

The abstract of the case study describes the practice of The Hnízdo project – inclusion of adolescents from Ukraine in Prague.

Project promoter – Salvation Army

The project was implemented by the Salvation Army in the Czech Republic, part of an international Christian organization that traditionally focuses on working with homeless people and families living in substandard conditions. The Salvation Army provides a range of social, health and related services. Its activities are also linked to the provision of humanitarian aid.

At the time of **the arrival of the Ukrainian refugees**, the Salvation Army's Prague branch was involved in providing assistance at the Regional Assistance Centre for Ukraine in Prague. One of the first steps was to help the refugees in the dormitories of Charles University. In parallel, the concept of The Hnízdo began to take shape. Its realization was preceded by intensive negotiations and advocacy work with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Prague City Hall and the Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children for the benefit of the target group. The aim of these negotiations was to set up a service for unaccompanied minors that combines intensive case management, integration activities and an offer of accommodation.

Target group of the project

The target group of the project were refugee minors from Ukraine aged 15 years and older who arrived or found themselves unaccompanied during their stay in the Czech Republic, as well as young adults under the age of 20 without a supportive social network who did not feel mature for independent living and needed support for successful integration.

Cooperating entities

Within the framework of the project implementation, the Salvation Army cooperated with a number of entities, including:

- **Prague City Hall**, which through Trade Centre Praha a.s. is mainly a provider of accommodation for the target group;

- **Authority for Social and Legal Protection of Children Prague 9**, who is usually the guardian of unaccompanied Ukrainian minors;
- **The Regional Centre for Help and Assistance to Ukraine** in Prague, which contacts The Hnízdo staff when a potential client is registered.

Objectives of the projects

The main goal of the project was to provide the target group with a safe background, safe relationships, social and legal counselling and support in integration. The following criteria can be used to evaluate the fulfilment of the objective from the point of view of the project participants:

- provision of housing,
- participation in education or labour market participation,
- overcoming a language barrier (at least a basic one),
- knowing where and how to address mental health and health problems.

The project also had a preventive dimension - it aimed to prevent crime and socially pathological phenomena through the offer of project activities.



Project activities

The project included two key activities that ran in parallel throughout the project.

Online counselling and field counselling

Project staff provided basic counselling to Ukrainian refugees either online or on the ground. This activity served in part to find potential clients for the second Hnízdo activity.

In the framework of online counselling and field counselling, the staff recorded **156 contacts** in online counselling, **34 contacts** in contact field counselling. Another **48 contacts** were made with clients who sought the service based on recommendations from friends and acquaintances (not online or in the field).

The activity called Hnízdo

The client's entry into The Hnízdo activity was conditional on an assessment of their needs. The activity was based on intensive **case management**, where each client had a key worker who worked with them individually to plan, supported them in achieving their goals, network them to other needed services, etc. and in the case of unaccompanied minors, worked with their guardian.

The participant in this activity may or may not have used the hostel accommodation.

The Hnízdo activity involved 61 clients, 55 of whom were supported with over 40 hours of direct work.

Benefits of the project for the target group

One-off client needs were met in the context of basic counselling.

Within The Hnízdo activity, the main benefit observed across clients was the provision of a safe base and secure attachments that enabled clients to **gradually become independent**.

The Hnízdo project provided the target group with comprehensive support to address their individual needs, thereby improving their quality of life and facilitating their integration into society. The main impacts observed are:

- Clients paid attention to **taking care of their health**, both mental health and physical health.
- **Networking clients to a range of services** they needed or might need to know to manage the transition to independent living.
- The Hnízdo clients received the **necessary information on the functioning of the basic systems** in the Czech Republic, e.g. social, health, education, banking, transport, etc.
- **Acquisition of the Czech language** at the necessary level, which depended on the client's possibilities and future plans.
- **Economic stabilisation of the client**, which took the form of employment, but also support in studying and acquiring the skills needed to enter the labour market.

Support is tailored to the individual needs of clients, which increases its effectiveness and long-term impact.

„If it weren't for The Hnízdo, I probably would have sat at home and not dealt with the health issues that needed to be addressed. I probably wouldn't have even looked for a job or dealt with any hobbies, The Hnízdo helped me a lot.“ (project participant)

Experience of project implementation

The whole project was innovative in its nature and brought new approaches to supporting refugee minors. A new type of service for unaccompanied refugee minors was created, linked to the provision of independent housing and intensive support. An important new aspect of the service was also its integration dimension.

The experience of the project has been taken over by People in Need, which has introduced the Safe Harbour service for the same target group and is implementing it in three cities. The Hnízdo project can serve as an **inspirational model** that can be easily adapted and replicated in other regions, by other organisations for the target group of minors from other countries or Czech minors over 15 years of age.



HNÍZDO:

Inclusion of adolescents from Ukraine in Prague

What has worked well in working with the target group

The method of searching for the target group through social networks - communication channels used by the target group. Posting information about the service and other available services, introducing staff and their stories, contributed to building trust in the service and its contact by the target group.

Knowledge of the language of the target group by the workers in direct work - an important element of the project is workers with knowledge of two languages and their own experience of integration

Thoroughly conducting an anamnestic interview, mapping the client's needs.

Building trust between worker and client - given the age of the clients, it was important to create trusting relationships with clear boundaries. Community activities proved to be an effective tool for strengthening the relationships between the clients staying at the home, but also for strengthening client-staff relationship.

Barriers to project implementation

In its setup, the project also counted on the involvement of volunteers, which failed. This was mainly due to the time required to work with them and good timing with regard to the needs and psychological state of the clients. Volunteering was retrospectively assessed as an activity that the implementer would have focused on more. Its use would be desirable e.g. in supporting clients in learning the Czech language.

During the course of the project, the way of financial support for Ukrainians changed and some of The Hnízdo clients faced smaller or larger debts, mostly for accommodation or health insurance. The project implementer would include **direct support for participants** in the budget, which would help in reducing other living costs of the project participants (e.g. reimbursement of fares for courses).

Finding follow-up housing for clients was also challenging, as workers had limited options due to the unavailability of apartments in Prague.

The implementer also found it challenging to assemble a sufficiently **professional, bilingual team to work directly with clients**. Assembling a team of staff who had the necessary personality characteristics, enthusiasm, and bilingual communication skills, and taking the time to train them, no matter how time consuming that was, proved to be an effective way forward.



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