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# Spis treści

1	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	The subject and scope of empirical research – local communities as a space for the integration of migrants	4
1.2	Research problem and research questions	5
1.3	Research methodology	6
2	A thematic analysis of gaps in support systems	8
2.1	Counteracting social exclusion as a policy objective of the European Union – the concept of significance at the level of regulation of the European Union treaties	9
2.2	Problems of refugees (from Ukraine) in the countries of the European Union – the level of secondary law of the European Union	11
2.3	The concept of social capital and social inclusion and social integration of refugees – a literature approach	12
2.4	Social Capital Building and Social Inclusion of Refugees (from Ukraine) in European Documents and Studies	15
2.5	Integration policy and building social capital and social inclusiveness – a theoretical model in the European Union	16
2.6	The role of local governments in building social capital and social inclusiveness – multi-level governance	18
2.7	The role of local governments and multi-level governance in disseminating knowledge about the benefits of integration and the paradox of perception of migration	20
3	SWOT analysis of refugee integration	21
3.1	Characteristics of the Greek model	21
3.2	Characteristics of the Slovenian model	24
3.3	A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in rural areas of Germany	26
3.4	A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Romania	29
3.5	A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland	33
3.6	A synthetic comparison of four models of integration of refugees from Ukraine emerging from the analysed reports: Greek, Slovenian, German and Romanian.	33
3.7	Models of refugee integration and building social inclusiveness – a comparative analysis	36

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The subject and scope of empirical research – local communities as a space for the integration of migrants

In recent years, the problem of integrating migrants and counteracting social exclusion has become one of the important social, economic and political challenges in European countries. This issue has become particularly important after 2022 due to the influx of refugees from Ukraine to many European Union countries. Forced migration caused by armed conflict has led to new challenges related to social security, access to public services, social inclusion and the exploitation of migrants' potential in host communities.

In this context, more and more attention is paid to the role of local communities and institutions functioning at the local level in the processes of integration of migrants. It is at the local level that a significant part of the activities related to ensuring access to basic social services, education, the labour market and institutional support are carried out. At the same time, local social communities are a space in which social relations between residents and people coming from other countries are formed, as well as mechanisms for building social capital and social inclusion are developed.

The importance of local communities in the process of integration of migrants also results from the nature of contemporary public policies, which are increasingly based on the model of multi-level governance. In this model, integration activities are carried out simultaneously at the European, national, regional and local levels, and it is the local level that is the place where many initiatives and programs aimed at migrants are directly implemented. Local governments, non-governmental organizations, social institutions, enterprises and informal groups of residents undertake various activities aimed at both supporting migrants in meeting their basic needs and including them in the life of the local community.

An important element of integration processes is building social capital and strengthening social inclusion. Social capital is understood as a resource of social relations, networks of cooperation, social norms and trust, which are conducive to undertaking joint actions and strengthen social cohesion. Social inclusiveness, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which different social groups – including migrants – have the opportunity to participate in the social, economic and institutional life of a given community. The process of integrating migrants is therefore not only about providing them with access to services or social assistance, but also about creating conditions that enable them to actively participate in the life of the local community and develop their social and economic potential.

The aim of this report is to present the results of research on the activities undertaken by various entities operating in local communities to build social inclusion and strengthen the social capital of refugees from Ukraine. The research focuses on identifying initiatives carried out by public institutions, business entities, non-governmental organizations and informal groups of residents that promote the integration of migrants in local social communities.

The subject of the analysis are activities undertaken in the years 2022–2025 in selected local communities in the European Union countries. The research includes both formal activities, carried out as part of programs and projects financed from public or private funds, as well as informal initiatives undertaken by various groups of residents. Particular attention was paid to activities related to education and training, support on the labour market, development of entrepreneurship, legal and administrative assistance, provision of social and

care services, as well as initiatives promoting the participation of migrants in the social and cultural life of local communities.

The report is based on the results of empirical research conducted using the multiple case study method. This method enables an in-depth analysis of complex social phenomena by examining several deliberately selected cases that allow for the identification of similarities and differences in the ways in which institutions and organizations operating in different social and institutional contexts operate. Each of the analyzed cases is a separate unit of analysis, and their comparison allows us to capture the mechanisms conducive to building social inclusiveness and identify barriers hindering the implementation of integration activities.

The study used triangulation of research methods, including analysis of existing data (Desk Research) and individual in-depth interviews (IDI). The analysis of the existing data allowed for the identification of existing programs, strategies and initiatives implemented for the integration of migrants, as well as to determine the institutional and social context of the actions taken. In turn, in-depth interviews conducted with representatives of public institutions, non-governmental organizations, business entities and informal groups of residents made it possible to gain in-depth knowledge about the nature of the actions taken, their effects, available resources and the difficulties encountered.

The collected data were used to analyse the support system operating at the local level and to identify its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats related to the further development of integration activities. The results of the research were presented in the form of national analyses and a comparative analysis, which makes it possible to identify different models of integration of migrants emerging in the analysed countries.

The structure of the report has been subordinated to the logic of presenting both the theoretical and institutional context, as well as the results of empirical research. The first part of the report presents the theoretical and institutional context related to the integration of migrants and building social capital and social inclusion. The next part presents the results of empirical research on selected countries of the European Union. Next, a comparative analysis of models of integration of refugees from Ukraine is presented, which allows for the identification of similarities and differences in the ways of organizing integration activities in different social and institutional contexts. The report concludes with a synthetic discussion of the research results, as well as conclusions and recommendations for the further development of activities aimed at building social inclusion of migrants in local communities.

Contemporary migration processes are one of the most important social and political challenges in Europe. A particularly intense influx of migrants to the European Union countries has been observed since 2022 in connection with the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine. The armed conflict has led to mass movements of the population, and a significant part of refugees from Ukraine have found shelter in European Union member states. This situation has posed new challenges for public institutions, social organizations and local communities related to ensuring living conditions and integration of people arriving from Ukraine.

In the process of integrating migrants, local communities play a special role, which are the basic space for the functioning of individuals and social institutions. It is at the local level that a significant part of the activities related to access to public services, education, the labour market and social assistance are carried out. At the same time, local social communities are a place where relations between residents and people coming from other countries are formed, as well as mechanisms conducive to social integration and building social capital are developed.

The subject of this study are activities undertaken in local communities that promote the inclusion of various categories of residents – including migrants from Ukraine – in the social,

economic and institutional life of local communities. The analysis focuses on identifying initiatives undertaken by various actors operating at the local level, such as public institutions, business entities, non-governmental organizations and informal groups of residents.

The scope of the research includes activities carried out in the years 2022–2025 in selected local communities in several countries of the European Union. Particular attention was paid to initiatives aimed at increasing the access of migrants and other categories of residents to various forms of social, educational and economic support, as well as activities conducive to building social relations and integration with the local community.

The research covers various types of activities undertaken for the benefit of residents, including activities related to education and training, support on the labour market, development of entrepreneurship, legal and administrative assistance, provision of social and care services, as well as initiatives promoting the participation of migrants in the social and cultural life of local communities. The institutional and organisational resources available to entities implementing integration activities and the barriers hindering their implementation were also analysed.

## 1.2 Research problem and research questions

The main research problem of this project is the identification of activities and conditions conducive to building social inclusion and social capital in local communities, with particular emphasis on the integration of migrants from Ukraine. In connection with the intensification of migration processes in Europe, the question arises about the role of various entities functioning in local communities in creating conditions conducive to the integration of new residents and the use of their social and economic potential.

Therefore, the research problem concerns both the nature of activities undertaken by public institutions, social organizations, business entities and informal groups of residents, as well as the effects of these activities in the context of building social inclusiveness and social capital. An important element of the analysis is also the identification of barriers hindering the implementation of integration activities and factors conducive to their effectiveness.

The following research questions were formulated as part of the project:

- What public institutions, business entities, non-governmental organizations and informal groups of residents are taking action for the benefit of different categories of residents, including migrants from Ukraine?
- Which social groups are covered by the activities undertaken by these entities?
- What kind of activities were carried out in 2022–2025 for the integration of different categories of residents and migrants from Ukraine?
- What are the goals, organizational forms and scale of the activities carried out?
- What are the effects of the initiatives taken so far?
- What organizational, human and financial resources do entities implementing integration activities have?
- What barriers and challenges arise in the process of implementing activities for the social integration of migrants and other categories of residents?
- How are migrants from Ukraine perceived in local communities and how does this affect the implementation of integration activities?
- Do the activities undertaken by local actors focus primarily on solving the problems of migrants, or on using their potential for the development of local communities?

The answers to the above questions allow for an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms of functioning of local support systems and for the identification of factors conducive to building social inclusion in local communities.

## 1.3 Research methodology

The implementation of the research goals required the use of an approach that allows for an in-depth analysis of the activities undertaken by various entities operating in local communities. Therefore, the project uses the method of multiple case study, which allows for the analysis of complex social phenomena by examining several deliberately selected cases.

This method allows for a detailed analysis of the activities undertaken by public institutions, non-governmental organizations, business entities and other entities operating at the local level. Each of the analyzed cases is a separate unit of analysis, while their combination allows for the identification of similar mechanisms of action, patterns of cooperation and differences resulting from different social and institutional contexts.

The selection of cases was deliberate and based on criteria that made it possible to compare actions taken in different local contexts. In each of the analysed cases, the survey covered selected entities representing various sectors of social and economic life, including public institutions, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, business entities and informal groups of residents.

In order to provide the most complete picture of the analysed phenomena, triangulation of research methods was used, consisting in the use of various techniques of data collection and analysis. The study used both existing data and data obtained directly from representatives of the surveyed institutions and organizations.

The basic research techniques used in the project included Desk Research and Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI). The analysis of the existing data allowed to gather information on existing programs, strategies and initiatives implemented for the integration of migrants, as well as to identify the institutional and social context of activities undertaken in the studied local communities.

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of public institutions, non-governmental organizations, business entities and informal groups of residents involved in activities for the benefit of various categories of residents, including migrants from Ukraine. These interviews made it possible to gain in-depth knowledge about the nature of the activities carried out, their goals, effects, available resources and difficulties arising in the process of their implementation.

The methodological approach used enabled a multi-faceted analysis of activities undertaken in local communities and the identification of factors conducive or hindering building social inclusion. The results of the research are the basis for conducting an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of local support systems and for identifying opportunities and threats related to the further development of integration activities.

### **Selection of research cases – characteristics of the surveyed local governments and their communities**

The selection of research cases in this project was purposeful and was subordinated to the methodological assumptions of the multiple case study method. The aim of such an approach was to enable an in-depth analysis of the actions taken to build social inclusiveness and the integration of migrants from Ukraine in various social and institutional contexts.

The survey covered selected local communities in several European Union Member States where a significant number of refugees from Ukraine appeared after 2022. The analyzed cases represent different models of organization of social support systems, different institutional conditions and different traditions of integration policies. Such diversity makes it possible to identify both similarities and differences in the ways of organizing integration activities and building social inclusiveness in local communities.

The study included cases from the following countries: Greece, Slovenia, Germany, Romania, Polish, Austria and Lithuania. The selection of these countries was dictated by

several criteria. Firstly, all the analysed countries belong to the European Union and operate within a common system of regulations concerning migration and social policy. Secondly, these countries differ in their experiences related to the reception of migrants and the organisation of support systems for refugees. Thirdly, the selected cases represent different socio-economic contexts, which allows for the analysis of the impact of these factors on integration processes.

The unit of analysis in the study are entities operating in local communities that take action for the benefit of various categories of residents, including migrants from Ukraine. In each of the analysed cases, public institutions, business entities, non-governmental organisations and informal groups of residents involved in integration activities were taken into account.

As part of the empirical research, ten entities representing different sectors of social and economic life were selected in each of the analysed local communities. Among them were, in particular:

- local government units and public administration institutions,
- social welfare institutions and educational institutions,
- non-governmental organizations working for residents and migrants,
- enterprises and other economic entities,
- informal groups of residents engaged in social activities.

Such diversity of analysed entities allows us to capture a wide range of activities undertaken in local communities for social integration and building social capital.

The selection of the analyzed cases also allows for a comparative analysis of models of integration of migrants emerging in different institutional and social contexts. A comparison of the experiences of individual local communities allows for the identification of factors conducive to the effective integration of migrants and for indicating barriers hindering the implementation of integration activities.

### **Research methods and techniques**

The implementation of the research assumptions required the use of a methodological approach enabling the analysis of complex social processes occurring in local communities. The study triangulated research methods and techniques, using different data sources and different ways of obtaining and analysing them. This approach allows for a more complete picture of the analysed phenomena and increases the reliability of the research results.

One of the basic research techniques used in the project was the analysis of existing data (Desk Research). This method involves the analysis of existing source materials, such as reports, strategic documents, public statistics, expert studies, reports on the activities of institutions and other documents on activities undertaken for the integration of migrants and combating social exclusion. The analysis of the existing data was carried out at the first stage of the research and was the starting point for further empirical analyses.

Desk Research made it possible to identify the activities undertaken by various entities operating in local communities, as well as to determine the institutional and social context of these activities. It also allowed for the initial identification of areas requiring in-depth analysis in the further part of the research.

The second basic research technique used in the project was In-Depth Interviews (IDI). These interviews were conducted with representatives of public institutions, non-governmental organizations, business entities and informal groups of residents involved in activities for the benefit of various categories of residents, including migrants from Ukraine.

In-depth individual interviews are characterized by a relatively low level of standardization, which makes it possible to adapt the course of the interview to the specifics

of a given organization and the context of its functioning. Thanks to this, it was possible to obtain in-depth information on the nature of the activities undertaken, their goals, the way of organization, available resources and difficulties arising in the process of implementation of integration initiatives.

The interviews also made it possible to learn about the opinions and experiences of people directly involved in activities for the integration of migrants and other categories of residents. This allowed for a better understanding of the mechanisms of cooperation between different entities functioning in local communities, as well as for the identification of factors conducive or hindering the implementation of integration activities.

The combination of existing data analysis and individual in-depth interviews made it possible to conduct a multi-faceted analysis of local support systems and social integration. The data obtained were used to identify actions taken for the benefit of various categories of residents, to determine their goals and effects, as well as to analyze resources and barriers related to the implementation of integration initiatives.

The results of the conducted research are the basis for further analysis of the functioning of local social support systems and for the identification of their strengths and weaknesses, development opportunities and threats, which is presented in the further parts of the report in the form of a SWOT analysis.

## 2 A thematic analysis of gaps in support systems

Migration processes are one of the most important social phenomena of contemporary Europe. In recent years, forced migration related to the armed conflict in Ukraine has become particularly important, leading to the influx of large numbers of refugees to the Member States of the European Union. This phenomenon has created new challenges for public policy systems, social institutions and local communities, which have been involved in efforts to provide support to people arriving from Ukraine and their integration into host societies.

In response to the growing scale of forced migration, the European Union institutions and the Member States are taking a number of measures to counteract the social exclusion of migrants and to promote their social and economic integration. These activities range from the creation of a legal and institutional framework at European level to the implementation of specific programmes and initiatives at national, regional and local level. The modern approach to integration policy is increasingly based on the assumption that the integration of migrants is a multidimensional process, requiring the cooperation of many actors and activities carried out at different levels of public management.

Local communities and institutions operating at the level of local governments play an important role in this process. It is at the local level that a significant part of the activities related to ensuring migrants have access to basic public services, such as education, healthcare, social assistance or support on the labour market, are carried out. At the same time, local communities are a space in which social relations between residents and people coming from other countries are formed, as well as mechanisms conducive to building social trust, cooperation and solidarity are developed.

In the context of integration processes, the concepts of social capital and social inclusiveness are of particular importance. Social capital refers to the resources inherent in social relationships, networks of cooperation, social norms and the level of trust between members of a given community. Social inclusiveness, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which different social groups – including migrants – have the opportunity to participate in the social, economic and institutional life of a given community. Building social capital and

strengthening social inclusiveness are recognised as one of the key conditions for the successful integration of migrants into host societies.

The analysis of integration processes requires taking into account both the legal and institutional context functioning at the level of the European Union, as well as broader social and theoretical conditions related to the issues of social capital, social inclusiveness and integration policy. The literature on the subject emphasizes that the effective integration of migrants depends not only on the availability of public services or support programs, but also on the quality of social relations in local communities, the level of social trust and the degree of openness of society to cultural diversity.

