočisko <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=rozsiruje-sa-okruh-osob-ktore-mozu-na-slovensku-poziadat-o-docasne-utocisko> cit. 30.4.2023

62 Vojna na Ukrajine: poskytovanie dočasného útočiska sa predĺži, cit 30.4.2023 <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-6&sprava=vojna-na-ukrajine-poskytovanie-docasneho-utociska-sa-predlzi>, cit 30.4.2023

63 Štatistika MVSR

After the first wave of emergency assistance in the first weeks and months, a system of long-term assistance for the refugees gradually started taking shape. Local governments, NGOs and international organisations such as IOM, UNICEF and UNHCR and other partners supported the creation of integration and assistance centres for people who decided to stay in Slovakia temporarily or even long-term.

As an example of an initiative in long-term assistance we mention the cooperation of the consortium of partners operating the *Integration Centre of the Košice Region*.⁶⁴ The Integration Centre was established as a follow-up initiative to the activities of the aforementioned informal *Platforma organizácií na pomoc vysídleným rodinám a jednotlivcom z Ukrajiny v Košiciach*. The Integration Centre of the Košice Region was opened on 20 June 2022.

The Integration Centre was established under the auspices of the Košice Self-Governing Region in the premises provided by KSK on Strojárska Street in the wider city centre. The establishment of the Integration Centre was initiated by the DEDO Foundation⁶⁵ in cooperation with nine organisations associated in a consortium. The centre provides assistance with administrative tasks such as filling in forms and applications, with information on the labour market, assistance in housing issues, etc. Staff at the centre also provide legal advice and counselling support. The aim is to provide the widest possible range of assistance in one place. Foreigners can make an appointment via the online booking system, by email, by phone or personally at the centre. The centre is networking with other local and international organisations providing help and support to Ukrainian refugees in Košice.

Since its inception, several foreign delegations have visited it as an example of unique cooperation of several organisations “under one roof” for the purpose of providing long-term integration support to foreigners in the city and the region.

The Integration Centre of the Košice Region also includes the organisations League for Human Rights, Mareena and People in Need. Together with the Centre for Research on Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) and the Milan Šimečka Foundation, they proposed solutions for the integration of people from Ukraine in Slovakia⁶⁶ in May 2022 and presented them to representatives of the Government, the President of the Slovak Republic and the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society. The proposals were elaborated in the form of a publication entitled *Integration of People from Ukraine*.

64 Viac info viď <https://www.facebook.com/ickosice> cit 30.4.2023

65 Spájame svoje skúsenosti a know-how, v Košickom kraji bude cudzincom pomáhať Integročné centrum <https://www.nadaciadedo.sk/spajame-svoje-skusenosti-a-know-how-v-košickom-kraji-bude-cudzincom-pomahat-integracne-centrum/> cit 30.4.2023

66 Ponúkame návrhy riešení na integráciu ľudí z Ukrajiny na Slovensku, <https://clovekvoohrozeni.sk/ponukame-navrhy-rieseni-na-integraciu-ludi-z-ukrajiny-na-slovensku/>, Cit. 30.4.2023

Examples of other initiatives to help refugees from Ukraine in Košice

- **Ukraine Care Centre UNLP**

In the first weeks after the outbreak of the refugee crisis, the L. Pasteur Hospital set up a contact centre for people arriving from Ukraine, with doctors and staff speaking Ukrainian/Russian. The centre set up its own subpage on the hospital's website as well as emergency helplines.

<https://www.unlp.sk/ukraine-care-center/>

- **IT MAPA – job offers in Košice for Ukrainians**

In spring 2022, Košice IT Valley also participated in the coordination calls of the platform of organisations to help refugees from Ukraine. In addition to facilitating assistance to individual companies in the cluster, they have set up a separate section on the IT MAPA website with offers suitable for refugees from Ukraine:

<https://www.itmapa.sk/sk/partneri-ua>

- **Map of aid in Košice**

Východné pobrežie created a *Košice for Ukraine* map: shorturl.at/sQZ69. The map was created as an updated and supplemented version of the map of Košice for foreigners, which was created as part of the INTEGRA project that was mentioned in the introduction. The aid map was also shared by the City of Košice on the kosicepreukrajinu.sk website, created and managed by the city in cooperation with NESS.

- **Co-working at Továrenská**

OZ Stroj, which brings together Košice creatives and organisations working in the area of culture and creative sector, offered their spaces in the Co-working MAŠINA on Továrenská for the Ukrainian refugees.

<https://www.kcstroj.sk/masina.html>

- **Activities for mothers with children**

Centrum pre matku a dieťa Radosť was established in the first weeks, as a response to the lack of places in kindergartens and nurseries. Centrum organises activities mostly for pre-school children, the teachers can speak Ukrainian. Centrum is also an independent civic association since the summer of 2022. It connects a community of families from Ukraine who have found refuge in Košice.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/radost.centrum/>

For a similar reason, ETP Slovakia, in cooperation with American Spaces and the Štátna vedecká knižnica in Košice, has started regular Friday low-threshold activities for mothers with children from Ukraine since March. An experienced social worker and an educator prepared an informal programme for the children, provided a space for informal conversations and help with communicating with the authorities, job searching, etc.

<https://www.etp.sk/ukraine>

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Taras Danko⁶⁷

Basic information

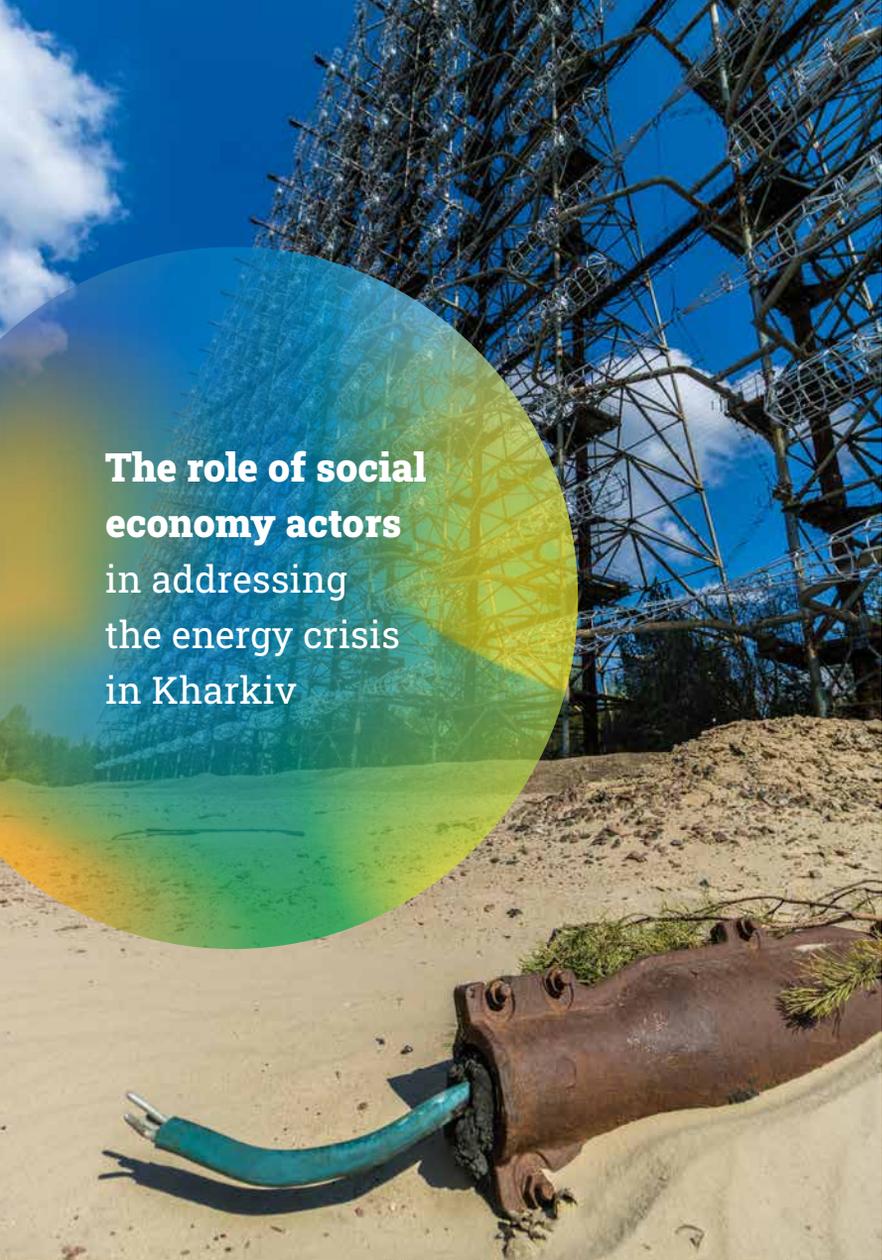
Ukraine has made significant progress in the development of renewable energy sources in recent years. The fact that renewable energy sources supplied 8.1% or 12.8 TWh of electricity generated in 2021 is a positive sign of progress towards Ukraine's energy transition goals.

