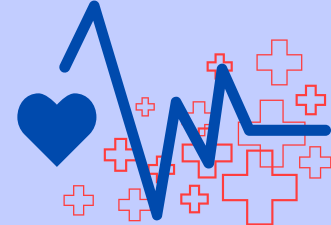


DUMKA – Multi-Disciplinary Mental Health Support for Refugees from Ukraine



Abstract of the case study describes the practice of the project **DUMKA – Multi-Disciplinary Mental Health Support for Refugees from Ukraine**

Project implementer

The project was implemented by the non-profit organization Agency for Migration and Adaptation **AMIGA**, z. s., which has long been active in providing psychological support to migrants and in intercultural work, particularly in the area of health. The organization offers social, educational, and therapeutic services, and since 2022 has been actively supporting refugees from Ukraine.

Project objectives

The main aim of the project was to **stabilize the mental health** of refugees from Ukraine and to **strengthen them in the process of social and economic integration in the Czech Republic**. The project sought to improve access to healthcare and other services, as well as to develop multi-disciplinary cooperation between institutions.

One of the goals was also to involve professionals from among the refugees in the provision of services.

Cooperating entities

Within the project, AMIGA worked closely with state and municipal institutions (e.g., the Prague City Hall), healthcare facilities, non-governmental organizations (e.g., SIMI, Fokus Praha), schools, and international partners (e.g., WHO, UNICEF).

The cooperation included client referrals, joint case management, staff training, and advocacy activities.

Target group

The project was intended for **refugees from Ukraine of all ages** who came to the Czech Republic as a result of the war – from children to seniors. It focused on people experiencing psychological difficulties, loss of orientation in the system, barriers in access to healthcare, or insufficient support for integration.

Among the organization's clients were also **highly vulnerable groups**, such as young adolescent refugees or people with serious health problems and disabilities.

Project activities

The project included four key activities, which complemented each other and made it possible to provide coordinated support.

- **Individual psychological support**

The project offered **free crisis intervention and therapeutic support** to refugees in Ukrainian and Russian, provided by professionals with personal migration experience. **Each client could receive up to 10 individual consultations** aimed at stabilizing their mental condition, processing trauma, and strengthening their ability to cope with everyday challenges. The service was provided in person and, when needed, also online.

- **Intercultural support in healthcare**

Intercultural workers helped clients navigate the healthcare system, find medical care, interpret, arrange insurance, accompany them to examinations, and communicate with authorities. **Services were delivered mostly in the field, with the aim of bridging both language and systemic barriers**. Intercultural workers also taught clients how to navigate the system independently.

- **Education and conflict prevention**

Workshops and information sessions in places with a higher concentration of refugees (e.g., hostels, community centres, schools) contributed to increasing awareness, self-development, and the prevention of risky behaviour. Topics included adolescence, bullying, achieving family harmony, adaptation in a new country, and more. This activity also included **the option of crisis intervention in acute cases**.

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● Project management and administration

The aim of this activity was to ensure comprehensive project management as well as professional team coordination – including supervision, support for interdisciplinary cooperation, and care for the quality of services.



Benefits of the project

The DUMKA project significantly contributed to improving the daily functioning and quality of life of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic. A key benefit was the **stabilization of clients' mental health** through free psychological support in their native language. Many clients came to the service in acute crisis, suffering from anxiety, depression, or retraumatization – **stabilizing their mental state became the first step toward further integration, such as seeking employment, establishing contact with institutions, or returning to everyday life.**

Language and cultural accessibility of services played a crucial role. The possibility to discuss sensitive topics with professionals who had similar migration experiences and spoke their language helped clients feel safe and accepted. **The DUMKA team was perceived as an environment of trust and understanding**, where clients could once again find support and hope. This had a positive impact on their ability to handle everyday tasks and build a new life in an unfamiliar environment.