Therefore, this part of the report presents the theoretical and institutional conditions of the processes of integration of migrants in the European Union countries. The analysis includes, in particular, legal regulations and public policy objectives related to counteracting social exclusion, problems and challenges faced by migrants in the European Union countries, as well as concepts of social capital and social inclusion in the context of social inclusion.

The importance of integration policy implemented in the multi-level management model and the role of local governments in creating conditions conducive to the integration of migrants and building social capital in local communities are also discussed. Particular attention was also paid to the issue of social perception of migration and the role of public institutions and local leaders in shaping knowledge and social attitudes towards migrants.

The theoretical and institutional context presented in this part of the report is a reference point for the analysis of the results of empirical research presented in the following parts of the study.

## 2.1 Counteracting social exclusion as a policy objective of the European Union – the concept of significance at the level of regulation of the European Union treaties

Combating social exclusion is one of the key elements of the European social model. This policy aims to reduce the processes of social marginalization by ensuring that individuals and groups at risk of exclusion have access to basic socio-economic resources, such as employment, education, health care or the social security system. The literature on the subject emphasizes that social exclusion is multidimensional and includes both economic and social aspects, as well as the political participation of individuals in social life<sup>1</sup>.

Social exclusion is understood as a process leading to the limitation of the possibility of participation of individuals or groups in the basic structures of social life. It can result from a number of interrelated factors, such as poverty, unemployment, disability, low qualifications, discrimination or forced migration<sup>2</sup>. The sociological literature also indicates that social exclusion should be analysed not only as an economic problem, but also as a phenomenon related to limited access to social institutions and weakening of social bonds<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, social inclusion policies in the European Union are horizontal in nature and cover a wide range of groups at risk of marginalisation, including the poor, the long-term unemployed, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, homeless people, as well as migrants and refugees. Social inclusion is therefore one of the important elements of the European Union's social policy and an important instrument for implementing the principle of social cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Silver, *Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms*, *International Labour Review* 1994, vol. 133, no. 5–6, pp. 531–578.

<sup>2</sup> R. Levitas, C. Pantazis, E. Fahmy, D. Gordon, E. Lloyd, D. Patsios, *The Multi-dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion*, Department for Communities and Local Government, London 2007.

<sup>3</sup> A. Sen, *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application, and Scrutiny*, Asian Development Bank, Manila 2000.

The legal basis for the activities undertaken in this area is primarily to be found in the primary law of the European Union. In accordance with Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union, the Union shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion and combat social exclusion and discrimination<sup>4</sup>. This provision indicates that building social cohesion is one of the fundamental goals of European integration.

The so-called social clause contained in Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is also of significant importance. According to this provision, requirements relating to, in particular, a high level of employment, adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion and the provision of a high level of education and health protection must be taken into account in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities. This clause stresses the need to take social aspects into account in various areas of EU policy.

These regulations are complemented by the provisions of Articles 151 and 153 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which define the scope of the Union's actions in the field of social policy. In accordance with these rules, the Union supports and complements the actions of the Member States in areas such as improving working conditions, social protection of workers and the integration of people excluded from the labour market<sup>5</sup>.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is also an important element of the system of protection of social rights in the European Union. Article 34 of the Charter guarantees the right to social assistance and housing assistance in order to combat poverty and social exclusion. Article 21, on the other hand, establishes a general principle of non-discrimination on grounds such as sex, ethnic origin, religion, disability or age<sup>6</sup>.

In recent years, the problem of counteracting social exclusion has also been increasingly analysed in the context of migration and the integration of migrants and refugees. The European Union institutions emphasise that the effective integration of migrants is an important element of social inclusion policy and a prerequisite for building cohesive European societies. The European Commission's documents indicate that migrants' access to the labour market, education, public services and social security systems fosters both their social integration and reducing the risk of permanent forms of social marginalisation<sup>7</sup>.

Similar conclusions are drawn in reports by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which emphasise that the rapid integration of migrants into education systems and the labour market plays a key role in the process of their social and economic integration<sup>9</sup>. Lack of access to these areas of social life may lead to the deepening of social inequalities and the perpetuation of social exclusion processes among migrants and refugees.

In this context, the actions taken towards refugees should be seen not only as a humanitarian response, but also as part of a broader policy to counteract social exclusion. Indeed, the integration of refugees is an important component of social inclusion policy, which aims to prevent the emergence of permanent forms of marginalisation and to enable those arriving in the Member States to participate in the basic social and economic structures of the host societies.

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<sup>4</sup> Treaty on European Union, OJ L 101, p. OJ C 202, 7.6.2016, p. 13-46.

<sup>5</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, OJ L 113, p. OJ C 202, 7.6.2016, pp. 389-405

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027, Brussels 2020.

<sup>7</sup> OECD, European Commission, Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In, Paris 2023.

## 2.2 Problems of refugees (from Ukraine) in the countries of the European Union – the level of secondary law of the European Union

As indicated in the previous chapter, counteracting social exclusion is one of the basic objectives of the European Union's social policy and an element of the implementation of the principle of social cohesion. In this context, the actions taken towards migrants and refugees are of particular importance, as they belong to groups particularly vulnerable to social marginalisation due to their living situation. The European Union's legal instruments on refugees should therefore be analysed not only from the perspective of humanitarian protection, but also as tools to counteract social exclusion.

The massive influx of people fleeing armed conflicts poses a serious challenge for both host countries and the refugees themselves. This is particularly the case after the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, which led to the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the end of World War II. In response, the European Union has activated the temporary protection mechanism provided for in Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for granting protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons<sup>8</sup>.

This directive was adopted as early as 2001, but its genesis dates back to the experience of European countries related to armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. At that time, European countries were faced with the need to take in a significant number of people fleeing hostilities, but the lack of common legal solutions at the European Union level led to significant differences in the way individual countries reacted to the influx of refugees. The introduction of the temporary protection mechanism was therefore aimed at creating a common legal framework allowing for a swift and coordinated response by Member States to situations of mass forced migration<sup>9</sup>.

The temporary protection mechanism differs from the classic asylum procedure. This protection is collective in nature and is granted to persons covered by it without the need to carry out an individual asylum procedure. The decision to activate this mechanism is taken by the Council of the European Union at the request of the European Commission<sup>10</sup>. Temporary protection is granted for a limited period of time and covers, m.in, the right to reside, access to the labour market, education, health care and basic social benefits.

Despite the adoption of the Directive in 2001, it has not been applied for more than two decades. The literature indicates that this was mainly due to the lack of political consensus among Member States on a common response to migration crises. In many cases, countries have taken individual action, using national asylum systems or temporary arrangements, rather than triggering a common protection mechanism at European Union level<sup>11</sup>.

It was only the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 that led to the application of the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in the history of European integration. Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 has provided temporary protection to millions of people fleeing the territory of Ukraine and ensured their immediate access to fundamental social rights in the Member States<sup>12</sup>.

The regulations contained in the directive respond to a number of problems faced by people forced to leave their country as a result of armed conflicts.

One of the basic problems is the lack of a stable legal status. People fleeing war often find themselves in a situation of uncertainty about the legality of their stay and the possibility

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<sup>8</sup> Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 L 212 of 7.08.2001.

<sup>9</sup> S. Peers, *EU Justice and Home Affairs Law*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Directive 2001/55/EC, Article 5.

<sup>11</sup> S. Carrera, E. Guild, *Temporary Protection and the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis*, CEPS 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022

of enjoying their fundamental rights in the host country. Standard asylum procedures are usually lengthy and administratively complex, which can lead to overloading Member States' asylum systems in a context of mass influx of refugees. The temporary protection mechanism, on the other hand, allows for the swift granting of the right to stay without the need for a full asylum procedure<sup>13</sup>.

A significant problem is also the limited access of refugees to the labour market and means of subsistence. People arriving in host countries often do not have the financial resources or the ability to take up employment immediately. Lack of the right to work would lead to long-term dependence on social welfare systems. However, the Directive provides for the possibility of taking up work and participating in vocational training, which is conducive to the achievement of economic independence by persons covered by temporary protection.

Another challenge is housing problems. Refugees arriving in Member States often do not have a place of residence in the host country, which requires the organisation of temporary accommodation schemes or the provision of support in finding housing. The Directive obliges Member States to provide adequate accommodation or assistance in obtaining it.

An important element of the protection system is also ensuring access to health care and psychological support. People fleeing armed conflict often require treatment for physical injuries, as well as help coping with war trauma and the consequences of experiences of violence or forced displacement.

A special group among refugees are children and young people. Sudden interruption of education can have serious consequences for their social and professional development. For this reason, the Temporary Assistance Directive guarantees children's access to the education system in the host countries, enabling them to continue their education and promoting their social inclusion<sup>1</sup>.

However, one of the most important challenges related to the reception of refugees is the risk of their long-term social exclusion. Refugees often experience a loss of economic, social and institutional resources, which makes it significantly more difficult to function in a new social environment. The literature indicates that language barriers, lack of recognition of professional qualifications and limited knowledge of public institutions in the host country significantly increase the risk of marginalisation of migrants<sup>14</sup>.

The Temporary Replacement Directive provides for access to basic social benefits, healthcare, education and the labour market. Access to these areas of social life is an important instrument for countering social exclusion, as it enables refugees to participate in the basic socio-economic structures of the host country<sup>15</sup>.

The rapid integration of refugees into the labour market is of particular importance. OECD research indicates that the professional activation of migrants fosters their social integration and reduces the risk of long-term dependence on social welfare systems<sup>13</sup>. Equally important is the education of children and young people, which enables them to continue their education and fosters the integration of young refugees with their peers in the host society<sup>16</sup>.

## 2.3 The concept of social capital and social inclusion and social integration of refugees – a literature approach

The presented legal regulations on the temporary protection of refugees indicate that the actions taken at the level of the European Union are aimed not only at providing basic

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<sup>13</sup> Directive 2001/55/EC, Articles 5 to 8.

<sup>14</sup> A. Ager, A. Strang, *Understanding Integration*, "Journal of Refugee Studies" 2008.

<sup>15</sup> OECD, European Commission, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023*, Paris 2023.

<sup>16</sup> OECD, *The Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, Paris 2022.

protection to people fleeing armed conflicts, but also at creating conditions conducive to their social integration in the host countries. Access to the labour market, education, the health care system or public institutions is one of the key elements of counteracting the social exclusion of migrants and refugees.

At the same time, the analysis of integration processes cannot be limited only to the institutional and legal perspective. It is increasingly emphasised that the effective integration of migrants also depends on social factors, such as the level of social trust, networks of social relations or the ability of societies to integrate new members into existing social structures. In this context, the concepts of social capital and social inclusiveness are of particular importance, as they allow for a better understanding of the mechanisms conducive to the integration of refugees in host societies.

For this reason, the rest of the article focuses on the analysis of the concept of social capital and social inclusiveness in the context of the integration of refugees from Ukraine in the Member States of the European Union.

Contemporary analyses of the integration processes of migrants and refugees increasingly refer to the concept of social capital and social inclusiveness. This approach allows us to look at the problem of counteracting social exclusion not only through the prism of access to public benefits or the labour market, but also through the prism of social relations, the level of trust and the ability of society to integrate new members into existing social structures. In this view, the integration of refugees is not only a process of adaptation of individuals to new institutional conditions, but also a process of building social relations and strengthening social cohesion in host societies<sup>17</sup>.

The concept of social capital refers to the network of social relationships, norms of reciprocity, and the level of trust that enable individuals to cooperate and participate in social life. The literature on the subject indicates that social capital is an important resource of the community, which is conducive to the effective functioning of public institutions and increases the ability of societies to solve collective problems<sup>18</sup>. Robert D. Putnam emphasizes that a high level of social capital is conducive to the growth of social trust and improves the quality of functioning of public institutions<sup>19</sup>.

In the context of migration, the distinction between bonding social capital, which is based on relationships within a given social group, and bridging social capital, which enables the establishment of relationships between different social groups, is of particular importance<sup>20</sup>. For refugees, the development of bridging social capital is of particular importance, as it enables the building of relationships with members of the host society and facilitates access to information, public institutions and employment opportunities.

From the perspective of social capital, the integration of refugees should be seen as a reciprocal process, involving both the actions taken by those arriving in a new country and by public institutions and local communities. Access to the labour market, the education system or public services is conducive not only to improving the economic situation of migrants, but also to the creation of new social networks and the strengthening of relations between different social groups. In this way, integration policies can contribute to increasing the level of social trust and reducing tensions arising from cultural or economic differences.

The concept of social inclusivity is closely related to the above perspective. It refers to the ability of a society to include all its members in the basic structures of social life. The literature emphasizes that social inclusiveness means not only formal access to public

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<sup>17</sup> A. Ager, A. Strang, *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2008.

<sup>18</sup> J. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, *American Journal of Sociology* 1988.

<sup>19</sup> R. D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press 1993.

<sup>20</sup> R. D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster 2000.

institutions, but also a real opportunity to participate in social, economic and cultural life<sup>21</sup>. In this respect, the integration of migrants and refugees is one of the important elements of building an inclusive society, in which social diversity does not lead to the marginalization of certain groups, but becomes a factor strengthening social and economic dynamics.

The application of this perspective in the analysis of the European Union's integration policies makes it possible to see that legal instruments concerning refugees can have not only a protective but also a social function. Providing temporary protection with access to the labour market, education or public services is conducive to the creation of new social relations and enables the gradual integration of these people into the structures of the host societies. As a result, integration policy measures can contribute to strengthening social capital among both migrants and local communities.

The presented theoretical considerations constitute an important basis for the analysis of integration processes taking place in the Member States of the European Union in connection with the influx of refugees from Ukraine after the start of the Russian aggression in 2022. The mass nature of migration has made it necessary for European countries to quickly implement legal and institutional solutions to provide protection to people fleeing armed conflict, and at the same time to create conditions conducive to their social integration.

In this context, the activation of the temporary protection mechanism at the European Union level, which enabled people fleeing Ukraine to quickly access basic social rights, including the right to reside, access to the labour market, the education system and healthcare, was of particular importance<sup>22</sup>. The provision of these powers can be analysed not only from the perspective of humanitarian protection, but also in the context of tackling social exclusion and building more inclusive societies.

Access to basic social institutions enables refugees to participate in the social and economic life of the host countries and fosters social relations with members of local communities. From the perspective of the concept of social capital, the process of integration of refugees from Ukraine can be interpreted as a process of creating new networks of social relations between migrants and host societies. Social contacts in the workplace, in the education system or in local communities can foster the development of social capital of a bridging nature, which enables cooperation between different social groups and facilitates access to information and social resources<sup>23</sup>.

As a result, the process of integration of migrants can contribute not only to improving the living situation of the refugees themselves, but also to strengthening social cohesion in the host countries. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the effectiveness of integration policies depends on many factors, including the availability of institutional forms of support, the activity of local communities and the level of social acceptance of the presence of migrants.

The Temporary Replacement Directive provides for access to basic social benefits, healthcare, education and the labour market. Access to these areas of social life is an important instrument for countering social exclusion, as it enables refugees to participate in the basic socio-economic structures of the host country.

The rapid integration of refugees into the labour market is of particular importance. OECD research indicates that the professional activation of migrants fosters their social integration and reduces the risk of long-term dependence on social welfare systems. Equally important is the education of children and young people, which enables them to continue their education and fosters the integration of young refugees with their peers in the host society.

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<sup>21</sup> R. Levitas et al., *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion*, London 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022

<sup>23</sup> OECD, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023*, Paris 2023.

The presented legal regulations indicate that the actions taken at the level of the European Union are aimed not only at providing basic protection to people fleeing armed conflicts, but also at creating conditions conducive to their social integration in the host countries. Access to the labour market, education, the health care system or public institutions is one of the key elements of counteracting the social exclusion of migrants and refugees.

At the same time, the analysis of integration processes cannot be limited only to the institutional and legal perspective. It is increasingly emphasised that the effective integration of migrants also depends on social factors, such as the level of social trust, networks of social relations or the ability of societies to integrate new members into existing social structures. In this context, the concepts of social capital and social inclusiveness are of particular importance.

## 2.4 Social Capital Building and Social Inclusion of Refugees (from Ukraine) in European Documents and Studies

In recent years, the problem of integrating migrants and building social inclusiveness has become one of the important topics of analyses carried out by both the European Union institutions and the scientific community. EU strategy papers stress that the effective integration of migrants requires action not only at the state level, but also at the local level. Cities and local communities play a special role in this process, as they are a space for daily social contacts between migrants and members of host societies.