The significant share of solar (56%) and wind (33%) energy sources in the total renewable energy sources production in Ukraine indicates that the country is utilising its renewable energy potential and investing in these sectors. Another 8% of the energy produced from renewable energy sources comes from biomass and biogas, and 3% from small hydropower plants. This can be seen as evidence that Ukraine is exploring a diverse range of renewable energy sources.

The Government is committed to supporting the development of this sector as evidenced by the existence of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2030. This includes both measures to promote the use of renewable energy sources and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Based on the above, it can be argued that in the period prior to the Russian invasion of 24 February 2022, the Ukrainian renewable energy sector was well on its way to achieving the target of producing 25% of its energy from renewable sources by 2035.

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**The role of social
economy actors**
in addressing
the energy crisis
in Kharkiv

Kharkiv, as one of the largest cities in Ukraine, has significant potential for renewable energy development. The city has several renewable energy projects in the pipeline, including solar power plants, wind farms and biogas plants. In addition, the city has several research institutions and companies involved in the development of renewable energy technologies.

The significant escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014, resulted in Russia invading and occupying parts of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had a significant impact on Ukraine's energy security, particularly in the territories affected by the war. Ukraine has long relied on Russia for its energy supplies, including natural gas, coal and oil. The war disrupted gas transit through Ukraine to Europe, affecting Ukraine's revenues from transit fees and raising concerns about the energy security of European countries.

The war has also damaged Ukraine's energy infrastructure, including power plants, transmission lines and gas pipelines. The damage has led to power outages and disruptions in the supply of gas and other fuels, significantly affecting the country's energy security.

In response to the invasion, Ukraine has taken measures to improve its energy security and has focused on strengthening domestic renewable energy sources and diversifying its energy supply. Investments have been made in solar and wind energy projects, in expanding domestic gas production and securing gas supplies from other countries such as Poland and Hungary.

The economic disruption caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the emphasis on an accelerated energy transition. The situation caused by the Russian invasion has

also reinforced Ukraine's efforts to promote energy sustainability and circular economy practices, which require significant resources and attention. However, the ongoing war has caused a significant economic downturn in Ukraine, with many sectors, including energy, facing significant instability. The extensive displacement and subsequent humanitarian crises caused by Russian aggression are diverting resources and attention away from the pursuit of long-term environmental and energy sustainability and circular economy. The invasion has also increased the country's dependence on foreign aid and support, which may limit its ability to invest in and develop initiatives of green economy. Running battles lead to significant environmental damage, including destruction of infrastructure and contamination of land and water resources, which may take years to fully eradicate.

In the long term, the impact of the Russian invasion on Ukraine's energy security will depend on the ongoing war and Ukraine's efforts to mitigate its impact on the energy sector.

The ongoing energy crisis in Ukraine caused by the Russian invasion is also having significant short-term impacts on the development of the circular economy and the renewable energy industry in Kharkiv. The lack of energy supply, especially electricity, is putting pressure on various sectors, including utilities, agriculture, production and transport, which can lead to humanitarian problems and a slowdown in economic activities, among others.

The energy crisis impacts the waste management sector as the lack of energy supply can lead to delays in waste collection and processing, affecting the overall circularity of the system.

In addition, limited energy availability can also affect the operation of renewable energy facilities and limit their ability to generate electricity and meet the demand for clean energy.

The investment environment for renewable energy sources development in Kharkiv is also affected. Given the current instability in the region, investors are currently hesitant to invest in renewable energy sources projects. The lack of investment is thwarting the growth and development of the renewable energy sector, which has a further impact on the overall circular economy of the region.

Thus, it can be concluded that the energy crisis caused by the Russian invasion has serious short-term consequences for the circular economy and the renewable energy sector in Kharkiv. These mainly affect the waste management, energy production and investment opportunities. However, it is necessary to note that the situation is dynamic and it is currently difficult to predict the full extent of the impact.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the long-term prospects for the renewable energy sources and circular economy sector in Kharkiv, as well as in Ukraine, after the end of the war and the eventual restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty over its entire territory are positive.

First of all, with Ukraine's application for EU membership and the subsequent granting of EU candidate status, EU support and investment in the development of the country's renewable energy industry and circular economy is likely to increase. This could include funding for research and development of new technologies, as well as funding for infrastructure projects such as renewable energy and waste management facilities.

Second, the need to rebuild and modernise the country's infrastructure after the war could provide opportunities to incorporate circular economy principles into the design and construction of new buildings and transport systems. For example, the use of recycled materials in construction industry, the introduction of energy efficient building designs and the promotion of public transport and cycling could contribute to a more sustainable and circular economy.

Last but not least, the increased awareness and concern about environmental issues, including climate change and pollution, is highly likely to increase the demand for renewable energy and sustainable practices in Ukraine. As consumers become more aware of the impact of their actions on the environment, demand for products and services that are produced and provided using sustainable methods may increase.

Overall, while the war has undoubtedly had a negative impact on the renewable energy industry and the circular economy in Kharkiv, there are reasons to be optimistic with regard to the long-term prospects for sustainable development in Ukraine. However, continued investment and political support are needed to ensure sustained growth and development of the green economy in Kharkiv.

The role of non-governmental organisations in addressing the situation

Considering the challenges currently faced by the renewable energy sector in Kharkiv, a number of measures aimed at the long-term development of the renewable energy sources sector have been identified. The stakeholders, including social economy actors and local government, should particularly focus on implementing the following:

1. **Diversify energy sources:** Given the current energy crisis and dependence on energy imports, it is important to diversify energy sources to ensure greater energy security. This should include investment in a mix of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, water and biomass.
2. **Promote energy efficiency:** Promoting energy efficiency measures in buildings and industry can help reduce energy demand and thus mitigate the impact of the energy crisis. Local governments and social economy actors could provide incentives and support for energy efficiency upgrades in buildings, such as insulation, efficient lighting and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems.
3. **Promote circular economy practices:** The circular economy can help reduce waste, promote resource efficiency and provide economic opportunities. Local government and social economy actors could promote circular economy practices such as recycling, composting and waste reduction initiatives.
4. **Promote innovation and research:** Investing in innovation and research can help develop new technologies and practices for renewable energy and the circular economy.