The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 indicates that the integration of migrants should include, *in but not least*, access to education, the labour market, public services and the opportunity to actively participate in society and citizenship<sup>24</sup>. In this respect, integration activities are not only social but also economic, as they contribute to making better use of the social and professional potential of migrants and strengthening social cohesion in the Member States.

The importance of migrants' social participation is also highlighted by reports by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The study *Together in the EU: Promoting the Participation of Migrants and their Descendants* indicates that the integration of migrants should be understood as a process enabling their active participation in the social, economic and political life of the host societies<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, analyses by the OECD and the European Commission on migrant integration rates show that access to the labour market, the education system and public institutions that enable migrants to establish social relationships and participate in social life is an important factor conducive to integration<sup>26</sup>.

The scientific literature also emphasizes the importance of social relations in the processes of integration of migrants. In the integration model proposed by A. Ager and A. Strang, one of the key elements of integration is social bonds and a sense of belonging to the host community<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, research on migration policy indicates that the process of integration of migrants is multi-layered, with local institutions and urban communities playing an important role in it<sup>28</sup>.

In recent years, migration research has also observed the so-called "local turn", i.e. the growing importance of the local level in the analysis of integration policies and the processes

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<sup>24</sup> European Commission, *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027*, Brussels 2020.

<sup>25</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Together in the EU: Promoting the Participation of Migrants and their Descendants*, Vienna 2017.

<sup>26</sup> OECD, European Commission, *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, Paris 2023.

<sup>27</sup> A. Ager, A. Strang, *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2008.

<sup>28</sup> P. Scholten, R. Penninx, *The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration*, in: B. Garcés-Masareñas, R. Penninx (eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*, Springer 2016.

of integration of migrants<sup>29</sup>. According to this approach, it is at the local level – in cities, schools, workplaces and neighbourhood communities – that key processes of building social relations between migrants and host communities take place.

Despite the growing interest of researchers in the issue of migrant integration in Europe, many analyses focus primarily on the state level or on the experiences of large urban centres. Relatively less attention is paid to integration processes taking place in small and medium-sized towns, where the structure of social relations and the role of local institutions can significantly affect the level of social inclusion.

In the context of the influx of refugees from Ukraine after 2022, this problem is of particular importance, as many smaller urban centres in European countries have become places where migrants settle. This means that the process of social integration of refugees does not take place only in large metropolises, but also in smaller local communities, where social relations are often more direct and the role of local institutions and social organizations can be particularly important.

Therefore, this article attempts to analyze the processes of building social capital and social inclusion in small towns in Poland and in selected small towns in other countries of the European Union. The aim of the analysis is to identify factors conducive to building social relations between migrants and local communities and to better understand the role of local institutions and local communities in the processes of integration of refugees from Ukraine.

## 2.5 Integration policy and building social capital and social inclusiveness – a theoretical model in the European Union

The literature on the integration of migrants increasingly emphasizes that the effectiveness of public policies in this area depends not only on ensuring formal access to social benefits or the labour market, but also on their impact on social relations in the host society. In this context, the concept of social capital is an important analytical tool, which allows to explain how institutional actions can contribute to strengthening social cohesion and reducing the risk of marginalisation of certain social groups. Social capital encompasses networks of social relations, norms of cooperation and the level of trust that enable individuals to function effectively in society<sup>1</sup>.

From the perspective of the integration of migrants and refugees, the development of bridging social capital, which enables the building of relationships between migrants and members of the host society<sup>2</sup>, is of particular importance<sup>2</sup>. These relations foster the exchange of information, increase access to social resources and facilitate participation in social and economic life. Unlike bonding social capital, which focuses on relationships within a given social group, bridging capital fosters the creation of links between different social environments and reduces the risk of the emergence of isolated migrant communities<sup>3</sup>.

On this basis, a theoretical model can be proposed to explain the relationship between integration policy and reducing social exclusion. In this model, integration policy acts as an institutional mechanism that enables refugees to access basic social resources, such as education, employment or public services. Access to these resources fosters social relationships and increases opportunities to participate in social life. As a result, new social networks are created that strengthen the level of trust and cooperation between different social groups.

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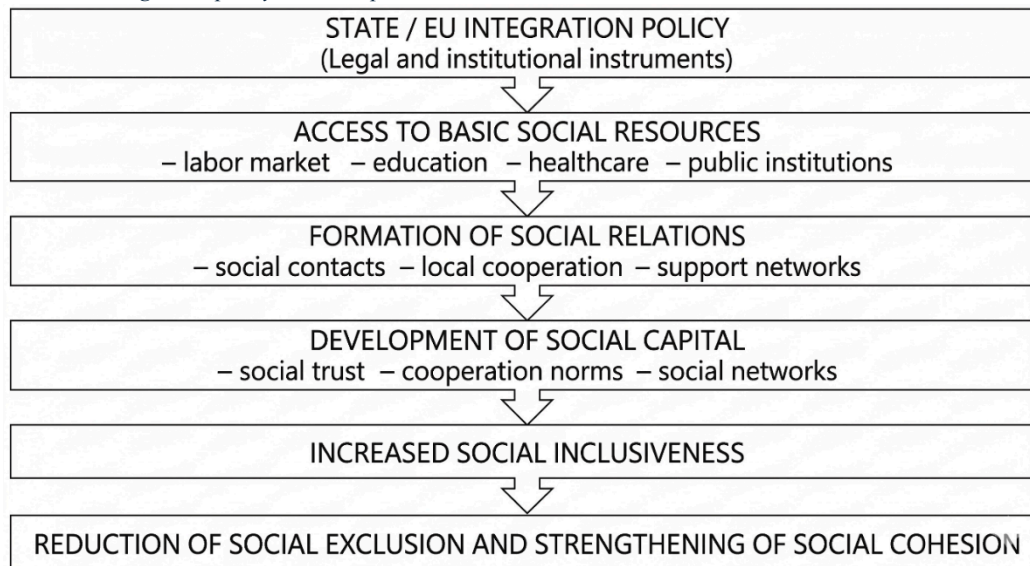
<sup>29</sup> R. Zapata-Barrero, T. Caponio, P. Scholten, *Theorizing the "local turn" in migration and integration studies*, *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 2017.

This process leads to a gradual increase in social capital both among migrants and in the host communities. As a consequence, the development of social capital contributes to reducing the risk of social exclusion, as people with access to social networks and public institutions have greater opportunities to find employment, receive institutional support or participate in society<sup>4</sup>.

For this reason, integration policies can be seen as part of a broader strategy to strengthen social cohesion. Their aim is not only to provide protection for people fleeing armed conflicts, but also to create conditions conducive to building social relations and increasing the level of trust in host societies.

Therefore, the proposed model indicates that the effectiveness of integration activities should be analysed not only in economic or institutional terms, but also in the context of their impact on the structure of social relations. Integration policies that foster networking between migrants and local communities can lead to increased social capital and contribute to building more inclusive societies in the long term.

Figure 1. Between integration policy, social capital and social inclusiveness



Source: own study based on R. D. Putnam's concept of social capital and A. Ager and A. Strang's theory of migrant integration.

The analysis indicates that counteracting social exclusion is one of the important elements of the European Union's social policy. Treaty regulations and EU secondary law instruments provide the institutional framework for the social integration of migrants and refugees. Of particular importance in this regard was the activation of the temporary protection mechanism after the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine in 2022, which made it possible to quickly ensure that refugees had access to basic social rights, such as the right to reside, access to the labour market, education and healthcare.

At the same time, the analysis of integration processes indicates that the effectiveness of actions taken within the framework of integration policy does not depend solely on legal and institutional solutions. Social factors also play an important role, in particular social relations, the level of trust and the ability of societies to integrate new members into existing social structures. In this context, the concepts of social capital and social inclusiveness prove to be particularly useful, which allow to analyze the integration of migrants not only in the institutional but also in the social dimension.

The presented theoretical model indicates that integration policies can contribute to the growth of social capital by providing migrants with access to basic social resources, such as

education, the labour market or public institutions. This access fosters social relationships between migrants and members of the host communities, which in turn leads to increased social trust and the building of more inclusive societies.

The local level plays an important role in this process. Research conducted in recent years indicates that the process of integration of migrants takes place to a large extent in local communities, where everyday social relations between migrants and residents of host societies are established. Small and medium-sized cities may be of particular importance in this context, where the structure of social relations and the activity of local institutions can be conducive to building social capital and strengthening social inclusiveness.

Therefore, further research on migrant integration processes should take greater account of the local perspective and the role of local institutions and communities in building social relations between migrants and host communities. Analysis of these processes can contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms of social integration of migrants and to the formulation of more effective public policies conducive to building cohesive and inclusive European societies.

## 2.6 The role of local governments in building social capital and social inclusiveness – multi-level governance

In the scientific literature, it is increasingly emphasized that the effectiveness of integration policies does not depend solely on legal and institutional solutions adopted at the state or European level. The integration of migrants and refugees takes place to a large extent in local communities, where everyday social relations between migrants and residents of host societies are established. For this reason, the concepts of social capital and social inclusiveness, which emphasize the role of social relations, trust and participation in public institutions in integration processes, are increasingly important in the analysis of integration processes<sup>30</sup>.

Small and medium-sized cities are a particularly interesting context for the analysis of these processes. In such local communities, social relations are often more direct than in large urban centres, and local institutions and social networks can play an important role in the process of integrating migrants into social life. At the same time, the presence of new groups of residents can pose a challenge for local communities, affecting the dynamics of social relations and the level of social acceptance<sup>31</sup>.

Integration policy in the European Union is implemented within the framework of a multi-level governance system, in which responsibility for integration activities is divided between the European, national and local levels<sup>32</sup>. Local governments play a special role in this system, as it is at the level of cities and municipalities that a significant part of public services aimed at migrants and refugees are provided.

Local governments are responsible for organising many key public services, such as education, social assistance and housing policy. As a result, the integration of migrants largely takes place in local communities, where there are direct contacts between refugees and the inhabitants of the region. Local authorities also play an important role in creating integration programmes that take into account the specificities of local communities. Integration strategies are being developed in many European cities, including language courses, support for professional integration and activities to promote intercultural dialogue<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> R. D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York 2000.

<sup>31</sup> A. Ager, A. Strang, *Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2008.

<sup>32</sup> P. Scholten, R. Penninx, *The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration*, Springer 2016.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027*, Brussels 2020.

An important element of these activities is cooperation with non-governmental organizations, which often implement social support and psychological support programs for migrants and refugees. Thanks to cooperation between public administration, social organizations and educational institutions, it is possible to create local support networks conducive to the integration of migrants and the building of social capital in the host communities.

One of the important challenges of integration policy in the European Union countries is to maintain social acceptance of the presence of refugees in local communities. The influx of more migrants may lead to social tensions, especially in a situation where some residents perceive the support provided to refugees as excessive or unfair to the local population. Therefore, EU integration policy includes not only actions aimed directly at migrants, but also instruments aimed at strengthening social cohesion and building social acceptance of integration processes.

One of the important tools used in this regard is the promotion of inclusive integration policies. In line with the approach set out in the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, integration activities should involve both migrants and host communities. A special role in this context is played by local intercultural dialogue initiatives, which aim to build relations between migrants and the host community. Many European cities are implementing projects to promote social cooperation, such as joint cultural events, volunteering programmes and neighbourhood initiatives<sup>34</sup>.

An analysis of integration policies implemented in the European Union Member States indicates that the effective integration of refugees requires a comprehensive approach involving actions at European, national and local level. The Temporary Assistance Directive has created a legal framework for the swift provision of protection to people fleeing war, but the long-term effectiveness of these solutions depends to a large extent on the quality of integration policies implemented in host countries.

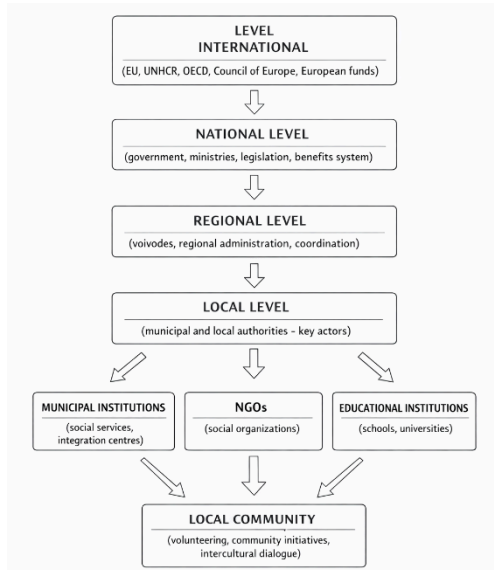
Local governments are of particular importance in this process, as they are responsible for the implementation of many public services and maintaining direct relations with local communities. Therefore, integration policies should strengthen the institutional capacity of local authorities and foster cooperation between public administrations, NGOs and local communities.

Building social acceptance of the presence of migrants is also an important element of an effective integration policy. Transparency of public actions, joint social initiatives and intercultural dialogue can contribute to reducing social tensions and increasing social cohesion in host countries.

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<sup>34</sup> R. Zapata-Barrero, T. Caponio, P. Scholten, *Theorizing the "local turn"*, *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 2017.

Figure 2 A multi-level system of integration of refugees



Source: own study.

The diagram presents a multi-level management system for the integration of migrants and refugees. It includes the international level, which provides the financial and expert framework, the state level, which is responsible for legislation and public policies, the regional level, which has a coordinating function, and the local level, where most of the integration activities are carried out. The local level is of the greatest operational importance, where the cooperation of local governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the local community directly affects the process of refugee integration.

## 2.7 The role of local governments and multi-level governance in disseminating knowledge about the benefits of integration and the paradox of perception of migration

The scale of social acceptance of integration policies depends not only on the actual economic effects of migration, but also on the way they are communicated and interpreted in the public space. In research on migration, it has been repeatedly pointed out that public opinions about migrants often differ from empirical data on their impact on the economy or the labor market. This phenomenon is referred to as the "paradox of perception of migration", in which societies often perceive the scale of migration and its consequences as more negative or more extensive than economic and demographic analyses suggest.

In practice, this means that even in situations where migrants contribute to economic growth, fill labour market shortages or increase tax revenues, part of the public may perceive their presence primarily in terms of social costs. For this reason, the literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of communication and educational activities that allow to present the real effects of migrant integration and build a more sustainable image of migration in the public space.

Research on the management of integration processes points out that activities taken at the local level play a particularly important role in this regard. Local governments are the institutional level closest to the citizens, and at the same time the place where the effects of migration are directly observed. For this reason, migration researchers point to the so-called "local turn" in integration policy, which consists in the growing role of cities and regions in shaping and implementing integration policies.

In practice, local governments can use a variety of instruments to reduce the gap between the actual effects of migrant integration and the social perception of migration.

Firstly, it is important to systematically disseminate knowledge about the real impact of the integration of migrants on the economy and social life. For this purpose, local governments can prepare local reports on the labour market, migrants' entrepreneurship or their participation in the tax system. OECD analyses indicate that transparent presentation of such data can help reduce social tensions and strengthen trust in public policies.

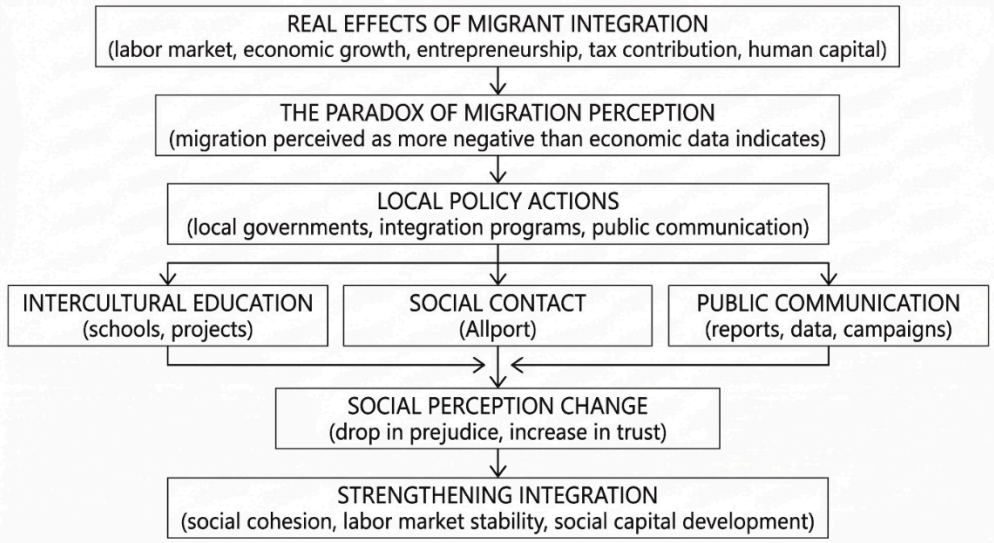
Secondly, an important element of local policy are activities that promote direct social contacts between residents and people with migration experience. According to Gordon Allport's classic theory of social contact, regular interactions between representatives of different social groups can lead to a reduction in prejudice and an increase in social trust. In practice, such activities may include local events, educational projects in schools, cultural initiatives or integration volunteering programs.