Local governments could support research partnerships between universities and businesses, while social economy actors could provide funding for innovation projects.

5. **Advocate for legislative changes:** Advocating for legislative changes that promote renewable energy and the circular economy can help create a supportive regulatory environment. Local stakeholders and social economy actors can work with policy makers to advocate for legislation that supports the development of renewable energy and circular economy practices.

The preconditions for the implementation of these measures include:

1. **Political stability and security in the region:** The first prerequisite for any meaningful action is political stability and security in the region. As the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has disrupted economic development and investment, stability and security must be ensured as a prerequisite for meaningful progress.
2. **Public-private partnerships:** Cooperation between public and private actors is key to the development of the renewable energy sector. This cooperation can help attract investment, share expertise and utilise resources.
3. **A clear regulatory framework:** A clear and stable regulatory framework is essential for the growth of the renewable energy sector. It includes policies that support the development of renewable energy technologies, incentives for investment and transparent rules for project development.

4. **Access to finance:** Access to finance is critical for the development of the renewable energy sector. Public and private financial mechanisms can help mobilise resources, reduce risk and support investment in renewable energy projects.

With a view to align local priorities with national objectives, local stakeholder groups should work with relevant government agencies and policy makers. This should include participating in policy discussions, providing feedback on legislative proposals and advocating for legislative changes that support the development of the renewable energy sector.

In order to attract knowledge, technical skills and investment from the EU, local stakeholders, including social economy actors and local governments, should explore opportunities for partnerships and cooperation with EU-based organisations such as universities, research institutions and private companies.

To access funding for research and innovation, they could also use existing EU funding mechanisms such as Horizon Europe. Finally, local stakeholder groups should consider participating in European Community initiatives such as the European Green Deal, which provides opportunities for cooperation and funding for sustainable development initiatives.

To facilitate communication and cooperation between all stakeholder groups, it is essential to create a platform for dialogue and collaboration. This could involve the creation of a stakeholder working group that brings together representatives from the renewable energy sector, local government, social economy actors, government agencies and civil society organisations.

The creation of such a platform can be a starting point for unlocking the potential of renewable energy in Kharkiv as well. To implement the efforts associated with its establishment and operation, in January 2023, the NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House, founded in 2020, proposed an action plan aimed at:

1. Creating a coalition of stakeholders including local businesses, universities, government agencies, social economy actors and NGOs to promote renewable energy and circular economy initiatives in Kharkiv, with a focus on attracting investment and expertise from the EU.
2. Facilitating communication and cooperation between stakeholders to support the development of renewable energy and circular economy projects.
3. Providing technical expertise and support to stakeholders interested in developing renewable energy and circular economy projects.

Given the strong relations with the Kharkiv municipality, the Honorary Consul of the Slovak Republic in Kharkiv and UKRENERGO – Office for identification and fight against threats to facilities of critical infrastructure, the Ukrainian and Slovak House is well positioned to implement the platform. The Ukrainian and Slovak House, created as part of the project “Cities in the Enlarged European Area: Joint Development of Capacities of Public Institutions by Slovak-Ukrainian Cross-Border Cooperation and Improving Integrity in Public Affairs (CEEAA)” under the Cross-Border Cooperation/Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency programme, is actively participating in project activities. Non-governmental organisation Ukrainian

and Slovak House also co-organised the international forum “Ukraine-Slovakia 2021: Aerospace. High Precision Engineering. Problems and Prospects for Industrial Cooperation”, which was held in Bratislava on 21-22 September 2021. It was a major event highlighting the potential for cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and Slovakia in the field of aerospace and mechanical engineering. This experience can be a good foundation for future efforts to promote the development of renewable energy and energy resilience in Kharkiv and Ukraine as a whole.

Current results of the cooperation of non-governmental organisations with local governments

The immediate result of the NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House that is working to mitigate the impact of the crisis is the list of activities outlined by this organisation to create a coalition for renewable energy in Kharkiv. The list includes the following activities:

1. Creating a preliminary framework for a state-of-the-art renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv.
2. Identification and mapping of stakeholders in the renewable energy sector in Kharkiv.
3. Organisation of consultations with stakeholders to identify common goals and objectives.
4. Mapping the European renewable energy ecosystem and outlining a strategy of its engagement.
5. Developing a communication and cooperation plan for the Kharkiv renewable energy coalition.
6. Organising workshops and trainings to build the capacity of local businesses, universities and government agencies in the field of renewable energy and the circular economy.
7. Organising study visits to EU countries to learn about best practices in renewable energy development.
8. Conduct research and analysis to identify potential sources of EU funding for renewable energy projects in Kharkiv and provide guidance to stakeholders on how to access these funds.
9. Preparation of a plan for the development of renewable energy sources in Kharkiv.
10. Facilitating partnerships between local businesses, universities and EU institutions to promote technology transfer and knowledge exchange.
11. Advocating for legislative changes at the national level that will support the development of renewable energy and the circular economy in Kharkiv.

In line with this plan, the NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House offered the municipality a preliminary vision of a state-of-the-art renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv, founded on five pillars:

1. Established infrastructure: well-developed energy infrastructure, including transmission and distribution systems, can support the integration of renewables into the grid.
2. Technological innovation: the development and implementation of innovative technologies, such as energy storage systems and smart grid technologies, can help increase the efficiency and reliability of renewable energy systems.

3. Public awareness and involvement: public awareness and public support for renewable energy sources can help increase demand for green solutions and encourage investment in the sector.
4. Cooperation and partnerships: Cooperation between stakeholders such as industry, government, academic institutions, civil society and the non-profit sector can foster innovation and create an enabling environment for the development of renewable energy.
5. Supportive legislation: legislative environments that incentivise the development and implementation of renewable energy technologies, such as feed-in tariffs, tax credits and net metering, can encourage investment and growth in the renewable energy sector.

On 16 December 2022, Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov and architect Norman Foster presented details of a new master plan for Kharkiv's reconstruction. In this context, the NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House is currently discussing with the municipality the proposed vision for a state-of-the-art renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv. Aligning the activities of the renewable energy coalition with the Kharkiv Master Plan would be beneficial as it can help ensure the integration of renewable energy infrastructure implementation into the overall urban planning process of the city. Alignment with the zoning plan can prevent potential conflict with other development priorities and projects in Kharkiv, and can potentially secure greater support from local government and other stakeholders.

In order to support its objectives, the NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House has started to identify and map stakeholders in the renewable energy sector in Kharkiv, which fall into the following categories:

1. Energy companies: these companies are responsible for the production and distribution of renewable energy in Kharkiv. They can include both large energy companies and smaller community energy providers.
2. Government agencies: local and national government agencies are responsible for creating legislation that supports the development of renewable energy in Kharkiv. They also provide funding and incentives to support the implementation of renewable energy.
3. Environmental organisations: these organisations work to raise awareness about the benefits of renewable energy and promote policies supporting its development. They also educate the public about the environmental impacts of energy use.
4. Academic institutions: universities and research institutions play a crucial role in the development of new technologies and processes for the production and distribution of renewable energy. They also provide training and education for professionals working in the renewable energy sector.
5. Consumers: energy consumers in Kharkiv play an important role in the renewable energy ecosystem. They can choose to buy renewable energy from energy providers or install their own renewable energy systems, such as solar panels or wind turbines.
6. Industry: Kharkiv's industrial sector can be a significant consumer of energy and the development of renewable

energy systems can help reduce energy costs and improve sustainability.