Thirdly, "local ambassadors" programmes are increasingly used, which consist in presenting people with migration experience as active participants in social and economic life. These can be entrepreneurs, employees of local companies, teachers, artists or social activists. Such programs serve to build positive narratives about migration by showing concrete stories of cooperation and success. Research on public communication on migration indicates that narratives based on examples of individual experiences are often more effective in shaping social attitudes than abstract institutional messages.

In a broader perspective, these activities may lead to the emergence of local pro-social norms conducive to social solidarity. The literature on social capital highlights that local communities where standards of cooperation and mutual assistance are developed have higher levels of trust and a greater capacity to solve social problems. From this point of view, measures supporting the integration of refugees can be seen not only as an element of humanitarian policy, but also as an instrument for strengthening social capital and the cohesion of local communities.

These experiences indicate that actions taken at the local level can play an important role in reducing the paradox of perception of migration by presenting concrete examples of cooperation, professional activity of migrants and their contribution to the development of local communities. As a result, the integration of migrants can be seen not only as a challenge for social policy, but also as an element of economic development and strengthening the social capital of local communities.

Figure 3 A model of local integration of refugees in the conditions of the paradox of migration perception



Source: own study.

The model shows the relationship between the actual effects of migrant integration and the social perception of migration. It assumes that the actions taken by local authorities –

including intercultural education, strengthening social contacts and data-driven communication – can contribute to reducing the "perceptual gap" between facts and public opinions. As a result, it is possible to strengthen integration processes and increase social cohesion in local communities.

## 3 SWOT analysis of refugee integration

### 3.1A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Greece

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in rural and semi-urban regions of Greece indicates the development of a specific integration model, which can be described as a local and social model based on "organic solidarity". Its most important feature is the dominant role of local communities, social organizations and local enterprises in the process of including refugees in the social and economic life of the regions.

The integration process in the analysed regions – mainly in Western and Central Macedonia – developed relatively spontaneously, in response to local economic and demographic needs. In contrast to the highly bureaucratic integration models characteristic of large urban centres, in the case of Greece, integration was largely the result of direct social relations, cooperation in the workplace and daily contacts between refugees and inhabitants of rural regions.

Cultural closeness between local communities and refugees from Ukraine was also an important factor conducive to this process. In many cases, the inhabitants of the regions of Macedonia saw refugees as "people like us", which facilitated the building of social relationships and acceptance of their presence in local communities.

The Greek model is also characterised by a strong link between social integration and the local economy. In many regions, refugees have been included in the activities of enterprises in the agri-food sector, food processing and local agricultural cooperatives. Economic integration therefore took place in parallel with social integration, enabling refugees to obtain stable employment and at the same time build relationships with local residents.

An important element of the model was also the activity of educational institutions and social organizations that created integration programs for children and young people. Schools, sports initiatives and cultural projects became a space for daily interactions between young refugees and the local community, which fostered the breaking down of language and cultural barriers.

At the same time, the report indicates that the Greek state primarily played a framework and supporting role in this model, providing basic legal and administrative instruments. In practice, however, many integration activities were carried out by local governments, NGOs and local enterprises, which responded flexibly to the needs of the community.

To sum up, the model of refugee integration in the analysed regions of Greece can be described as a model of socio-local integration, in which interpersonal relations, social solidarity and cooperation within local economic and social structures play a key role. Its greatest strength is its ability to build inclusive social relations and quickly integrate refugees into the life of local communities. At the same time, the effectiveness of this model largely depends on the activity of local communities and the stability of local economic structures.

On the basis of the analyzed report, it can be stated that the references to the level of the Greek state appear in it in an indirect way and are primarily of a diagnostic nature. The main

part of the study focuses on the activities carried out by local entities – local governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and enterprises – which have played a key role in the process of integrating refugees from Ukraine in rural and semi-urban regions. In this context, the report indicates that the effectiveness of integration was largely the result of grassroots initiatives and the flexibility of local actors, who were able to respond quickly to emerging needs.

At the same time, the report signals a number of challenges and limitations related to the functioning of systemic solutions at the state level. In particular, attention is drawn to the lengthy administrative procedures for the recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications obtained abroad. The slowness of these procedures leads to a phenomenon called "brain waste", i.e. a situation in which highly qualified people take up work below their competences. This problem has been pointed out by representatives of both educational institutions and training organizations.

The report also highlights the importance of the infrastructural determinants of integration, which remain largely the responsibility of public policies. In mountainous and less urbanised regions, limited access to public transport is a significant barrier, hampering access to jobs, training and social services. Problems related to the insufficient availability of institutional childcare, especially in the context of shift work in the industrial and agri-food sectors, are of a similar nature.

Another aspect indicated in the report is the issue of financing integration activities. Many initiatives supporting refugees are supported by grant projects financed from European funds or temporary programs. However, there is a lack of stable financing mechanisms inscribed in long-term public policies, which may pose a challenge to the sustainability of the solutions developed.

Despite these limitations, the report indicates that the experience of hosting refugees has contributed to an increase in institutional readiness at the local level. Local governments and regional institutions have gained new competences in the field of crisis management, cross-sectoral cooperation and intercultural activities. As a result, local models of integration have been created based on cooperation between public administration, the social sector and the local economy.

To sum up, the report suggests that in the analysed regions of Greece, the process of refugee integration was largely carried out at the local level, where it was possible to respond quickly to the needs of the community and to use the potential of the arrivals. At the same time, the administrative, infrastructural and financial barriers indicated in it show that in order to ensure the sustainability and scalability of these activities, it is necessary to anchor them more strongly in public policies at the state level.

The report on the implementation of the project on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in rural and semi-urban regions of Greece (2022-2025) points to numerous manifestations of social inclusiveness of local communities. Although the report does not always use the term "social inclusion" directly, the actions, attitudes of residents and institutional practices clearly indicate a high level of openness and inclusion of refugees in local life. Integration was largely bottom-up and based on direct social relations, cooperation in the workplace and participation in community life. In many cases, refugees were not seen as beneficiaries of aid, but as potential collaborators, neighbours and members of the local community who could contribute to the development of a region affected by depopulation and labour shortages.

The manifestations of social inclusion described in the report include, in particular:

- Neighbourly solidarity – residents of local communities showed direct support to refugees, treating them as "people from the neighbourhood" and including them in everyday social relations.

- A change in the perception of refugees – there has been a shift from treating them as a burden to seeing them as a potential force to revive the local economy and social life.
- Integration through employment – refugees have been integrated into the local labour market, especially in the agri-food and processing sectors, often in stable, paid positions.
- Linking integration with the local economy – in some municipalities, refugees received accommodation linked to membership in agricultural cooperatives, which allowed them to become residents and co-producers in the local economy at the same time.
- Integration of children and young people – through joint sports activities, artistic activities and narrative projects that fostered peer relationships and reduced xenophobia.
- Participation in social and cultural life – refugees have begun to spontaneously participate in local festivals and social events, which indicates their growing presence in the public space.
- Inclusion in educational and scientific institutions – universities treated refugees as scientific capital, enabling them to conduct research and work in academic teams.
- Intergenerational and cultural transfer – local craftsmen passed on traditional skills to the refugees, which was conducive to both the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region and the acquisition of new qualifications by the refugees.
- Using the digital competences of refugees – enabling remote work and contacts with international markets, which allowed for active participation in the economy despite the peripheral nature of the region.

At the same time, the report points out that despite the high level of social openness, there are still some structural barriers, such as limited transport infrastructure, lack of childcare or slow recognition procedures. This means that social inclusion in the studied communities was often stronger at the level of interpersonal relationships than at the level of formal institutional mechanisms.

### 3.2A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Slovenia

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Slovenia indicates that a model of integration has developed in this country, which can be described as an institutional-state model. Its main feature is the dominant role of the state and public administration in organizing the system of reception and integration of refugees. Integration takes place primarily through the inclusion of refugees in the existing institutional systems – education, the labour market, health care and social assistance.

The starting point for the functioning of this model was the Slovenian state's rapid response to the refugee crisis caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022. Slovenia has implemented the provisions of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, ensuring that refugees can stay legally and have access to basic public services without having to go through the standard asylum procedure. Thanks to this, refugees were able to obtain the right to work, education, health care and social benefits relatively quickly.

In the first phase of the crisis, the state focused on organizing reception infrastructure and providing basic accommodation for people arriving from Ukraine. State reception centres, student dormitories, integration flats and temporary apartments were used for this purpose. In the following years, these activities were supplemented by integration programs that were to enable refugees to stabilize their lives in the host country.

One of the most important elements of the Slovenian model was the integration of children and young people into the education system. Refugees have gained access to kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and vocational training programmes. Schools have become an important space for social inclusion, as they have enabled children to quickly relate to their peers and learn Slovenian. In many cases, it was the integration of children in the education system that was conducive to stabilizing the situation of entire families.

Access to the labour market also played an important role in the integration model. Persons under temporary protection could take up employment on the same terms as Slovenian citizens. Support in the job-search process was provided by the Public Employment Service, which offered career counselling, individual employment plans and programmes to support entry into the labour market.

Despite the relatively well-developed institutional framework, however, the report points to some challenges related to the functioning of the integration system. The most important are language barriers, limited availability of housing on the private market and difficulties in the recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside the European Union. These problems cause some refugees to take up work below their competences or experience difficulties in finding stable employment.

In the Slovenian model, social organisations and volunteer networks also play an important role and complement the activities of the state. Organizations such as Slovene Philanthropy, the Legal-Informational Centre for NGOs or the Association for Voluntary Work *Novo mesto* offer legal assistance, career counseling and psychological support for refugees. However, unlike some other countries in the region, these organizations primarily have a supporting function towards the institutional system of the state.

To sum up, the Slovenian model can be described as an integration system managed by state institutions, in which formal legal regulations and the inclusion of refugees in existing institutional structures play a key role. Its greatest advantage is the stability and predictability of the support system, resulting from a clearly defined legal and administrative framework. At the same time, this model is less based on spontaneous social relations than some other integration systems and focuses more on the formal integration of refugees into the structures of the state and the labour market.

The analysis of the report indicates that in the case of Slovenia, the process of receiving and integrating refugees from Ukraine has been largely shaped by actions taken at the state level. The document focuses largely on the institutional and legal framework of integration, pointing to the key role of national regulations, public policies and the functioning of state administration in organising the support system for persons under temporary protection.

The basis of the refugee protection system was the implementation of the temporary protection mechanism provided for in the European Union law, which was implemented into the Slovenian legal system through the Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act. Thanks to this, persons covered by temporary protection could obtain formal legal status in a relatively short time and start the process of social and economic integration.

Under this system, refugees have been given access to a number of entitlements, including the possibility of taking up employment on the same terms as Slovenian citizens, access to healthcare, education and social benefits. These solutions were aimed at reducing administrative barriers and enabling refugees to be included in the social and economic life of the country more quickly.

The report also points to the important role of the state in the organization of the first phase of the humanitarian response. In the initial period of the crisis, a temporary accommodation system was set up, including, for example, state reception centres, student

dormitories, and integration and temporary housing. In the first months, more than five hundred emergency accommodation places were provided in this way for people arriving from Ukraine.

An important element of state policy was also support for the integration of refugees into the labour market. In this regard, the Public Employment Service played an important role, offering refugees from Ukraine individualized career counseling and assistance in planning the path to entering the labor market. People registering with employment offices received support from career counsellors who helped prepare employment plans and identify job opportunities.

The Slovenian state has also provided the opportunity for integration into the public education system. Ukrainian children could be included in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and vocational education programmes, and additional language classes supported their adaptation to the school environment. At the same time, persons under temporary protection have gained formal access to the public health care system.

Despite the relatively well-developed legal framework, the report also points to certain limitations in the functioning of the state system. Among the most important challenges, the limited administrative capacity of some public administration units is mentioned, which has led to delays in processing applications for temporary protection. Attention is also drawn to the difficulties related to the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, as well as to structural problems in the housing market, which is characterized by limited availability of housing and rising rental costs.

In conclusion, the report indicates that the Slovenian state has played a key role in creating an institutional and legal framework for the reception and integration of refugees from Ukraine. With the swift implementation of temporary protection mechanisms and access to essential public services, it has been possible to move relatively smoothly from the humanitarian phase to more long-term integration efforts. At the same time, the continued effectiveness of the integration process will depend on the ability of the institutional system to overcome the existing administrative, housing and language barriers.

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Slovenia in 2022-2026 indicates that the process of integrating this group into the country's social life was supported by both state institutions and civil society organisations and local communities. Inclusivity was manifested in the rapid activation of legal protection mechanisms, ensuring access to basic public services and numerous integration activities carried out by non-governmental organizations and educational institutions.

An important element of this process was the implementation of a temporary protection system that enabled refugees to quickly obtain the right to stay and access key social services. As a result, administrative barriers were reduced and refugees could be included in the social and economic life of the country relatively quickly. At the same time, the active role of NGOs and volunteer networks contributed to building relationships between refugees and local communities and facilitated the use of institutional forms of support.

On the basis of the report, the following manifestations of the inclusiveness of Slovenian society towards refugees from Ukraine can be indicated:

- Swift implementation of legal protection and access to public servicesThe temporary protection system has provided refugees with the opportunity to obtain the right to stay and access the labour market, education, healthcare and social benefits.
- Integration of children and youth in the education systemUkrainian children were included in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and vocational education programs, and additional language classes supported their adaptation in the school environment.

- Openness of the labour market for people under temporary protection Refugees could take up employment on the same terms as Slovenian citizens, which was conducive to their economic independence and social integration.
- The active role of NGOs and volunteering Social organizations offered refugees legal advice, help in finding work and housing, as well as various integration activities.
- Providing psychosocial support In response to the experiences of war and forced migration, social organisations and social workers offered psychological assistance and activities to support the reconstruction of social relationships.
- Development of cultural mediation and social support mechanisms Social organizations acted as intermediaries between refugees and public institutions, helping them to navigate the administrative and social system.
- Inclusion of young people and students in the higher education system Ukrainian students studied at Slovenian universities, which fostered their long-term social and professional integration.

To sum up, the report indicates that the inclusiveness of Slovenian society towards refugees from Ukraine is manifested primarily in the openness of public institutions, the activity of civil society organizations and in integration activities carried out in the areas of education, the labour market and social support. At the same time, the document emphasizes that the integration process also faces structural barriers, such as difficulties in the housing market, language barriers or administrative constraints, which may affect the pace and sustainability of social integration of refugees.

### 3.3A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in rural areas of Germany

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Germany in 2022–2026 indicates that a specific integration model has developed in the studied regions, which can be described as a socio-economic model based on rapid integration into the labour market and the use of social capital of local communities. In contrast to traditional integration models based mainly on the social assistance system, this approach focuses on the professional activation of refugees and the use of their qualifications and competences in local economies.

The basis for the functioning of this model was the legal framework resulting from the implementation of the EU Directive on Temporary Protection, which enabled refugees to quickly obtain the right to stay and access the labour market and public services. Thanks to this, it was possible to move away from the crisis management model towards an integration strategy based on investing in the human capital of refugees.

One of the most important elements of the German integration model is the strong link between the integration process and the needs of the local economy, especially the small and medium-sized enterprises (Mittelstand) sector. In many rural and provincial regions, companies actively participated in the integration process, offering refugees employment opportunities, apprenticeships and training to adapt their qualifications to the requirements of the German labour market. Integration was therefore largely achieved through participation in the labour market, which was conducive to both the economic independence of refugees and the development of local economies.