7. Local communities: local communities in Kharkiv can play an important role in the renewable energy ecosystem by advocating for the development of renewable energy projects, participating in community energy initiatives and supporting the implementation of renewable energy technologies.
8. Developers and solution providers in the field of renewable energy: these companies are responsible for designing and implementing renewable energy systems such as solar panels, wind turbines and geothermal systems. They also provide maintenance and support services for these systems. Renewable energy developers and solution providers can work with a range of stakeholders, including energy suppliers, government agencies, academic institutions and local communities to support the development and adoption of renewable energy in Kharkiv. They can also work with financial institutions to secure funding for renewable energy projects and with energy storage providers to integrate renewable energy into the grid.

So far, institutions that could become the cornerstones of Kharkiv's renewable energy ecosystem have expressed interest in joining the initiative. Their list is as follows:

1. Kharkiv Energy Cluster (KhEC): the KhEC is a public-private partnership that promotes bringing together energy suppliers, academic institutions and government agencies to support the development of renewable energy in Kharkiv. They work to create an enabling environment for renewable energy and

provide a platform for cooperation and knowledge exchange among stakeholders.

2. Kharkiv Engineering, Automation and Machinery Cluster IAM: As the renewable energy sector is closely linked to the development and implementation of new technologies, the expertise and resources of this cluster are valuable in identifying and implementing innovative renewable energy solutions. The cluster will provide technical support and advice to local businesses and organisations involved in renewable energy, as well as facilitate knowledge exchange and technology transfer between local and international partners.
3. National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" (NTU "KhPI"): NTU "KhPI" is a leading technical university in Ukraine. It conducts research and provides education in the field of renewable energy technologies and collaborates with industrial partners to develop innovative solutions for the renewable energy sector.
4. V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University and Simon Kuznetz Kharkiv National Economic University: These universities offer valuable resources for the Coalition's capacity-building and training activities, as well as advice on policy development and advocacy efforts.

The initiative is also supported by a range of other organisations, including:

1. Non-governmental organisations: the National Science and Technology Association of Ukraine; the Ukrainian Association for Management Development and Business Education; the Ukrainian Association of Professionals in Technology

Commercialisation; the Ukrainian Association of Business Incubators and Innovation Centres. These organisations represent various areas of focus including science and technology, management and business education and technology commercialisation. They can provide valuable input and guidance for policy development and advocacy efforts related to renewable energy. They can also play a role in capacity building and coalition training, helping to develop the skills and knowledge needed to advance renewable energy in the region. In addition, they can contribute to knowledge sharing and collaboration between stakeholders, thereby promoting innovation and best practice in the renewable energy sector.

2. R & D centres: the Anatolii Pidhorny Institute for Problems in Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine; Scientific Park “Naukograd - Kharkiv”; R & D centre of Engineering Invest IF GmbH. These will play an important role in fostering innovation, providing technical assistance and testing facilities, promoting the safety and resilience of the renewable energy infrastructure, and promoting technology transfer between local and international partners.
3. Industrial consumers: the Kharkiv Aerospace Innovation Cluster “Mechatronics”. Companies in this cluster are interested in incorporating sustainable practices into their operations, this cluster therefore represents industrial consumers of renewable energy solutions in Kharkiv and Ukraine. There is also potential for collaboration and cross-sector partnerships between the Aerospace Innovation Cluster “Mechatronics” and renewable energy companies in Kharkiv

and Ukraine as a whole, to explore ways of integrating renewable energy solutions into the aerospace industry.

Currently, the NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House continues to map other important stakeholders of the renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv, with a focus on energy companies, government agencies, environmental organisations, consumers, industry, social economy actors, local communities as well as renewable energy solution providers.

The role of non-governmental organisations in the future renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv

The immediate plans of NGO Ukrainian and Slovak House include further mapping of stakeholders in Kharkiv, building relationships with local government, finding partners at national and EU level, fundraising and coalition networking.

The cooperation with the NORCE research centre from Norway, supported by the Ukrainian and Slovak House, has several potential benefits for building a renewable energy coalition in Kharkiv:

- Becoming familiar with best practices; cooperation can provide valuable insights into successful practices and approaches to renewable energy development that have been implemented in Norway. These practices could potentially be adapted and applied in the Kharkiv region;
- Networking: collaboration can provide coalition members with the opportunity to network with renewable energy

experts from Norway and potentially forge new partnerships or collaborations;

- **Becoming familiar with new technologies:** cooperation can introduce new and innovative renewable energy technologies that are being developed and used in Norway. This exposure could potentially inspire the coalition to explore new technologies or adopt them in their own renewable energy projects;
- **Inspiration:** cooperation can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for coalition members. Hearing about successful renewable energy projects and initiatives from another country could help to energise and encourage coalition members to continue their work and look for new opportunities.

Ukrainian and Slovak House is also one of the organisers of the international forum “Kharkiv Days in Slovakia” held in at the beginning of 2024. The potential benefit of this forum lies in providing a space for discussion on important topics related to cross-border cooperation, aviation, energy security and humanitarian issues. Energy security as a guarantee of global security in Europe has been included among the forum's priorities.

The aim of the event is to exchange ideas and best practices between Kharkiv and partners from Slovakia and neighbouring EU countries, which can lead to potential cooperation and partnerships. For the city of Kharkiv, the event offers an opportunity to showcase its strengths and achievements in different areas and to attract potential investors, partners and visitors.

Conclusion

Overall, the non-governmental Ukrainian and Slovak House is well positioned to play a key role in the creation and operation of the future renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv. Ukrainian and Slovak House is actively engaged in coalition building and stakeholder mapping, building relationships with local government, seeking partners at national and EU level, fundraising and networking. Additionally, it is involved in organising a major international forum that will focus on important topics related to energy security, cross-border cooperation and humanitarian issues. Against this background, the Ukrainian and Slovak House emerges as a key player in the future renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv, helping to promote change, create partnerships and foster innovation. The successful implementation of renewable energy projects in Kharkiv and the wider region will not only help to address the current energy crisis, but will also contribute to building a more resilient energy system in Ukraine, which can be seen as a crucial step towards ensuring energy security and independence, reducing dependence on fossil fuel imports and mitigating the impact of future energy shocks. The efforts of the Ukrainian and Slovak House to support the renewable energy ecosystem in Kharkiv are crucial to achieving these goals and promoting sustainable development in the region.

The experience of receiving refugees from Ukraine in Norway: the case of Alta municipality

Bård Kårtveit and Vigdis Nygaard⁶⁸

Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In the following six months, almost 7 million Ukrainians fled the country, seeking refuge in other parts of Europe. In addition, millions more became internally displaced in Ukraine. In response to the war, on the 4th of March, the EU Council triggered the Temporary Protection Directive, which meant that most persons fleeing the war would be accorded protection without individual asylum assessments. On 11 March, Norway followed the EU by applying Section 34 of the Immigration Act, granting temporary collective protection to Ukrainians seeking asylum in Norway. In the following months, as neighbouring countries received a fast a growing number of refugees, there was great uncertainty as to how many Ukrainians might end up in Norway. By August 2022, Norway had received 24 000 refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. While a lower number than anticipated, this still constituted a significant increase compared to earlier years, when between 1400 and 2300 people had applied for asylum in Norway.⁶⁹ By March 2023, some 42 000 Ukrainians have sought refuge in Norway. Among these, some 19500 are women, 9500 are men, and 13500 are children.⁷⁰

68 Bård Kårtveit and Vigdis Nygaard, NORCE Norwegian Research Centre AS, www.norceresearch.no

69 UDI, 2022

70 <https://www.nrk.no/nyheter/flyktninger-fra-ukraina-1.15912060>

Ukrainians who seek collective protection in accordance with Section 34 of the Immigration Act are not formally recognized as refugees under Norwegian law, as this requires individual assessment in each case⁷¹. As refugees with temporary collective protection, Ukrainians who arriving in Norway are granted a residence permit for one year at a time. As refugees they are covered by a settlement scheme, through which they can get public assistance to find a place to live and are entitled to certain benefits and services in the municipality where they are settled.

Ukrainian refugees who come to Norway, do so under circumstances that differ from those of other groups of refugees. First of all, they have visa-free access to the Schengen area for travel of up to 90 days within any 180-day period. As such, they can choose in which country they apply for asylum, and they do not need to register immediately after arrival in Norway. Second, unlike other refugee groups, most Ukrainians who arrive in Norway and other European countries are women and children, because most males of fighting age (18–60 years) have to remain in Ukraine. Third, since Ukrainians receive temporary collective protection, most applications can be processed more quickly than individual asylum assessments. Finally, many of the Ukrainian refugees who come to Norway have pre-existing networks in the country, enabling them to find private accommodation outside the normal reception system.

Settlement in Norway

Traditionally, Norway has practiced a settlement model where refugees are allocated to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities, and municipalities have a veto on how many refugees they accommodate. To a much greater degree than with previous refugee groups, Ukrainians have settled through direct agreements with the municipalities in question. Moreover, with the rapid application processes for Ukrainians seeking protection, the question of settlement arose much earlier than in previous reception processes.

As the situation evolved, and Norway had to prepare for a greater number of refugees than the authorities are used to process in a normal year, new legislation and new procedures were introduced in adjustment to the new situation during the first six months after Russia's invasion.

Nonetheless, the main procedure from arrival to formal settlement has remained the same, consisting of four stages: 1) pre-registration, 2) application process, 3) pre-settlement process and 4) formal settlement. As Ukrainians are not obliged to apply for protection immediately upon arrival, the first stage was pre-registration. This is a phase in which some Ukrainians – mainly those with prior contacts in Norway – try to find if there's a way for them to settle in Norway, without going through the asylum process. After they had registered and applied for protection, they move to the second stage, the application process, to await the decision.

⁷¹ Napriek tomu bude označenie „utečenec“ používané pre zjednodušenie textu.

Registering and applying for collective protection

Since 2020, registration of asylum applications has taken place at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde (south of Oslo). The actual registration is conducted by representatives of the National Police Immigration Service (NPIS). The rapid arrival of high numbers of Ukrainians, who – unlike most asylum-seekers – had visa-free access to Norway, forced some changes to the registration process. The Ministry of Justice also decided to de-centralize registration procedures, making it possible to register in eight different police districts throughout the country. The National Arrivals Centre at Råde is still used for registration for individuals staying with friends or family in south-eastern Norway, as well as for those who have nowhere to stay and who must be channelled into the ordinary reception system.

Once an application for protection has been registered by the Police, UDI processes the application. For most applicants from Ukraine, there is no individual asylum interview, only a check to determine citizenship and residence in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022. With this simplified process, the procedure can be speeded up, especially when the applicant has a biometric passport.



Initial Placement at Reception Centers

During the asylum application phase and until settlement in a Norwegian municipality, asylumseekers and refugees may live in reception centers. Asylum-seekers are not obliged to reside in reception centers, but they forfeit their access to free housing and pocket money if they opt out of the reception system. The reception centers are formally overseen by UDI, but run by private companies, NGOs or municipalities. The biggest operators are the private companies Link and Hero. These centers vary in size, set-up and location in various parts of Norway. When capacity for the reception of refugees had to be expanded, UDI engaged in tender processes where new and existing operators could compete for contracts for new emergency reception centers (akuttinnkvartering). Such emergency reception centers also include hotels, which are used to rapidly expand capacity in case of mass influx of refugees. It is important that these emergency reception centers provide decent living quarters, as in some cases, refugees have to spend a considerable amount of time there. As of November 2022, the average waiting period from personal interview to formal settlement in a municipality was approx. Six weeks.⁷²

72 Taraku & Halse 2022

Alternative Reception Placement (AMOT)

The first Ukrainians who came to Norway were mostly people who had family and friends in Norway – whom they would stay with. A survey of Ukrainians who arrived between February and August 2022 found that 65% had some sort of pre-existing network in Norway (family, friends and acquaintances, professional or other). Over 30% had family members and about 20% had friends in Norway. Only one third of early arrivals did not have any prior network in Norway.⁷³ Due to the lack of adequate reception capacity in the early phase, the Ministry of Justice decided to expand the system for ‘alternative reception placement’ (AMOT), in an instruction issued on 16 March 2022. AMOT is a system that allows asylum applicants to live outside reception centers, but subject to strict criteria for application, and it has not been widely applied before. Under the AMOT system, the municipality where the asylum-seeker lives assumes responsible for the applicant. He or she must apply for AMOT, and the municipality may accept or refuse to take on this responsibility. If the municipality does not accept it, the asylum-seeker is referred back to a reception center if he or she needs financial and other forms of assistance. Ukrainian refugees who found a place to live in a municipality – either with family members, other private persons or a home organized by voluntary organizations or by the municipality (which is not part of the regular reception system) – could apply to be registered for AMOT in the municipi-

⁷³ Hernes et.al. 2022, 40–41

⁷⁴ Brekke & Fladmoe 2022, 81–84

ality. If the municipality accepted AMOT for the individual, the municipality becomes responsible for that person, for which the municipality receives a grant from UDI to cover average expenditures. The municipality is to pay financial benefits to cover the expenses necessary for the asylum-seeker’s livelihood, unless that person is able to fully or partially support him/herself through personal income.

Settlement coordination between IMDi and municipalities

Norway has had a publicly steered settlement model, where refugees are allocated to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities. The state (through IMDi) sends requests to Norwegian municipalities based on prognoses as to how many refugees will need settlement the following year. The municipalities then decide if and how many refugees they are willing to settle. With the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, municipalities have been mostly positive to requests from IMDi. In many cases, individual municipalities have offered to settle a higher number of refugees than first suggested by IMDi. These processes have been made easier by the overall positive attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees among the Norwegian population⁷⁴

To be entitled to financial assistance and enrollment in the introduction program, refugees must be settled through settlement agreements between IMDi and individual municipalities. In recent years, the Norwegian system has also opened up for

'self-settlement', whereby refugees find their own housing, although they must still apply to the municipality in question to be formally settled there, in order to retain their right to financial assistance and enrollment in the introduction program. If the municipality agrees to settle a refugee, IMDi is contacted, and a formal settlement agreement is made. However, the practice of self-settlement was not widespread prior to the arrival of Ukrainians, and many municipalities had not previously accepted refugees for selfsettlement.⁷⁵

As noted, Ukrainians have to a much larger extent than previous asylum-seekers lived outside Norway's reception system during the pre-settlement period, either by staying privately without public assistance, or through the AMOT system. Many Ukrainians not staying in reception centres – often with the help of their networks – have been in direct contact with a municipality concerning possible settlement there. Some have found housing on their own or through their networks, and others have received assistance from the municipality in finding more long-term housing. In many cases, the settlement process has unfolded in dialogue between refugees (or their helpers) and the municipality, outside the traditional settlement process where IMDi allocates refugees to the municipalities. For a refugee to be formally settled in a municipality (and be entitled to financial assistance and enrollment in the introduction program), the municipality and IMDi later makes an agreement about formal settlement.