An important element of the model were also local support centers for migrants, referred to as Welcome Centers, which served as one-stop shops. These institutions enabled refugees to obtain information on employment, education, administrative procedures and the system for the recognition of professional qualifications. This solution reduced the complexity of the German administrative system and facilitated orientation in integration procedures.

Another important component of the integration model was the combination of language learning and professional integration. Programs such as STARK in Saxony brought language classes directly to workplaces, allowing refugees to gain language competence and work experience at the same time. This solution significantly reduced the time needed to start professional activity and accelerated the integration process.

The report also emphasizes the importance of social capital and interpersonal relations in the integration process. Mentoring programs, such as the Senior Experten Service or "buddy" systems, allowed refugees to have direct contact with local residents, experts and colleagues. These relationships fostered trust building and facilitated adaptation to the new social environment.

Digital tools supporting orientation in the administrative system also played an important role in the German integration model. Applications such as the Integreat App enabled refugees to access information on official procedures, the labour market or the professional certification system. Digital solutions allowed refugees to function more independently and reduced information barriers.

At the same time, the report points to some structural challenges that may hinder the integration process. The most important of these are the shortage of places in childcare institutions (Kita), the limited availability of public transport in rural regions, and the complicated procedures for recognising professional qualifications acquired abroad. These problems can limit the pace of professional integration, especially for women and people living in more remote places.

To sum up, the German model of integrating refugees from Ukraine can be characterized as a model based on professional activation, cooperation with the local economy and the use of social capital of local communities. It sees integration not only as an element of migration policy, but also as a strategy to support the economic and demographic development of regions, especially rural and provincial areas.

#### The role of the German state in the process of integration of refugees from Ukraine

The analysis of the report indicates that in the case of Germany, the process of integration of refugees from Ukraine was based on a combination of the legal and institutional framework created at the level of the European Union and the German state with the activities carried out by local governments, social organizations and enterprises. While the report focuses mainly on regional and local initiatives, it also addresses the broader regulatory context and public policies that have enabled the rapid implementation of integration measures.

The basis of the support system for refugees from Ukraine was the implementation of the temporary protection mechanism provided for in the European Union Directive (Temporary Protection Directive). This mechanism enabled people fleeing the war to obtain the right to stay and access the labour market and public services without having to go through the standard asylum procedure. In practice, this meant a significant simplification of administrative procedures and a faster start to the process of social and economic integration.

At the level of the German state, programmes for financing integration and support for the labour market, including funds from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), also played an important role. This funding has enabled the implementation of numerous integration programmes, such as language courses, vocational training and initiatives supporting refugee entrepreneurship.

The report also points to the importance of institutional cooperation between the state and economic organisations, especially the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Industrie- und Handelskammer – IHK). These institutions supported the integration process through

career counselling, assistance in the recognition of qualifications and mediation between refugees and employers of the Mittelstand sector.

An important element of the integration policy was also to support the digitization of public administration, which was to facilitate refugees' access to information and public services. The development of digital tools, such as information applications used by local governments, is part of a broader process of modernisation of the German administration.

At the same time, the report points to certain limitations in the functioning of the institutional system. The most important challenges include the complexity of administrative procedures and the slow pace of recognition of professional qualifications obtained abroad. The report also draws attention to the phenomenon referred to as "analogue-digital mismatch", i.e. the mismatch between the high digital competences of many refugees and the still highly bureaucratic and paper-based public administration system in Germany.

To sum up, the report indicates that the German state has created a stable legal and institutional framework enabling the reception and integration of refugees from Ukraine, primarily through the implementation of the temporary protection mechanism and the financing of integration programs. At the same time, the document emphasizes that the effectiveness of integration in practice depends to a large extent on cooperation between the state level and local social and economic actors, who play a key role in the daily process of integrating refugees into the social and economic life of the regions.

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in rural Germany in 2022-2026 indicates that this process was supported not only by state and local government institutions, but also by the broad involvement of local society, social organizations and enterprises from the small and medium-sized enterprises sector (Mittelstand). Integration was presented as a multidimensional process, in which both formal institutional mechanisms and bottom-up social relations and cooperation in the work environment played an important role.

Especially in rural regions and smaller urban centres, the integration process was supported by local social capital, including support networks, mentoring programmes and integration initiatives carried out by residents and social organisations. Direct relations between refugees and local communities fostered the building of trust, a sense of belonging and the gradual integration of refugees into the social and economic life of the regions.

The report also indicates that the integration of refugees was largely linked to professional activation and cooperation with local enterprises. The inclusion of refugees in the labour market not only enabled their economic independence, but also fostered the building of social relations in the workplace and in the local environment. At the same time, the use of digital tools and new forms of communication supported the process of orientation of refugees in the administrative and social system.

On the basis of the report, the following manifestations of the inclusiveness of German society towards refugees from Ukraine can be indicated:

- Active involvement of local communities in the integration process. The integration of refugees often took place through daily social contacts, cooperation in the workplace and participation in local social initiatives and organizations.
- Functioning of mentoring programs and social support networks. Programs such as the Senior Expert Service (SES) or local "buddy" systems enabled direct support for refugees by residents, experts and colleagues.
- Creation of local integration centres ("Welcome Centres") In many regions, support centres have been set up as one-stop-shops where refugees can obtain information on employment, education and administrative procedures.
- Integration through the labour market and cooperation with Mittelstand companies. Local employers actively participated in the integration process, offering refugees the opportunity to work and acquire professional competences.

- Linking German language learning to the workplace Integration programmes such as STARK in Saxony brought language learning directly into workplaces, which accelerated professional and social integration.
- Inclusion of refugees in the social life of local communities. Participation in sports clubs, social organizations and local initiatives was conducive to building relations between refugees and residents.
- Use of digital tools to support integration. Information apps such as the Integreat App facilitated refugees' access to information about public services, the labour market and social life.
- Support for refugee entrepreneurship. Initiatives such as Project OPPORTUNITY enabled refugees to develop their economic activity, which fostered their long-term economic integration and the development of local communities.

To sum up, the report indicates that the inclusiveness of German society towards refugees from Ukraine is manifested primarily in the active involvement of local communities, businesses and social organizations in the integration process. The inclusion of refugees in the labour market, social networks and the life of local communities has fostered the building of lasting social relations and enabled the gradual participation of refugees in the economic and social life of the regions.

### 3.4A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Romania

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in the Iași region in the years 2022-2026 makes it possible to distinguish a specific integration model, which can be described as a humanitarian-civic model, based primarily on the mobilization of civil society, non-governmental organizations and volunteer networks. In contrast to the more institutionalised integration systems in place in some Western European countries, this model has largely developed from the bottom up, often in response to the country's limited administrative capacity to respond quickly to the migration crisis.

The region of northeastern Romania, with the city of Iași as the main regional hub, has become one of the most important humanitarian corridors for people fleeing the war in Ukraine. In the first months of the conflict, this area mainly served as a transit point for refugees heading to Western European countries. Over time, however, some of them decided to stay in the region, which led to a gradual transformation of the humanitarian aid system into a more long-term process of social integration.

The first stage of the response to the crisis was typically humanitarian and was dominated by the activities of social organizations and volunteers. In a short time, first aid points at the border, food distribution centers and places of temporary accommodation for refugees were established. Organizations such as Caritas, Save the Children, World Vision and Red Cross have played a key role in providing basic material support, psychological and legal assistance.

In the following years, the support system was gradually expanded to include integration activities. Educational programmes for refugee children and counselling centres offering assistance in the areas of law, health, employment and housing played a particularly important role. The integration of children in the education system became one of the main mechanisms for the stabilization of refugee families, because schools had not only an educational function, but also a social and psychological one.

One of the characteristic elements of the Romanian integration model was also the strong cooperation between NGOs, which created joint support networks for refugees. An example of such cooperation is the activity of the Federation of Non-Governmental

Organizations for Social Services (FONSS), which made it possible to coordinate the activities of various institutions and make more effective use of available resources.

The Romanian state has played an important role in creating a formal legal framework for the reception of refugees. The implementation of temporary protection legislation has ensured that refugees have access to the labour market, education and health care system. At the same time, the report indicates that in practice, the functioning of these mechanisms has encountered numerous administrative barriers, such as delays in obtaining identification numbers, difficulties in accessing health services or complicated procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications.

An important instrument of state policy was the "50-20" program, which enabled refugees to rent apartments on the private market thanks to financial support for apartment owners. This program has played an important role in reducing the pressure on the state's reception infrastructure and has enabled many families to stabilize their housing conditions. At the same time, delays in the payment of benefits have led to tensions between homeowners and refugees and exposed the administrative limitations of the system.

The report also draws attention to the problem of underutilization of the professional potential of refugees. Despite the presence of many highly qualified people, such as lawyers, teachers or technical specialists, lengthy procedures for the recognition of qualifications and language barriers mean that many of them take up jobs below their competence.

To sum up, the model of integration of refugees from Ukraine in the Iași region can be described as a model based on social solidarity and the activity of civil organisations, supported by the formal legal framework of the state, but largely dependent on local initiatives and international funding. Its greatest strength is its flexibility and ability to mobilise people quickly, while the main challenge remains to ensure the sustainability of the integration system in a situation of the gradual withdrawal of humanitarian programmes and limited resources of public institutions.

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in the Iași region indicates that the Romanian state has played an important role in creating a formal legal framework enabling the reception and functioning of refugees on the territory of the country. At the same time, the report emphasizes that despite a relatively quick legislative response, many state mechanisms have encountered difficulties in practical implementation. As a result, the refugee support system was largely based on the cooperation of public institutions with NGOs and financial support from international humanitarian programmes.

The legal basis for the functioning of refugees from Ukraine in Romania was the implementation of the provisions resulting from the EU Temporary Protection Directive. In national law, these solutions were introduced through Emergency Ordinance OUG 15/2022, which ensured that people fleeing the war had access to basic social rights. This regulation allowed refugees to legally stay on Romanian territory and access the labour market, education and health care system without having to go through the standard asylum procedure. Thanks to this, it was possible to start the process of stabilizing the lives of refugees in the host country relatively quickly.

One of the most important state instruments supporting the integration of refugees was the "50-20" program, which aimed to provide them with access to housing outside reception centers. This mechanism consisted in paying financial benefits to apartment owners for making the apartments available to refugees. The scheme played a key role in the early years of the crisis, allowing many families to move from temporary reception centres to private housing and reducing pressure on state infrastructure.

However, the report indicates that the functioning of the program was associated with numerous administrative problems. Delays in the payment of benefits, which in some cases exceeded several months, led to tensions between homeowners and refugees and caused an

increase in housing instability among some families. In addition, changes in the rules of the programme, consisting in making further support conditional on refugees taking up work or enrolling their children in school, led to a deterioration in the financial situation of some beneficiaries.

The report also addresses other administrative challenges related to the functioning of the state system. One of them was the procedure for obtaining a CNP identification number, which is necessary to use many public services. Delays in granting it made it difficult for refugees to access health care and other social benefits. Similar difficulties arose in the health care system, where errors in the national health insurance IT system meant that refugees were sometimes treated as uninsured, despite their rights.

An important problem indicated in the report is also the complexity of procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside the European Union. The process conducted by CNRED is time-consuming and complicated, leading to a situation where many highly qualified refugees take up jobs below their competences. This phenomenon is referred to as deprofessionalization or underemployment and represents a significant loss both for the refugees themselves and for the local economy.

The report also draws attention to the problem of the lack of a long-term legal perspective for refugees. Temporary protection status is regularly extended, but the lack of a clear path to a stable residence status makes it difficult for refugees to make decisions about their professional and educational future. At the same time, social organizations have difficulties in planning long-term integration programs in conditions of such uncertainty.

To sum up, the report indicates that the Romanian state created a legal framework relatively quickly to welcome refugees and ensure their basic social rights, but the effectiveness of these solutions was limited by administrative barriers and insufficient institutional capacity to implement integration policies in the long term. As a result, many key integration functions have been taken over by NGOs and local support networks, which have become one of the most important pillars of the refugee assistance system in the Iași region.

An analysis of the report on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in the Iași region in 2022-2026 indicates that one of the most important elements of the local integration model was the high mobilisation of civil society and humanitarian organisations, which played a key role in the first stages of the crisis. The region of north-eastern Romania, due to its location near the border with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, has very quickly become one of the main humanitarian corridors for people fleeing the war.

In the initial phase of the crisis, aid activities were largely organized from the bottom up by social organizations and volunteers. The report shows that in many cases it was non-governmental organizations that took over the functions of the state, organizing material, logistical and social assistance for refugees. In the following years, this assistance began to take a more institutionalized form, including, for example, educational integration of children, psychological support, legal assistance and activities supporting the social integration of refugee families.

At the same time, the report shows that social inclusion in the Iași region was largely the result of the activity of local social networks and the cooperation of humanitarian organisations, which created a flexible support system for refugees. Despite numerous institutional constraints, these activities made it possible to create a local ecosystem of assistance, which allowed many families to relatively stabilize their lives in the new environment.

On the basis of the report, the following manifestations of the inclusiveness of Romanian society towards refugees from Ukraine can be indicated:

- Immediate social mobilization after the outbreak of war Social organizations and volunteers appeared at the border crossings within the first 48 hours, organizing first aid points, distribution of food, hygiene products and temporary shelters.
- The active role of NGOs in organizing the support system Organizations such as Caritas, Save the Children, World Vision, and Red Cross provided legal, medical, psychological, and social assistance, often filling gaps in the public system.
- Networking between social organisations The FONSS Federation has created a platform for cooperation between NGOs, enabling the sharing of resources, competences and information in order to support refugees more effectively.
- Establishment of local integration support centres Special counselling and integration centres were set up in Iași to provide legal assistance, psychological support, career counselling and assistance in finding housing.
- Integration of children through the education system and social programs Schools and community organizations created special transition classes and integration programs that enabled refugee children to participate in school life and build relationships with their local peers.
- Support for refugee families and single mothers Community organizations created childcare programs, day-care centers, and after-school activities that enabled women to take up work or participate in language courses.
- Support programs for people with disabilities. Organizations such as Star of Hope have developed specialized therapeutic programs for children with autism, Down syndrome and other disabilities.
- Integration of young people and students in the local environment. Many young refugees have started their studies in Romanian schools and universities in Iași, building social and professional relationships in a new environment.
- Using technology to organize social support. The Telegram platform has become a key tool for communication between organizations and the refugee community, enabling quick communication about available help and integration opportunities.

To sum up, the report shows that the inclusiveness of Romanian society in the Iași region was primarily the result of grassroots social mobilisation and the cooperation of humanitarian organisations that created a local support system for refugees. At the same time, the document indicates that the sustainability of this model remains at risk due to the dependence of many activities on international funding and the limited ability of state institutions to take over the developed solutions in the long term.

### 3.5A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland

An analysis of the report on the adaptation and integration of migrants from Ukraine in Poland since 2022 makes it possible to distinguish a specific integration model, which may be described as a local-community and equality-based model. Its core features are the rapid mobilisation of residents in the phase of immediate reception, the important role of local institutions and informal support networks, and the gradual transition from exceptional humanitarian aid to the normalisation of everyday coexistence. In contrast to highly centralised integration systems, the Polish model visible in the report is strongly embedded in the local social fabric and in the practical capacities of municipalities, schools, social services, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and residents themselves.

Poland entered the most recent migration crisis not as a country entirely unfamiliar with Ukrainian migration, but as a state that had already hosted a substantial Ukrainian population before the outbreak of the full-scale war. According to the report, approximately 1 to 1.5 million Ukrainians lived in Poland before 2022, mainly as labour migrants. After the outbreak of the war, around 1.5 million more people arrived. This means that the new refugee wave was absorbed by a society that already had migration links, labour-market experience, and everyday contact with Ukrainian citizens, which partly explains the speed with which support structures emerged.

The territorial distribution of Ukrainian migrants in Poland was not random. The report indicates that the largest shares settled in Mazowieckie, Dolnośląskie, Wielkopolskie, Małopolskie, Śląskie, Pomorskie, and Łódzkie. Metropolitan cities remained the principal destinations, with Warsaw in the first place, followed by Kraków, Wrocław, Poznań, and Łódź. This pattern reveals a decisive feature of the Polish integration context: migrants primarily moved to places where jobs, transport, schools, healthcare, and pre-existing social ties were available. In practice, integration began where infrastructure and opportunity already existed.