Given these various options for accommodation during the pre-settlement phase, there are multiple paths to formal settlement in a municipality. Refugees from other countries have mostly followed the 'traditional path' of living in a reception center until they were settled in a municipality through IMDi, the Ukrainians have to a larger extent made use of alternative paths to settlement.

The Introduction Program

Refugees who receive temporary collective protection between the ages of 18 and 55, and who reside in a municipality by agreement with IMDi, are entitled to an introduction program if they wish to participate. The introduction program is a training program designed to prepare refugees to engage in work or education in Norway. The introduction programme should contain language and work-oriented elements, but the language training is now briefer for Ukrainians (only one year, consistent with the duration of their initial permit). Unlike the case for other refugees, it can also include English language training. Ukrainian refugees have neither the right nor the obligation to attend civics classes, nor must they take the otherwise compulsory empowerment course. However, they must complete the parental guidance course if they have children. Unlike other refugee groups, they can complete the introduction program on a part-time basis; and if they leave the program, they do not lose the right to come back later. No other refugee groups are granted this flexibility.

75 Søholt a Dyb, 2021

By the end of 2022, 9,2 Percent of Ukrainian refugees had found paid employment in Norway. Considering the fact that most arrived after June 2022, and that a majority of working age refugees attend the one-year Introduction Program, that's a fairly high number.⁷⁶

Education for Ukrainian children

Every child of compulsory school age in Norway has the right to a compulsory education, regardless of their residential status and circumstances, provided that the children are expected to stay in Norway for three months or more. This right shall be fulfilled as soon as possible and no later than within one month upon arrival in Norway. Children between 6 and 16 years of age has a duty to attend school and participate in primary and secondary education.

Ukrainian children attend school and receive an education in accordance with Norwegian teaching plans. But a lot of teaching material in Ukrainian has also been made available for use at Norwegians schools. At some schools, primarily in the bigger cities, Ukrainian pupils in middle, secondary school and in high school, are offered bilingual classes, in Norwegian and

76 <https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/sysselsetting/statistikk/sysselsetting-blant-innvandrere-registerbasert/artikler/sysselsettingen-blant-innvandrere-var-uendret-i-2022>

77 <https://lms.e-school.net.ua/guide>

78 <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/krig/>

79 <https://frivillig.no/caritas-norge/hjelp-ukrainere-i-norge-support-ukrainians-in-norway>

80 <https://folkehjelp.no/onsker-du-a-engasjere-deg-for-flyktningene-fra-ukraina>

Ukrainian, with social studies being taught in Ukrainian. In addition, Ukrainian authorities have created an online educational program, that follows Ukrainian national teaching plans.⁷⁷ Some Norwegian public schools provide the facilities and equipment to help Ukrainian students follow this program online, after ordinary school hours.⁷⁸

NGO involvement in the integration of Ukrainian refugees

Norwegian NGOs and volunteer associations are involved in the reception of Ukrainian refugees in two ways: First, Norwegian authorities have coordinated with, and provide funding for some NGOs to take part in the reception of Ukrainian refugees. One such NGO is Caritas, who have coordinated and screened Ukrainians who live in Norway for volunteer service as interpreters and mentors for refugees who speak primarily Ukrainian or Russian.⁷⁹

Another NGOs is Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). NPA takes part in organizing the reception of Ukrainian refugees in the Greater Oslo region, and in some other parts of the country. In addition, Norwegian People Aids volunteers across the country organize a variety of social activities aimed to help Ukrainian refugees integrate in Norwegian society.⁸⁰

Another NGOs is the Norwegian Sports Association, which organized sports activities for children and youth, primarily on a volunteer basis. Since March 2022, the Sports Association has organized several sport activities primarily for Ukrainian

children, and made effort so include Ukrainian children in the activities of Norwegian children of the same age. The last part is considered the most important, as children's sports is considered a crucial arena of social inclusion and language training.⁸¹

Second, based on project applications, Norwegian Integration Authorities provide funding for organized activities that aim to further the social inclusion and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, with a special focus on project directed towards children/youth. Since March 2022, Norwegian Integration Authorities have funded more than 150 "integration-promoting" projects throughout the country⁸² Overall, Norwegian authorities, at a national and a municipal level, have relied heavily on the hard work and initiatives of Norwegian civil society to address the social and to some extent the material needs of Ukrainian refugees.

Experience of first phase refugees

A report on the experiences of Ukrainians who arrived in Norway between March and July 2022 point to an overall impression of satisfaction with their reception, with the treatment they have received, and the welcome they have gotten from Norwegian authorities and local communities. Even so, there are challenges, especially related to financial support, access to information, and the process of settlement once rights of residence has been granted.

81 <https://www.idrettsforbundet.no/idrettskrets/viken/frivillighetens-innsats-for-flyktningene/>

82 <https://www.imdi.no/tilskudd/ekstraordinar-tilleggsutlysning-tilskudd-til-integrering-sarbeid-i-regi-av-frivillige-organisasjoner/#mottakere>

Information for refugees

One considerable challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Norway has been getting access to important information. Refugees who arrived during the first six months have reported that they find the information given to them to be unclear and inadequate. IMDi representatives have admitted that due to frequent emergency measures, providing good and up-to-date information became difficult, especially during the first few months. During the first few months, the authorities struggled to obtain Ukrainian and Russian-speaking interpreter to help process and inform Ukrainian refugees in Norway. Since then, a number of Ukrainian and Russian-speakers residing in Norway have volunteered or been hired to work with refugees, but access to qualified interpreters, especially in smaller municipalities, remains scarce.

In particular refugees who lived privately, outside of the reception centers have struggled to obtain necessary information about settlement procedures, rights to financial assistance and other issues. In their efforts to find information, Ukrainian refugees have relied on both official Norwegian websites and social media channels. Many Ukrainians share and compare information on social media. In some cases, this had resulted in unfounded rumours and disinformation being spread quite fast. Since the Summer of 2022, Norwegian immigration authorities (UDI), integration authorities (IMDi) and work and welfare authorities (NAV) have adjusted their information strategies, offering important information in Ukrainian and in Russian on their websites, as well as on Facebook and other social media channels. This has significantly improved refugees experience of access to information.

Financial support

During the application period, while refugees are living at awaiting answers to their applications, refugees living in reception centers where they are served food, receive around 130 EURs per month, with 70 EUR extra pr. dependent child, while those living in reception centers where they are not served food, receive around 400 Euros per month, and 130 Euros extra per dependent child. Refugees who have found accommodation outside reception centers, can be entitled to 1600 Euros per person, to cover all living costs, including rent. This is also the level of economic aid they are entitled to after settlement in a community.