The report also makes clear that migration to Poland was shaped by several mutually reinforcing factors. Labour-market resources were essential, because access to work was one of the main conditions of stabilisation. Migration networks involving family members, friends, and diaspora contacts reduced uncertainty and directed movement toward specific cities and regions. Infrastructure such as schools, healthcare, and public transport further increased the attractiveness of urban and suburban areas. Better access to services and adaptation opportunities therefore became a structural driver of settlement, not merely a secondary convenience.

At the same time, the Polish case was not limited to large cities. The report shows that rural areas generally attracted migrants to a lesser extent, while suburban municipalities located near major urban centres proved much more capable of absorbing newcomers. In this respect, the municipality of Andrespol, situated directly next to the city of Łódź, is a meaningful case. It represents a type of local community that is formally rural, but functionally connected to a metropolitan labour market and service system. Such municipalities combine the resources of proximity to a large city with the social density of a smaller local community.

The case of Andrespol is particularly useful because it illustrates how national integration tendencies materialised at the local level. The municipality had 14,204 registered residents at the end of 2024 and, according to the report, an estimated 250 to 400 Ukrainian citizens were living there permanently after the outbreak of the war. Most local residents worked in nearby Łódź, commuting daily, while the municipality itself hosted numerous small and medium-sized enterprises in trade, construction, and transport services. This economic profile mattered, because it created a setting in which migrants could gradually become part of ordinary local life rather than remain confined to emergency assistance arrangements.

In the first phase of the response, the dominant form of action was humanitarian reception. The report emphasises the strong engagement of the local community, which shared housing, material support, time, and organisational effort with refugees. Respondents interpreted this mobilisation not only as a reaction to current suffering, but also as an expression of historical memory. Family narratives about war and displacement shaped the moral language of solidarity. In other words, local willingness to help did not emerge from abstract declarations alone; it was rooted in lived intergenerational memory and in a culturally embedded sense that people escaping war must not be left unaided.

The initial reception model was therefore based on a combination of civic reflex, practical improvisation, and local agency. Respondents stressed that the municipality and its

residents rose to the occasion and tried to do everything that was possible in local conditions, even if many financial decisions were made at higher levels. This is consistent with the broader finding cited in the report that, in the early stages of receiving refugees in Poland, grassroots initiatives and volunteer work often played a decisive role, while the involvement of state and public institutions became more visible later. The Polish model, at least in this dimension, was built from below and only later stabilised by institutional arrangements.

Over time, however, the integration process moved beyond reception. The report indicates that the adaptation and integration phase in Poland, as seen through the Andrespol case, involves migrants entering the labour market, participating in local institutions, sending their children to school, using local services, and building relationships with members of the host community. A particularly important finding is that after several years the war situation is increasingly treated as normalised in everyday local life, and migrants are more often perceived not as a separate category of beneficiaries, but as residents and participants in the same community order.

To sum up, the report suggests that the Polish model of refugee integration may be described as a community-based system of gradual normalisation. It begins with strong humanitarian mobilisation and then shifts toward long-term inclusion through work, education, local services, and ordinary neighbourly coexistence. Its strength lies in flexibility, local responsiveness, and the ability to embed support in existing community life. Its main strategic challenge is not the lack of goodwill, but the need to transform spontaneous solidarity into durable, coordinated, and adequately resourced integration practice.

An analysis of the report also indicates that the Polish approach is inseparable from the idea of an inclusive society. The report defines such a society as one in which all can achieve their potential regardless of individual circumstances, and it treats inclusion as a system of social and institutional relations enabling full participation in collective life regardless of origin, legal status, or economic capital. In the Polish case, this perspective matters because it shifts the discussion away from emergency management alone and toward the longer question of whether migrants can genuinely take part in social, educational, economic, and civic life on an equal footing.

In this framework, integration is understood not as one-sided adaptation by newcomers, but as a two-way process of mutual adjustment between migrants and the receiving society. This is a crucial analytical point. The report explicitly rejects the view that integration consists only in demanding that migrants adapt to a fixed host environment. Instead, norms, institutions, and social practices must also respond to the presence of newcomers. The Polish case described in the report is therefore not simply about refugee adjustment to existing structures, but about the capacity of local communities to widen those structures without destroying their own internal cohesion.

The report further notes that exclusion may occur in several spheres: economic, social, political, and cultural. In practical terms, this means that successful integration in Poland cannot be reduced to whether migrants find jobs. Economic participation is necessary, but not sufficient. Social support networks, access to institutions, participation in community life, and a sense of belonging all matter. This is why the report draws on a multidimensional understanding of integration, including structural integration through institutions, cultural integration through learning norms and meanings, interactive integration through relationships, and identificational integration through the development of attachment to place and community.

What becomes visible in the Polish material is that local institutions form the main arena in which these dimensions of integration either succeed or fail. The study covered public institutions, economic entities, non-governmental organisations, and informal resident groups active between 2022 and 2025. This cross-sectoral character is significant. Integration

in Poland is not carried by one institution alone. It is shaped by the daily work of schools, social assistance units, healthcare providers, sports clubs, cultural centres, businesses, and neighbourhood-level relations. In this sense, the system is plural and practical rather than formally uniform.

The report identifies schools as one of the most important spaces of inclusion. School is described not only as a place for children, but also as a site where parents meet, communicate, solve problems, and enter the rhythms of local community life. This observation is methodologically modest but sociologically powerful. In the Polish context, schools are often among the few institutions that connect families, public administration, peer groups, and cultural expectations at the same time. When migrants and their children are present in schools, integration becomes visible in everyday routines rather than in special programmes alone.

The report also identifies areas where more support is needed if inclusion is to remain substantive rather than declarative. One such area concerns single mothers and parenting challenges, especially in households where family structures have been disrupted by war and displacement. Another concerns children and young people who may require psychological or therapeutic support. Respondents pointed to behavioural difficulties, emotional strain, and the need for specialists capable of communicating freely with children in Ukrainian. This is an important reminder that integration policy without mental-health sensitivity is usually little more than administrative optimism dressed as strategy.

Language support is another major issue. Respondents explicitly noted the lack of free Polish language classes for Ukrainian citizens and, interestingly, also the absence of free Ukrainian language classes for Poles. This observation goes beyond technical communication. It reflects the broader view that language, culture, and history are inseparable in real integration processes. Without language competence, access to institutions remains partial, misunderstandings multiply, and the symbolic distance between groups is harder to reduce. A society that wants integration but neglects language support behaves rather like a host who invites guests and then hides the house keys.

Another weakness identified in the report is the absence of a single, coordinated system of information about available assistance. Information exists, but it is scattered across institutions and not organised into one coherent point of access. Respondents suggested clearly marked information points for migrants, better online visibility, including on digital platforms such as Google Maps, and more structured communication in areas such as healthcare. In a local system, fragmented information can be nearly as exclusionary as the absence of help itself, because support that cannot be found in time is support that effectively does not exist.

The report further points to the possible need for local assistants or guardians who could help migrant children and families navigate municipal institutions. It also notes the importance of having organised knowledge about the number of migrants living in the municipality and at least a general understanding of where they live and what kinds of needs they face. This may sound administrative, but it is in fact a classic condition of good local policy: one cannot coordinate assistance intelligently while operating in an informational fog. Charity may survive improvisation; integration policy does not.

At the same time, the Polish local model possesses certain practical communication advantages. Respondents considered websites and social media to be the most effective communication channels, while also emphasising that in a small community word of mouth and direct information from neighbours remain highly relevant. This mixture of digital and interpersonal communication is characteristic of small and suburban municipalities. It lowers some barriers, but it does not eliminate the need for coordinated information architecture.

Informal circulation of knowledge can complement institutions; it cannot replace them indefinitely.

The report also reveals several barriers that limit the long-term effectiveness of integration. Some relate to social distance and the attitudes of migrants themselves, who may avoid broader contact not out of hostility but because of historical experiences, insecurity, economic pressures, or the need to maintain two households at once. Others are structural: financial shortages, insufficient human resources, and weak information about migrants' actual needs. The report additionally mentions legal restrictions concerning access to building plots, which may matter for families seeking long-term settlement. In short, the Polish model does not suffer from a lack of local intuition about what should be done; it suffers from a shortage of stable instruments, personnel, and coordination.

To sum up, the institutional picture emerging from the report is one of meaningful but incomplete inclusion. Poland, as reflected in the case studied, has developed local conditions for access to work, school, and services, and it increasingly treats migrants as ordinary residents rather than as a permanently separate category. Yet this system remains weakened by language barriers, fragmented information, limited specialised support, and resource deficits. Its future effectiveness depends on whether ad hoc responses are replaced by long-term, cross-sectoral local policies that strengthen the cohesion of the whole community rather than producing competition between insiders and outsiders.

An analysis of the report also makes it possible to identify the main manifestations of the inclusiveness of Polish society toward refugees from Ukraine. Importantly, this inclusiveness is not portrayed as a grand ideological project. It appears in the report as a set of practical social behaviours, institutional openings, and local norms through which migrants can participate in the common life of the municipality. The Polish case presented here is therefore inclusive not because it abolishes all barriers, but because it repeatedly seeks ways to reduce them within ordinary local structures.

On the basis of the report, the following manifestations of inclusiveness in Poland can be indicated.

Immediate social mobilisation after the outbreak of war. Local residents, organisations, and institutions responded quickly with housing, material support, organisational assistance, and volunteer work. This first phase was marked by the conviction that war refugees should be received without delay and that local communities had a moral duty to act before waiting for perfect procedural clarity.

The principle of equal treatment in the adaptation phase. Respondents strongly emphasised that assistance should not create separate privileges based solely on nationality, but should be granted according to actual need. In this perspective, a mature inclusive community is not one that permanently separates migrants for special handling, but one that incorporates them into the same normative order of rights and obligations as everyone else.

Integration through schools. The report presents schools as a central place where inclusion is produced in practice: children learn together, parents meet, relationships are built, and the norms of participation in local life become visible. This gives the education system an integrative role that is simultaneously structural, social, and cultural.

Integration through sports, culture, and local organisations. Respondents pointed to community centres, sports clubs, rural women's associations, and other local initiatives as spaces where people can meet around practical activities rather than abstract declarations. Sport and culture are treated as especially useful because they allow contact, cooperation, and familiarity to emerge naturally, without placing the entire burden on formal programmes.

Universal and open local initiatives. One of the clearest findings of the report is that the most effective activities are those embedded in the life of the whole community. Children's Day, workshops, intergenerational projects, cultural events, and sports activities should be

open to all residents rather than designed as separate events exclusively for migrants. This approach strengthens cohesion and reduces the risk that support will be perceived as division.

Long-term and cyclical action instead of one-off events. Respondents stressed that effectiveness should not be measured only by attendance figures, but by whether actions are adequate to real needs and repeated over time. Cyclical initiatives create better conditions for trust, continuity, and lasting results. A single event may produce photographs; repeated activity produces social ties.

Integration rather than assimilation, and rooting without enclaves. The report underlines that successful inclusion does not mean absorbing migrants into a uniform identity. It means enabling them to get to know the community, share traditions, and remain present in mixed social settings without forming isolated districts or enclaves. This is perhaps one of the most important conceptual findings of the Polish case: cohesion grows through proximity and reciprocity, not through forced sameness.

Willingness of migrants to remain and the recognition of mutual benefits. Respondents treated migrants' readiness to stay permanently in the municipality as evidence that they feel safe and see decent life prospects there. They also pointed to mutual benefits, especially in the labour market, where Ukrainian migrants helped address shortages, and in local everyday culture, where new shops, food practices, and social experiences enriched community life. Inclusion, then, is not charity alone; it is also the gradual recognition that coexistence generates value for both sides.

To sum up, the report shows that the inclusiveness of Polish society, as reflected in the municipality of Andrespol and the wider national context described in the study, is based above all on local social capital, institutional openness, and the embedding of migrants in ordinary community life. The strongest indicators of success are the meeting of basic needs, participation in schools and services, the absence of segregated enclaves, and the growing perception of migrants as residents rather than temporary outsiders. At the same time, the report identifies real weaknesses and opportunities: better information systems, language support, psychological assistance, and broader participation in local initiatives. No specific threats were clearly identified in the SWOT analysis, but the message is unmistakable nevertheless: without coordination, resources, and long-term policy, even good local instincts may eventually run out of steam. Goodwill is a fine beginning, but in integration policy it cannot remain the whole programme.

### 3.6A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Lithuania

An analysis of the materials on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Lithuania in the years 2022-2026 makes it possible to distinguish a specific integration model, which may be described as a hybrid civic-institutional and empowerment-based model. Its core features are the rapid activation of temporary protection, the practical cooperation between state institutions and non-governmental organisations, the early opening of the labour market, and the gradual shift from emergency aid to long-term social rooting. In contrast to systems based solely on humanitarian response or solely on administrative regulation, the Lithuanian model visible in the collected materials combines institutional flexibility with dense community-level mediation and a strong emphasis on helping newcomers regain agency.

Lithuania faced a very intensive inflow after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. By early 2026, 102,503 refugees had arrived in the country, while 51,523

people still remained in Lithuania under temporary protection. The first stage of the response was organised around registration centres in Alytus, Marijampole, Vilnius, and other municipalities, where refugees were offered immediate humanitarian aid, food, and short-term accommodation. This initial phase had an emergency character, yet it was quickly connected with decisions that opened the way to a more durable integration policy.

The demographic profile of the refugee population strongly shaped the Lithuanian integration context. The materials indicate that the population is predominantly female and includes a high proportion of minors, while a significant share of the adults are well educated. Major urban centres such as Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipeda attracted the largest numbers of refugees, which confirms that settlement followed the geography of opportunity rather than merely the geography of first reception. Many newcomers arrived with very limited material resources, especially during the first months of the war, which increased the importance of fast and practical institutional response.

The territorial distribution of refugees in Lithuania was not random. Settlement was influenced by access to jobs, transport, schools, and local service systems, but also by the severe constraints of the housing market. Although accommodation was often offered in smaller towns in order to spread demand more evenly, many refugees preferred metropolitan areas because these provided better chances of employment and broader support networks. This created a structural tension in the Lithuanian case: the places with the strongest labour-market pull were also the places where access to long-term housing was the most difficult.

The first phase of the Lithuanian response was therefore marked by a combination of state coordination and civic solidarity. Temporary registration, emergency shelter, humanitarian aid, and rapid access to basic services were put in place in a relatively short time. At the same time, a large share of everyday support was delivered through social organisations, volunteers, and informal community networks. This meant that from the very beginning integration in Lithuania was not simply a matter of central regulation; it depended equally on the capacity of local actors to translate legal entitlements into real and usable support.

Non-governmental organisations played an especially important role in creating what may be called a one-stop support environment. They provided material aid, legal counselling, social orientation, psychological assistance, and activities for children, while also helping refugees understand how Lithuanian institutions function in practice. Community networks reduced isolation and offered refugees a sense of belonging at a moment when many families were living with uncertainty, fragmented households, and continuing anxiety about relatives who had remained in Ukraine. The result was an integration process shaped not only by policy, but also by relationships.

Over time, the Lithuanian system moved from emergency reception toward a more structured and partly digitalised integration model. Since January 1, 2023, the Migration Department has issued digital residence permits through the MIGRIS system, which streamlined renewals and reduced some administrative burdens. This institutional development is important because it shows that Lithuania did not freeze its response at the humanitarian stage. Rather, it gradually reorganised refugee governance into a more sustainable framework that sought to normalise residence, access to services, and long-term participation in social life.

The labour market became one of the main mechanisms of stabilisation. Persons under temporary protection were granted the immediate right to work or engage in self-employment, and already in mid-2022 more than one-third of working-age refugees had found jobs, mainly in manufacturing, construction, and services. This confirms that Lithuania treated labour-market access not as a later reward for successful integration, but as one of the primary

tools through which integration could begin. Employment provided income, daily structure, and a first point of contact with the host society.

At the same time, the collected materials clearly indicate that labour-market inclusion often took a truncated form. Many highly qualified specialists, including teachers, lawyers, and other professionals, entered low-skilled jobs because of language barriers and the slow recognition of qualifications. From the perspective of long-term development, this is a serious inefficiency. It means that Lithuania has created access to work, but not yet full access to work at a level corresponding to refugees' actual competences. In other words, the system reduces idleness more effectively than it prevents deprofessionalisation.

To sum up, the Lithuanian model of integrating refugees from Ukraine may be described as a pragmatic model of managed inclusion. Its greatest strengths are the speed of legislative adaptation, the partnership between institutions and NGOs, the early opening of the labour market, and the relatively successful incorporation of children into schools. Its main weaknesses lie in housing shortages, skills mismatch, insufficient advanced language training, and incomplete mechanisms for tracking long-term outcomes. The general trajectory is therefore positive, but the transition from safe presence to full social and professional integration remains unfinished.

An analysis of the materials also indicates that the Lithuanian approach is closely linked to the idea of an inclusive society. In this perspective, integration is not reduced to legal stay or formal access to services. It is understood as the ability of newcomers to participate in social life, build relationships, and gradually become rooted in the host environment without being forced into assimilation. The most valuable parts of the Lithuanian material therefore concern not only institutions, but also the social conditions under which refugees cease to be treated as temporary outsiders and begin to function as recognised members of local communities.

The public climate in Lithuania appears to have improved since the first phase of the crisis, but it remains uneven. The materials from frontline organisations suggest that migration is no longer perceived as entirely unfamiliar, yet stereotypes and low tolerance still persist, including inside some institutions. A key explanatory factor is the lack of direct contact. Where personal interaction between locals and migrants is weak, fear and prejudice are more likely to endure. This means that inclusion in Lithuania depends not only on legal frameworks, but also on whether ordinary social encounters become frequent enough to normalise difference.

The collected interviews also show that support in Lithuania is not perceived symmetrically across migrant groups. Ukrainians have received stronger empathy and broader public attention than many other foreigners, which is understandable in the context of war but still reveals an imbalance in the moral economy of support. This observation is analytically important, because it shows that inclusion is shaped by both institutional and symbolic factors. The category of 'deservingness' influences who is welcomed most readily, and this can strengthen solidarity in one case while reproducing hierarchies between migrant groups in another.

What is especially visible in the Lithuanian case is the importance of intermediary institutions and practical information channels. Refugees reached support through websites, social media, municipalities, partner organisations, referrals from the Migration Department, and what interviewees described as the 'first-door principle', namely providing information immediately upon arrival so that migrants know where to return later. Yet the most effective communication often took place through peer-to-peer networks, messaging groups, and word of mouth. This suggests that trust, not only visibility, determines whether available support actually becomes accessible.

Education appears throughout the materials as one of the most important arenas of inclusion. Lithuania integrated Ukrainian children into public schools and kindergartens, while also providing free meals and educational support. Schools performed not only an instructional role, but also a stabilising social role for refugee families. They created daily routine, linked children and parents to local institutions, and helped transform emergency displacement into a more organised form of everyday life. In this sense, education functioned as a core mechanism through which inclusion moved from abstract policy to ordinary practice.

The educational dimension in Lithuania extends beyond formal schooling. The desk research material emphasises that from 2024 Ukrainian students applying to higher education follow the same procedures as Lithuanian citizens and compete for state-funded places on the basis of merit. At the same time, the SIEK approach, centred on successful integration through education and culture, underlines that cultural participation is as important as institutional access. This is a valuable insight, because it shows that long-term inclusion is strengthened not only by admission to schools and universities, but also by access to the symbolic and relational life of the host society.

Healthcare constitutes another important test of inclusiveness. Refugees in Lithuania are entitled to emergency care and, once registered, can access family doctors and specialists under conditions similar to those applying to insured residents. However, the materials point to long waiting times, information deficits, and persistent language barriers that complicate actual use of the system. Thus, formal equality of entitlement does not always translate into equal usability. The Lithuanian case once again demonstrates that integration barriers frequently arise not at the level of rights on paper, but at the level of navigation, interpretation, and institutional responsiveness.

Psychosocial support has become increasingly important as the crisis has lengthened. The collected materials show a clear shift from short-term crisis intervention toward long-term trauma care. NGOs and the International Organization for Migration provide free psychological consultations, yet many refugees still report that their needs are only partially met. Common burdens include anxiety for family members in Ukraine, survivor's guilt, prolonged uncertainty, and the cumulative strain of rebuilding life in exile. In practice, this means that inclusion cannot be understood solely through employment and schooling; emotional stabilisation is a necessary condition of durable participation.

The philosophy of the Foreigners' Integration Center illustrates this broader understanding particularly well. Integration is framed there as empowerment rather than dependency. Immediate problems such as housing, legal status, and survival needs must be addressed first, but the longer-term goal is to help migrants participate, contribute, and navigate the system independently. An important organisational lesson recorded in the materials is the shift from doing things for migrants to teaching migrants how to manage institutions themselves. This approach reduces long-term dependency and gives inclusion a more substantive meaning.

The criteria used by frontline actors to assess effectiveness are also revealing. Success is measured less by financial volume or the number of events and more by genuine engagement, language progress, and system-level improvements generated through recurring casework. Passing Lithuanian language examinations is treated as a tangible sign of long-term integration, while the ability to identify repeated structural problems and raise them to decision-makers is seen as another meaningful indicator. This is an important corrective to superficial metrics, because it places autonomy and real participation above administrative optics.

At the same time, the Lithuanian material points to several structural limits of the current inclusion model. Support is often funding-dependent, post-programme vulnerability

remains significant, and some migrants still cannot navigate institutions independently once formal integration periods end. Organisational actors also report shortages of staff and the need for longer, more flexible, person-centred support trajectories. In addition, changes in the division of responsibilities between NGOs and municipalities may create transitional gaps rather than continuity. The result is a system that has learned a great deal, but still struggles to guarantee sustained accompaniment.

To sum up, the institutional picture emerging from the Lithuanian materials is one of meaningful but incomplete inclusion. Refugees from Ukraine have obtained legal access to residence, work, education, and at least the basic layers of public services. Yet the quality of inclusion still depends heavily on mediation by NGOs, community trust, language acquisition, and the ability of the system to respond to diverse biographies rather than standardised administrative categories. Lithuania has clearly moved beyond emergency reception, but full inclusion still requires stronger continuity, deeper coordination, and more equal access to the higher levels of participation.

An analysis of the collected materials also makes it possible to identify the main manifestations of the inclusiveness of Lithuanian society toward refugees from Ukraine. Importantly, this inclusiveness is not presented as a single act of welcome, but as a set of repeated practices through which refugees are gradually connected to institutions, neighbourhoods, workplaces, and informal social circles. The Lithuanian case shows that inclusion becomes visible not only in laws and programmes, but above all in the everyday mechanisms that reduce fear, create trust, and enable long-term rooting.

One of the clearest manifestations of inclusiveness was the rapid legislative and administrative adaptation of the state. Lithuania implemented the Temporary Protection Directive quickly, granted the right to reside and work, and extended protection through March 2026. The issuing of digital residence permits through MIGRIS further strengthened procedural continuity. This matters because it reduced the risk that refugees would remain trapped in legal ambiguity. In practical terms, inclusive society in Lithuania began with the recognition that people fleeing war had to be admitted not only physically, but also institutionally.

Another manifestation of inclusiveness was the strong cooperation between state institutions and civil society. NGOs were indispensable in providing material aid, legal support, social orientation, psychological help, and activities for children. They also acted as practical interpreters of the system, translating formal rights into concrete solutions. This NGO-state partnership did not replace the state, but it made the state socially workable. In this respect, Lithuania's inclusiveness relied not on a purely centralised mechanism, but on a layered support structure in which public institutions and social organisations reinforced one another.

A further sign of inclusiveness was the way information circulated through trusted social channels. The materials repeatedly stress that peer networks, messaging groups, and word of mouth were often more effective than formal announcements. Refugees who had already benefited from support became informal ambassadors for those who were more isolated or sceptical of institutions. Such communication is significant because it lowers the threshold of access. It also shows that inclusion works best when it is not experienced as distant administration, but as guidance transmitted through socially credible contacts.

Community-bridging initiatives provide another important example. Informal language clubs, shared breakfasts, refugee day events, and projects pairing Lithuanian families with migrant families created spaces where contact could become ordinary rather than ceremonial. These were not spectacular interventions, yet their sociological significance is considerable. They addressed exactly the factor that interviewees identified as crucial, namely the lack of

direct contact between locals and migrants. By multiplying situations of low-pressure interaction, such initiatives helped reduce symbolic distance and foster mutual familiarity.

The 'Sisters for Sisters' initiative illustrates this dimension with particular clarity. Created in 2022 by Lithuanian women as a grassroots response to the displacement crisis, it developed a model of psychosocial support based on reciprocity rather than hierarchy. Ceramics workshops, art classes, culinary meetings, sports activities, meditation, and guided conversations were designed as low-threshold spaces in which Ukrainian women could process trauma while building new social ties. Professional psychologists were present within these activities, which meant that what looked like simple community events also functioned as structured emotional support.

The integration of children constitutes yet another clear manifestation of inclusiveness, but here the Lithuanian material also reveals unfinished tasks. Schools and kindergartens created a relatively solid base of inclusion, and refugee youth increasingly entered the ordinary educational system. At the same time, the materials point to the need for stronger after-school and extracurricular opportunities. Such activities are not marginal. They are precisely the spaces in which peer relations, confidence, and everyday belonging are built. If Lithuania wants inclusion to be sustainable across generations, this sphere requires greater investment.

Lithuanian inclusiveness is also visible in the sphere of labour-market mediation, although here the picture is more ambivalent. Business organisations cooperated with the Employment Service through webinars for employers and planned support for regional job fairs, which helped create channels of recruitment. There is also clear awareness that language training, qualification recognition, and upskilling, especially in digital and higher value-added sectors, are necessary if refugees are not to remain concentrated in low-skilled positions. The employer network therefore represents a real opportunity, but only if labour-market access is linked to advancement rather than mere absorption.

Another strong manifestation of inclusiveness is the capacity of civil actors to influence system-level change. The materials report that legal advocacy by the Foreigners' Integration Center and partner organisations contributed to modifying a restrictive administrative practice affecting Ukrainians whose humanitarian residence permits had expired. This prevented some people from falling into illegality or being exposed to unsafe return scenarios. Such interventions are highly significant, because they show that inclusion in Lithuania is not only about delivering services within existing rules; it also involves correcting rules when they create exclusionary effects.

The long-term social effects recorded in the materials are equally important. In the case of 'Sisters for Sisters', many relationships became self-sustaining and survived beyond the formal life of the project, which later evolved into a foundation. Refugees were described as no longer being viewed as outsiders, but as more strongly rooted participants in local social and economic life. This is perhaps the most convincing sign of real inclusiveness: when organised support gradually becomes less necessary because ordinary social bonds have already taken over part of its function.

To sum up, the materials show that the inclusiveness of Lithuanian society toward refugees from Ukraine is based above all on a combination of legal openness, civic solidarity, practical mediation, and everyday bridge-building. Lithuania has demonstrated considerable institutional flexibility and social responsiveness, but the durability of this model depends on whether systemic barriers in housing, advanced language learning, qualification recognition, mental health support, and long-term coordination can be reduced. The country has already shown that rapid reception is possible. The next step is to ensure that inclusion becomes deep enough to convert temporary protection into durable participation and long-term mutual benefit.

### 3.7A model for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Austria

An analysis of the collected material on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Austria makes it possible to distinguish a specific model of support, which may be described as a decentralised partnership-and-stabilisation model. Its central features are the strong role of non-governmental organisations, the importance of regional and municipal coordination, the combination of formal funding with civic mobilisation, and the visible priority given to psychosocial security, everyday orientation, and practical access to services. In the Austrian case, integration appears less as a single centrally delivered programme and more as an ecosystem of interconnected initiatives rooted in local communities.

The empirical base covers ten initiatives operating in Austria, primarily in Styria and Graz. Eight are led by non-governmental organisations, one by a public institution, and one by an informal volunteer group. This structure is analytically significant. It shows that the practical face of integration is carried mainly by civic and para-public actors rather than by a single administrative authority. Even where public bodies finance or coordinate parts of the response, the visible front line of assistance consists of counselling centres, psychosocial organisations, educational institutions, community groups, and volunteer networks working close to the daily realities of displaced people.

The temporal pattern of the initiatives is equally revealing. Almost all began in March or April 2022, immediately after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and many remained active in 2025 or 2026. This continuity suggests that the Austrian response did not remain at the level of short humanitarian reaction. Emergency reception gradually evolved into medium-term support structures. The shift is visible in the movement from donations and transport assistance toward counselling, psychosocial intervention, educational pathways, language support, and more durable accommodation and family-centred accompaniment. In other words, time transformed aid into integration, even though the transition is still incomplete.

The sectoral composition of the material confirms this interpretation. Nine out of the ten initiatives belong primarily to social and care services, while two also extend into education and science. This means that, in the Austrian evidence base, integration starts with stabilisation rather than with abstract declarations of participation. The first task is to reduce fear, disorientation, administrative exclusion, and emotional overload. Only then can refugees use language courses, schools, universities, and labour-market services in a meaningful way. The Austrian model visible here is therefore practical: before people can integrate, they must first regain a minimum level of safety and functional everyday order.

The funding architecture of the identified initiatives also deserves attention. Six activities are described as projects financed from external funds, one combines external and own funds, two rely mainly on informal or volunteer-driven resources, and one combines organisational resources with donations. This mix indicates that Austrian integration practice rests on a hybrid financial base. Public or programme resources are crucial, but they are regularly supplemented by own institutional budgets, philanthropy, membership contributions, and voluntary work. Such a model allows rapid mobilisation and organisational flexibility, yet it also creates vulnerability when grants end or donation flows weaken.

The partnership structure reported in the material is highly characteristic. Recurrent partners include the Government of Styria, municipalities, the Austrian Public Employment

Service, the Austrian Integration Fund, universities, local NGOs, psychosocial centres, employers, and volunteer networks. Only three initiatives describe their cooperation as mainly formal, while seven operate through predominantly informal or mixed coordination. This is instructive. It suggests that Austrian integration works not only through official referral systems, but also through information exchange, trusted contacts, local improvisation, and practical problem-solving across organisational boundaries. The administrative state is present, but it becomes effective largely because it is embedded in a social web of intermediary actors.

In this sense, the Austrian model may be described as mediated inclusion. Rights, services, and opportunities are rarely accessed in a direct line from refugee to institution. They are usually mediated by counsellors, social workers, volunteers, teachers, and community organisers who translate systems into understandable steps. The collected initiatives repeatedly emphasise first contact, orientation, referrals, accompaniment, and case-by-case assistance. This is not a minor detail. It shows that integration depends less on the mere existence of entitlements than on the existence of actors capable of making those entitlements usable.

Caritas Steiermark illustrates this logic particularly clearly. Its intervention combines first-contact counselling, case management, psychosocial support, help with applications and administrative procedures, family support, and referrals to language courses or labour-market services. The declared objective is not simply to offer relief, but to strengthen self-reliance and help refugees navigate the Austrian welfare and service system. This reveals a model of integration based on guided autonomy rather than passive reception. Refugees are not treated only as recipients of aid; they are supported in becoming capable users of institutions, benefits, schools, counselling systems, and employment services.

The same logic extends into the sphere of education and research. The University of Graz Ukraine Support Programme demonstrates that Austrian inclusion has not been limited to subsistence concerns. The programme offers enrolment support, scholarships, German language courses, academic advising, counselling, a buddy system, and help for displaced researchers. Its existence signals that refugees are also approached as students, scholars, and future professionals whose trajectories should not be permanently interrupted by war. A system that preserves educational and academic continuity protects not only individual biographies, but also the longer-term social capital that refugees bring with them.

One of the most striking features of the Austrian evidence base is the centrality of psychosocial and trauma-informed support. ZEBRA, OMEGA, the Austrian Red Cross in Styria, Jugend am Werk, and other actors all place crisis intervention, emotional stabilisation, counselling in the first language, or community-based psychosocial support at the core of their activities. This indicates that the Austrian field has recognised a basic fact: war displacement is never only a housing or labour-market issue. It is also an issue of fear, grief, family separation, uncertainty, and prolonged psychological strain. Without attending to these layers, all later stages of integration remain fragile.

The use of first-language support in several Austrian initiatives is especially noteworthy. Counselling in Ukrainian or Russian, multilingual guidance, and culturally sensitive communication appear repeatedly across the material. This is more than a matter of convenience. It lowers the threshold of access, reduces the risk of misunderstandings in crisis situations, and creates trust where bureaucratic environments might otherwise feel opaque or intimidating. In the early and middle phases of displacement, language is power. An institution that can communicate in a person's first language does not merely transmit information more efficiently; it also signals respect, safety, and recognition.