With the early wave of refugees, Norwegian authorities struggled to get the money out. Among the first arrivals, many Ukrainian refugees had to wait for up to four months before receiving any financial aid, forcing many of them to take up private high-interest loans. Those who did receive financial support, for the most part found that the funding they received come nowhere close to cover their most basic expenses. That goes for all refugees, whether living at outside reception centers, or at reception centers, with or without meals included. In particular, those who live outside the reception centers have struggled to cover their basic needs, especially in the largest cities, where the full financial support barely covers rent. As a result of this, many refugees have had to rely on handouts of free food and second-hand clothes organized by volunteer organizations in Norway. In Norway's largest cities, Ukrainian refugees have dominated the lines of people receiving bags of free food from various volunteer organizations. The financial support granted

to refugees have simply been too low to enable them to support themselves. In first six months of the crisis, location had a lot to say about which offers the refugees received. Refugees in Oslo generally received better offers than refugees elsewhere in Norway. Different municipalities also had varying practices for financial assistance. The result was that some refugees were better off than others, depending on where in Norway they were. Evidence of these discrepancies spread fast on social media, causing public outcry, frustration among Ukrainian refugees, and heightened efforts to establish uniform standards for the allocation of financial assistance.⁸³



83 Hernes et.al. 2022

Settlement procedures

Naturally, Placement for long-term settlement is a matter of great concern for most Ukrainian refugees. For those who stay at reception centers, who are settled with assistance from IMDi, the main concern has been uncertainty about where in Norway they would be settled, and frustration about limited opportunities to influence that decision themselves. Norway is a vast country, and many refugees have been offered settlement in smaller municipalities located far away from any urban centers, and far away from any regions where they may have some pre-arrival networks, or for other reasons a preferred place of settlement.

Initially, Ukrainian who had their residency confirmed had to go through settlement interview at the reception centers. These interviews included 24 questions about health, employment, special needs, network etc. At the time of high arrivals in March, the settlement interviews became a bottleneck in the settlement process, and in early April, the Ministry decided to reduce the questions in the interview from 24 to three questions: 1) do you have family or network in Norway? 2) do you have pets with you? 3) do you suffer from medical conditions. This helped cut back on the time it takes to determine where people will be settled, but it also took away their chance to influence where they may be placed, based on their particular situation. This is a point of frustration among Ukrainian refugees, who experience having little say on the most important aspect of their stay in Norway – their place of settlement.⁸⁴

The case of Alta municipality

This case study describes and analyses how the Ukrainian refugee situation is experienced by a small-town Norwegian municipality in Northern Norway. The aim is to shed light on different aspects on accommodation of refugees from Ukraine, and how the local authorities has organised this work in cooperation with NGOs and other voluntary structures.

Alta municipality is located in the northernmost region of Finnmark. With the population of 21.300, it is this the biggest settlement of a generally rural region. Alta is also an administrative and educational centre with a university campus and a big upper secondary school. Main industries are building and construction, retail trade and a substantial share of public sector employment. Alta municipality has a long history of accommodating refugees for temporary or permanent settlement, and the organisation of this activity has changes over time depending on needs and governmental financial support. The last refugee crisis affecting the Northern part of Norway was in 2015 when 5500 asylum seekers crossed the Norwegian-Russian border in a few





months, using bicycles. This was an unexpected event where no infrastructure to receive the high numbers of refugees were in place, and the commercial actor like HERO was commissioned by the Norwegian state to rapidly build up refugee reception centres. This also happened in Alta, and HERO provided capacity and competence of accommodating a high number of refugees. They also run a separate centre for unaccompanied minors. In March 2018 the HERO refugee reception centre in Alta closed together with 17 other centres in Northern Norway as then numbers of refugees dropped considerably. During the following years, Alta municipality accommodated a moderate number of refugees that were handled within the municipal system (Table 3, Alta municipality⁸⁵).

Table 3: Number of settled refugees in Alta (source: Alta municipality⁸⁵)

Year	Number of settled refugees	Number of settled unaccompanied minors
2015	44	14
2016	82	6
2017	30	6
2018	25	7
2019	32	2
2020	16	1
2021	47	2
2022	201	6

Ukrainian refugees are granted collective protection in Norway for one year at the time. This protection was extended by one more year in 2023. UDI is responsible for establishment and financing of reception centres, and the running of centres are based on a tender where contracts are signed between UDI and different operators. An operator can be a municipality, a private company, or humanitarian organisation. When the Ukrainian refugee crisis started in February 2022, the Norwegian authorities realised that the numbers arriving in Norway can be unpredictable and possibly higher than expected. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – UDI commissioned several public and private actors to establish emergency reception centres in all parts of Norway. The role of these centres is to be the first location the refugees meet, and where they wait for a municipality to grant them relocation to a permanent residency. Alta munic-

85 Anmodning av bosetning av flyktninger i 2023 - Alta kommune. 9. decembra 2022. <https://publikum.alta.kommune.no/publikum/DmbMeeting/385>

ipality has no such first line centers, so most of the Ukrainian refugees, going through the initial placement at reception centers, have already spent some time in such somewhere else before coming to Alta.

Organisation of accommodated refugees

Alta municipality was requested by IMDI to settle 200 refugees in 2022, a number discussed and accepted by the Municipal Council. This number was considerable higher than initially planned, and much higher than the previous years. This required an upscaling of municipal coordinating forces and service delivery.

Alta municipality decided to establish a reception centre in Vertshuset as a pre-settlement for the refugees that are granted a permanent stay in Alta. The strategy is to grant all Ukrainians separate housing on the private market as soon as possible, and a request to the public resulted in many homeowners providing units for rent. They usually close contracts with the municipality for reimbursement of the costs, but the refugees will after some time pay directly when they have an income. Some of the Ukrainians expressed dissatisfaction of not receiving permanent housing immediately after arriving as they had to spend more time in a new reception center at Vertshuset. The municipal authorities replied that often the needs of the families were unknown to them upon their arrival, and they needed time to find a suitable lodging. The municipal Councillor said in an interview in December 22 that the challenges of finding private houses went relatively smoothly due to the positive attitude of house

owners. At this time only 20 of the Ukrainian refugees lived at Vertshuset.

Approximately 25 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Alta without going through the reception center at Vertshuset. They are under the so-called AMOT – Alternative Reception Placement, and have moved in with family members or friends already living in Alta. They receive a small financial benefit from the municipality for subsistence costs but will not get access to the Introduction program or housing benefits.

By the end of 2022, the municipal politicians realised that settlement of the same number of Ukrainian refugees in 2023 would challenge the capacity in staff and housing on the market. The request from IMDI was also this year 200, but the Municipal Council decided to accept 150. This number will be reconsidered later in 2023.

The commercial accommodation provider HERO will in May 2023 again open a new facility in Alta, an asylum reception center, with the capacity of taking 150 persons. This facility is for refugees waiting for their asylum application to be processed and an offer to settle in a specific municipality. The lodgers will not settle in Alta on a permanent basis. HERO will grant the asylum seekers institutional lodging and follow them up on a daily basis. Alta municipality has no responsibility for housing and activities but need to provide the asylum seekers with health care services. This will put an extra pressure on the health care.

Adults learning the Norwegian language

All adult refugees with permanent settlement in a municipality in Norway are obliged to follow an Introduction programme in Norwegian language and culture. Ukrainian refugees are exempted from this rule as they are supposed to return home when the war ends. This means that the Introduction programme and language course are voluntarily. In practice, most does sign up as it qualifies you for the labour market and is followed by financial support. According to our information most of the adult Ukrainian refugees in Alta have accepted the offer to follow the program. NRK net⁸⁶ had an interview with one of the coordinators explaining that the initial assumption of straightforward integration of Ukrainian refugees with a high educational level, and easy access to the labour market, needed some corrections. The lion share of the adult Ukrainian refugees were not familiar with English language and could not find a job without language skills in either Norwegian or English. The media article informs about Tetiana, attending Norwegian language courses through the Introduction program, spending two days a week in language practice in a primary school and after school activities. Alta municipality offers Norwegian language practice to 50 refugees in different municipal departments and requested private businesses to also take in learners.