The Austrian Red Cross initiative 'Frauentreffen Ukraine' offers a focused example of inclusion through safe and regular social spaces. Weekly women's meetings, psychosocial

support, information sessions, group discussions, creative workshops, and referrals create a structured environment in which Ukrainian women can receive help without the pressure of formal office settings alone. Such a model is significant because it combines emotional support, information access, and social connection. It also recognises the gendered character of displacement. A support system that creates reliable women-centred spaces does not simply comfort participants; it strengthens their capacity to function in everyday Austrian institutional life.

Housing and accommodation represent another decisive layer of the Austrian model. Initiatives such as Jugend am Werk and VinziHerz combine shelter with social support, daily-life assistance, counselling, and crisis intervention. Accommodation is not treated as a purely logistical matter. Housing becomes an entry point into a broader integration process. Once people are stably housed, support can extend to routines, schooling, contact with authorities, children's activities, and community building. Yet the same material also makes clear that housing remains one of the most serious bottlenecks. Limited space and high demand restrict the system's ability to move from emergency placement to durable settlement.

The role of volunteer and community mobilisation should not be underestimated. 'Steiermark hilft' and the humanitarian efforts of the Scouts in Styria demonstrate that Austrian integration was not built only by professional service providers. Donations, transport assistance, matching hosts with refugees, packing goods, and community events formed part of the first protective layer and, in some cases, continued beyond the immediate emergency phase. These practices matter sociologically because they show that solidarity was organised not only vertically through institutions, but also horizontally through citizen networks. Volunteer activity cannot replace structured social policy, but it can fill gaps quickly and humanise reception.

Ridna Domivka, the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre in Graz, adds another dimension that is often overlooked in integration policy. Its work with children's groups, language classes, cultural workshops, holiday celebrations, support for newly arrived families, and community events shows that integration is not equivalent to cultural erasure. On the contrary, the preservation of identity can function as a stabilising factor that helps families participate more confidently in the host society. The Austrian material therefore supports a conception of inclusion that leaves room for continuity, memory, and community self-organisation.

When the collected data are viewed as a whole, the estimated reported reach of the initiatives is substantial. Taken together, they mention support for roughly 5,050 to 7,100 persons, of whom approximately 4,120 to 5,780 are described as Ukrainian refugees. These figures must be interpreted with caution, because some beneficiaries may overlap across organisations and some estimates are approximate rather than exact administrative counts. Even so, the numbers are meaningful. They indicate that the observed Austrian support architecture is not marginal or symbolic, but serves a large population through repeated institutional and community contacts.

Another important point is that the initiatives do not all address refugees in isolation from the host society. Several are explicitly described as mixed actions involving both migrants and the local community. This suggests that at least part of the Austrian ecosystem understands integration as a relational process rather than a closed service package for newcomers alone. Mixed formats reduce symbolic distance, create ordinary contact, and make it easier for local actors to perceive refugees as participants in shared social spaces. Integration becomes more durable when it is socially distributed rather than administratively compartmentalised.

Seen from this perspective, Austria's inclusiveness is visible above all in its low-threshold forms of access. Refugees can enter support systems not only through official

offices, but also through community groups, universities, housing organisations, volunteer networks, cultural centres, psychosocial counselling services, and municipal contacts. Such multiplicity of doors is one of the greatest strengths of the observed model. People affected by war often do not know which institution is formally responsible for what. A system in which many actors can receive, orient, and redirect them is therefore more humane and more effective than one that depends on perfect bureaucratic navigation from the start.

The quality of mediation is enhanced by the repeated use of case management and referral networks. Instead of expecting refugees to solve each problem separately, several initiatives connect housing, mental health, social benefits, education, labour-market access, and family support in one trajectory of accompaniment. Caritas, JAW, OMEGA, ZEBRA, the Red Cross, and university actors all appear in referral chains of one kind or another. This networked approach matters because displacement produces overlapping vulnerabilities. Fragmented interventions quickly become ineffective under such conditions. The Austrian material points, by contrast, toward a relatively holistic practice of coordinated support.

Partnership with public institutions is another manifestation of inclusiveness, but it takes a specific Austrian form. The Government of Styria appears repeatedly as a funder or institutional partner, municipalities provide logistics or space, the Austrian Public Employment Service supports referrals, and the Austrian Integration Fund coordinates language-related dimensions. Yet the public sector does not dominate the field in a monopolistic way. Instead, it operates through delegated and cooperative arrangements with social organisations. This may increase responsiveness, but it also means that inclusion depends heavily on the density and competence of intermediary organisations, and not every region may possess the same capacity.

The strengths reported in the spreadsheet are strikingly consistent across organisations. They include multilingual access, first-language counselling, trained staff, strong local partnerships, psychosocial expertise, flexible case management, volunteer mobilisation, community-based activities, and safe or stable meeting spaces. Such repetition is useful analytically because it reveals what the Austrian field itself regards as effective integration resources. None of these strengths is accidental. They all concern proximity, trust, communication, and the ability to respond to complex biographies. The Austrian model appears strongest not where it standardises people, but where it remains capable of treating them as concrete individuals.

The challenges recorded in the material are equally coherent. High demand appears across multiple initiatives, as do administrative complexity, housing shortages, limited staff capacity, coordination workload, fluctuating attendance in group activities, reliance on donations or volunteers, and the emotional burden carried by professionals and facilitators. These are not isolated inconveniences. They point to structural pressure within the support system. When the same difficulties recur in counselling, accommodation, community support, and educational contexts, the implication is clear: Austrian integration actors have developed many effective practices, but they often implement them at or near the limits of their organisational endurance.

The housing question deserves particular emphasis because it appears in different guises throughout the evidence. Some actors struggle with limited emergency accommodation, others with insufficient capacity for families, and still others with the difficulty of linking social support to longer-term settlement. Housing is not merely one problem among many. It is the infrastructure of integration itself. Without stable housing, children's education is disrupted, counselling continuity becomes harder, labour-market access weakens, and psychosocial recovery remains uncertain. No matter how strong the counselling and community support system may be, its overall effectiveness will remain constrained as long as the housing bottleneck is not more durably addressed.

A second major issue concerns the sustainability of professional support. Trauma-informed counselling, crisis intervention, multilingual mediation, and individual case management are labour-intensive activities that depend on trained personnel. Several organisations explicitly mention staff overload or emotional strain. This is a serious warning sign. The more successful a support system is at attracting people in need, the more pressure it creates on those who provide care. Without stable financing, supervision, staff development, and sufficiently long project horizons, quality may deteriorate. In this respect, Austria's integration field resembles a well-built bridge under heavy traffic: sound in design, but dependent on reinforcement.

The labour-market dimension is present in the Austrian material, but it is usually mediated rather than dominant. Employment support often appears through referrals to courses, cooperation with the Public Employment Service, employer webinars, language coordination, or broader counselling around social orientation. This indicates that work is recognised as important, yet the evidence base places stronger emphasis on stabilisation and access than on rapid economic insertion alone. That is understandable in the context of war displacement. At the same time, it points to a strategic task for the future: to ensure that labour-market integration develops beyond immediate placement and includes qualification recognition and skill development.

The same can be said about educational advancement and longer-term social mobility. The University of Graz programme and the activities of Ridna Domivka demonstrate strong support for study continuity, youth engagement, and community education. However, the material as a whole still suggests that Austria's most developed competencies lie in humanitarian stabilisation and psychosocial accompaniment rather than in the systematic upward integration of refugee human capital. The first years after displacement have understandably focused on protection. The next phase should more deliberately convert safety into advancement, otherwise integration may become protective without becoming transformative.

An additional strength of the Austrian evidence base is the coexistence of formal and informal modes of action. Formal projects bring funding stability, reporting obligations, institutional legitimacy, and access to state systems. Informal initiatives contribute flexibility, speed, trust, and community energy. Neither mode is sufficient on its own. Formal structures without civic initiative can become rigid; informal solidarity without institutional anchoring can become fragile. The Austrian material suggests that the most resilient arrangements are those in which both dimensions cooperate. Good integration governance is neither purely bureaucratic nor purely spontaneous, but a negotiated combination of the two.

The Austrian case also demonstrates that inclusion is built through ordinary routines rather than through spectacular gestures. Weekly meetings, repeated counselling sessions, class enrolments, child-centred activities, emergency meals, community events, transport assistance, and help with forms do not look dramatic in isolation. Yet taken together, they create the social texture of belonging. They reduce the number of situations in which refugees must confront institutions alone and uncertain. They also create predictable rhythms of support, which is crucial for people whose life trajectories have been violently interrupted. In this sense, the Austrian model is quietly practical and institutionally humane.

From a broader analytical angle, the collected material suggests that Austria has developed a distinctly human-centred approach to refugee inclusion, at least within the regional ecosystem covered by the spreadsheet. The dominant orientation is not punitive or narrowly assimilationist. Instead, the focus falls on orientation, stabilisation, psychosocial recovery, guided participation, and the gradual reconstruction of everyday agency. This does not mean that the system is free of barriers. Administrative complexity, resource dependence,

and housing shortages are real constraints. Nevertheless, the overall direction visible in the evidence is one of managed inclusion rather than institutional distancing.

To sum up, the Austrian material supports the conclusion that the country’s response to refugees from Ukraine is best understood as a layered and partnership-based model of integration. Its greatest strengths lie in the density of civic and para-public actors, the seriousness with which psychosocial needs are treated, the use of multilingual and low-threshold support, the practical quality of case management, and the willingness to combine humanitarian, educational, cultural, and community dimensions. Its principal weaknesses concern funding fragility, housing shortages, administrative complexity, staff overload, and the risk that stabilisation may outpace longer-term upward integration. Even so, the overall picture is decidedly constructive and provides a credible basis for durable inclusion.

### 3.8A synthetic comparison of four models of integration of refugees from Ukraine emerging from the analysed reports: Greek, Slovenian, German and Romanian.

The table shows primarily the dominant level of operation, the main integration actors and the logic of the system's functioning.

Comparison Dimension	Greek model	Slovenian model	German model	Romanian Model
Dominant character of the model	Socio-local	Institutional-state	Socio-economic	Humanitarian-Civic
Main level of integration	Local communities and local governments	State and public administration	Labour market and regional economy	Social organizations and NGOs
The role of the state	Creating a basic framework, but a limited operational role	A strong role of the state in the management of integration	Legal framework and financing of integration programmes	The state creates a legal framework, but implementation is limited
Main Integration Actors	local communities, NGOs, regional businesses	state administration, public institutions, schools	Mittelstand, chambers of commerce, local governments	NGOs, volunteers, humanitarian organisations
Integration logic	"Organic solidarity" and local community involvement	Managing integration through state institutions	Integration through employment and the use of human capital	Humanitarian aid transitioning into social inclusion
The importance of the labour market	medium – especially in agriculture and processing	moderate – access to the labour market is	very high – integration linked to the economy	relatively low – language and administrative barriers

		provided by the state		
The role of civil society	very large	moderate	important but supportive of the economy	key – the main pillar of the system
Main integration tools	local cooperation, social projects, buddy systems	education, access to public services, career guidance	Welcome Centers, mentoring, vocational training, digital applications	NGO aid centers, 50-20 program, humanitarian aid
The most important barriers	transport, childcare, recognition of qualifications	Slovenian language, housing, administrative procedures	recognition of diplomas, childcare, rural transport	language, recognition of qualifications, administrative inefficiencies
System stability	moderate – depending on the activity of local communities	relatively stable thanks to state institutions	high – related to the economy	low – dependent on international funding
The main strength of the model	strong social solidarity and local integration	a clear institutional framework	Utilization of refugees' human capital	Rapid mobilisation of civil society
Main risks	Limited infrastructure in rural regions	overloading public institutions	Outflow of refugees to big cities	Withdrawal of humanitarian funding

**Comparison of SWOT analyses of refugee integration models (Greece – Slovenia – Germany – Romania)**

<b>Analysis Element</b>	Greece	Slovenia	Germany	Romania
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<p><b>Strengths</b></p>	<p>Very strong solidarity of local communities ; rapid absorption of refugees by the local labour market (agriculture, processing); a high level of cooperation between NGOs, local governments and enterprises; high social acceptance</p>	<p>Quick legislative reaction of the state; a clear legal framework for temporary protection; access to the labour market, education and healthcare for refugees; efficient functioning of public institutions</p>	<p>Strong institutional and financial support; active involvement of local businesses and chambers of commerce; developed integration tools (Welcome Centers, language programs); high level of qualifications of refugees</p>	<p>Very high mobilization of civil society; strong cooperation between non-governmental organizations; quick response of volunteering; Developed humanitarian support networks</p>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p>	<p>Transport problems in rural regions; lack of childcare hindering women's work; Slow procedure for the recognition of diplomas</p>	<p>Language barriers; housing shortage; Limited administrative capacity in some regions</p>	<p>Lack of social infrastructure in rural areas (e.g. kindergartens); difficulties in the recognition of professional qualifications; Bureaucracy</p>	<p>high dependence on project financing; language barriers; weak institutional capacity of the state; Burnout of volunteers</p>

<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p>demographic renewal of depopulating regions; development of the local economy; Leveraging the competences of refugees in the energy transition</p>	<p>strengthening the labour market in an ageing society; integration of the young generation of refugees; development of integration policies</p>	<p>demographic stabilisation of rural regions; development of refugee entrepreneurship ; modernisation of public administration</p>	<p>development of refugee entrepreneurship ; building new models of cooperation between NGOs and local governments; Exploiting the potential of young refugees</p>
<p><b>Threats</b></p>	<p>social fatigue with help; lack of stable funding; Migration of refugees to larger cities</p>	<p>a decline in interest in integration in the long term; Housing market pressure</p>	<p>the outflow of refugees to large cities; social fatigue with integration; legal uncertainty of residence status</p>	<p>the withdrawal of international funding; the risk of social exclusion; tensions on the housing market</p>

### 3.9 Models of refugee integration and building social inclusiveness – a comparative analysis

An analysis of the models of integration of refugees from Ukraine identified in the reports on Greece, Slovenia, Germany and Romania indicates that they differ not only in their institutional structure, but also in their potential to build social inclusion. In this context, inclusiveness is understood as the ability of the host society to integrate refugees into social, economic and cultural life in a way that enables the creation of lasting social relations and a sense of belonging to the community.

Among the analysed models, the local and social model, identified in the studied regions of Greece, shows the greatest potential in building social inclusiveness. The integration of refugees takes place there primarily through direct social relations between

refugees and residents of local communities. Local governments, local social organisations, educational institutions and businesses operating in rural and semi-urban regions play a key role in this case. Refugees are included in the life of local communities through work, education, participation in social events and daily interactions with residents. This process fosters a shift from perceiving refugees as recipients of aid to treating them as full members of the local community.

Important elements of inclusiveness can also be seen in the Romanian model, particularly in the Iași region. In this case, the integration process was largely the result of the mobilisation of civil society and the activity of humanitarian organisations and volunteers. Grassroots social initiatives have played a key role in organising humanitarian aid, psychological support, educational integration of children and the creation of local support networks for refugee families. At the same time, inclusiveness in this model is more humanitarian than structural, as many actions focus on providing social assistance and stabilising the living conditions of refugees, and less on their long-term integration into local economic structures.

The Slovenian model, on the other hand, represents an approach based primarily on state institutions. The integration of refugees takes place within a clearly defined legal and administrative framework that ensures access to public services such as education, the labour market or healthcare. This system is conducive to stabilizing the situation of refugees and provides them with formal legal protection. At the same time, social integration in this case is more formal in nature and is carried out to a greater extent through public institutions than through spontaneous social relations.

The German model, on the other hand, focuses primarily on economic integration. The inclusion of refugees in social life takes place mainly through the labour market and cooperation with enterprises in the small and medium-sized enterprises sector. Training programmes, career mentoring and employment-related language courses enable refugees to enter the labour market relatively quickly and achieve economic independence. Inclusivity in this model is therefore largely functional and economic in nature, and social relations develop primarily in a professional context.

A comparison of the four models shows that the model based on direct relations between refugees and the host community, characteristic of the Greek model, is the most conducive to building social inclusion. At the same time, the experience of the analysed countries indicates that the most lasting integration effects arise when different integration mechanisms complement each other. Combining social solidarity and the activity of local communities with institutional support from the state and the possibility of participating in the labour market can lead to a sustainable model of integration that fosters both social inclusion and economic independence of refugees.