One of the municipal coordinators tells that in the beginning most Ukrainians thought that they will soon return to Ukraine, but gradually they realized that their stay can be long-term or

86 <https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/flyktinger-trenger-sprakpraksis-i-bedriftene-men-kan-ikke-forvente-utbytte-straks-1.16181734>

even for good. Many now make plans to qualify for further studies or work in Norway for themselves and the family.

Alta Integration and Competence Center, owned and run by the municipality, is responsible for adult education on secondary level. The center also has a role in coordinating information between different municipal services and national authorities. They help the refugees to integrate in the local community by linking them to NGOs and private persons. The Introduction program currently (March 2023) have 6 groups of Ukrainian refugees learning Norwegian language. The groups are organised according to their Norwegian language level and time in Alta. The first arriving in 2022, are just about to finish the one-year course and are ready for the labour market.

Schools and kinder gardens

A considerable number of the Ukrainian refugees in Alta are children and teenagers. Among the 200 refugees accommodated in Alta during 2022, 40 % were under the age of 16. 46 attended public schools, 33 attended kindergartens. Alta municipality follows the principle of neighbourhood schools where pupils attend schools in the area where they live, encouraging integration in the local environment. This policy was challenged by a rapid influx of children, and for capacity reasons not all Ukrainian children could enter the nearest school to their home. They were transported with busses to another school. The capacity in kindergartens was challenged by the high number of “new kids”, and for the first time in many years the demand for places is

higher than the supply. The municipality will open new units but struggle to find qualified educators in a labour market with high demand.

The role of NGO involvement

Norway has a vibrant range of NGOs, and many nationwide NGOs have traditionally contributed to the inclusion of refugees. Some of them has local units in Alta. One such an example is Alta Red Cross. They have a long tradition of helping refugee teenagers and adults with homework and language practice and meet on regular basis in the afternoons. The relationship between the Municipal authorities and local NGOs are good, and much of the work is coordinated through the Voluntary Centrals, a meeting place for different NGOs and people in need of support, co-financed by the municipality.

Sports clubs are also good arenas for inclusion and social practice, and they all pay efforts to include Ukrainian children and teenagers in their activities. Parents are helping to transport participants to halls, training grounds and tournaments as very few Ukrainian parents have access to a car. Religious communities are also active to include the refugees and provide pick-up assistance for attending services.

Some Ukrainian nationals have lived in Alta for many years and are well integrated. Ukrainian students were also attending University studies when the war broke out. They took the initiative to form a Ukrainian Society and have acted as spokespersons and helpers for the refugees coming.

The Norwegian State financial support for daily expenses to the Ukrainian refugees are minimal, and the refugees have the possibility to receive food parcels provided by Alta Food Central. The Central is a non-profit organisation providing food given by grocery shops to reduce food waste. Other donors and businesses provide food as well as financial support. The work of organising the service is made by volunteers, and people in need can pick supply on specific days during the week.

Nationwide NGOs are important partners for IMDi. The organisations help to strengthen and develop the local integration work through teams, associations, voluntary centres, clubs and districts across the country, as well as effective dissemination of experience. IMDi has letters of intent with several NGOs at the national level. Municipalities and NGOs can increase immigrants' participation in the local community by offering common meeting places with the local population. Each year, IMDi provides grants towards integration work for NGOs. The grants aim to improve knowledge about integration in the population and increase the trust and participation among immigrants and their children in various areas of society. Such funding has been available for several years, but the amount was substantially increased due to the Ukrainian refugee's crisis. Nationwide NGO can apply for money from IMDi for further distribution among local suborganisations. Examples are local organisations of outdoor activities – DNT that received substantial financial support from IMDi and made money available for the Alta branch to organise fishing trips for young Ukrainian adults and dog sledge rides for kids. Another example is Alta chess club inviting Ukrainian kids and youngsters to chess tournaments.

Examples of inclusion

Local cultural organisations in Alta have responded to the request of inclusion by offering Ukrainian refugees free tickets to concerts, cultural events, as well as including Ukrainians in the program. One example is the annual classical music festival Festivalta that in February 2023 dedicated the opening concert to the victims of the war in Ukraine, playing music of the Ukrainian composer Silvestrov accompanied by Ukrainian poetry reading. Another effort to include the Ukrainian refugees in the local community, is to engage them in voluntary work. One example is the annual football tournament for children in Alta where 3000 participants need support in organising practical tasks. Ukrainian refugees helped in preparing and serving food for the youngsters. One of the Ukrainians says that it feels good to contribute with a helping hand, and the dugnad is a therapy to keep you mind away from the war. One of the coordinators claims that the dugnad strengthen the refugees' place attachment and makes them visible as local citizens.

Approximately 10 % of the population in Alta are immigrants, but their voices are seldom heard in the political debate. Alta Municipal Council recently decided to form a consultative Immigrant Council to strengthen their say, work and social participation. The Immigrant Council will strive to make Alta more inclusive, open and tolerant where citizens from other countries can participate in the local community.

Conclusion

Overall, the influx of refugees to Norway, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine represented a challenge to the Norwegian system in the sense that the number of refugees was far higher than in a normal year. This necessitated some adjustments to the laws and procedures regulating acceptance of, and settlement of Ukrainians as refugees in Norway. At the same time, the role of NGOs, and their relations with state authorities in this situation was largely based on pre-existing arrangements and structures of collaborations.

Some of the larger, well-established NGOs with a national reach, such as the Red Cross and Norwegian People's Aid, established formal agreements with IMDi to take part in the reception and settlement of Ukrainian refugees. A number of NGOs would play an important role in organizing "intergrative" social activities, to a large extent funded by Norwegian authorities based on project applications. Which NGOs play a central role in organizing such activities can differ between different regions. This followed a pattern of NGO mobilization last seen during the refugee-crisis of 2015, when Norway, as much of Europe saw an unprecedented influx of refugees, primarily from Syria and Afghanistan.

One new factor following the war on Ukraine is that Ukrainian refugees, primarily in the big cities found themselves dependent on handout of free food, second-hand clothes and other items of necessity from NGOs, because the financial benefits they received was simply not enough to cover their basic needs. News coverage of this caused some public outcry in Norway,

and settled an impression that while support from Norwegian authorities have fallen short, NGOs play a very important role in covering the basic needs of Ukrainian refugees in Norway.

Overall, the role and activities of NGOs have been scaled up in response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees. But these NGOs have mobilized and coordinated with Norwegian authorities following largely well-established structures of collaboration and financial support.

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Cities in the
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Iceland
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The EEA Grants represent the contribution of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway towards a green, competitive and inclusive Europe.

There are two overall objectives: reduction of economic and social disparities in Europe, and to strengthen bilateral relations between the donor countries and 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics.

The three donor countries cooperate closely with the EU through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). The donors have provided 3.3 billion € through consecutive grant schemes between 1994 and 2014. For the period 2014 – 2021, the EEA Grants amount to €1.55 billion. The priorities for this period are:

1. Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness
2. Social Inclusion, Youth Employment and Poverty Reduction
3. Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy
4. Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance and Fundamental Rights
5. Justice and Home Affairs

The EEA Grants are jointly financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, whose contributions are based on their GDP.

Eligibility for the Grants mirror the criteria set for the EU Cohesion Fund aimed at member countries where the Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average.

All projects are co-financed by the State Budget of the Slovak Republic in the amount of 15%.