Intercultural workers significantly **improved clients' access to healthcare**. They assisted in finding doctors, provided interpreting, and accompanied clients to medical examinations. In this way, they overcame language and institutional barriers that would otherwise have prevented clients from accessing healthcare. Continuity of this support was particularly important in cases of refugees with serious medical diagnoses (e.g., oncological) and in ensuring the quality of interpreting provided.

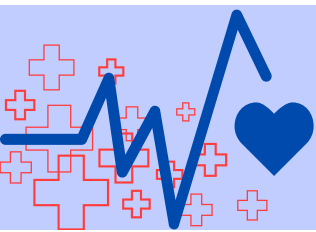
Intercultural workers also encouraged **clients' independence** – teaching them how to navigate the system, and how to arrange things on their own.

The project helped to **reduce the stigma surrounding mental health** in the Ukrainian community. Some clients later became active bearers of information and helpers for others.

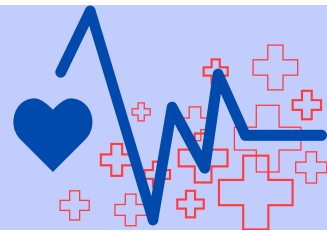
In particularly severe cases of clients struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts, the provision of psychological support and connecting them to psychiatric services led to **saving lives**.

“They helped me to reintegrate – to return to a normal, peaceful, non-war life... To a world without war. They also helped me by the way they spoke to me. That helped me start fighting against the depression I had fallen into... They also booked me an appointment with a psychiatrist. He diagnosed me with secondary depression. And they recommended other organizations that gave me support.” (project participant)

DUMKA's work **made the job of field workers from other non-profit organizations easier**, allowing them to focus on their specific areas of support, as clients' psychological stabilization was already ensured. According to partner organizations, DUMKA was able to achieve significant progress with clients for whom the standard support system could not.



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The DUMKA provided the most vulnerable with concrete support at the moment they needed it most, while also helping to connect professional institutions, public services, and non-profit organizations into effective cooperation.

Best practices

A strongly perceived need was to ensure that services focused on refugees' mental health and intercultural support are firmly anchored and available in the system in the long term. **The DUMKA project demonstrated that stabilizing mental health is a key prerequisite for further integration steps. Without this foundation, clients struggle to navigate the system, handle daily tasks, or consider returning to the labor market.** The project offers numerous examples of good practice:

- **Providing psychological assistance in the native language** – The opportunity to speak Ukrainian or Russian significantly increased clients' trust and reduced the stigma around mental health
- **Professionals with migration experience**
Intercultural workers and psychologists with their own refugee background had a deeper understanding of community needs and reinforced the sense of safety
- **Intercultural work in healthcare** – Ongoing support with navigating the system, accompanying clients, interpreting, and helping them find specialists improved access to healthcare
- **Information sharing through channels used by the Ukrainian community**, for example, Telegram, Facebook, and short informational videos
- **Facilitating long-term support** – Clients with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or advanced age appreciated the continuity of care – they did not have to repeatedly explain their medical condition
- **Promoting clients' independence**
Intercultural workers addressed situations together with the client rather than on their behalf
- **Responding to emerging needs**
For example, domestic violence or identity crises among young adults – the team was able to adapt activities flexibly in response to developments in the field

Barriers and challenges

- **Limited team capacity** (especially among intercultural workers and psychologists – demand exceeds available resources)
- **Short-term and uncertain funding** (complicating planning, creating unstable work arrangements, and risking staff burnout)
- **Systemic barriers within institutions** (e.g., reluctance of some doctors to treat foreigners or complex administrative procedures, such as disability recognition)
- **Limiting psychological support to ten sessions** (insufficient for clients with deep trauma – follow-up services are lacking)
- **Contrary to initial expectations, the need for psychological support has been growing over time** (integration processes are long-term, and mental health needs will remain for years to come)
- **Lack of tools for deeper impact evaluation** (it is difficult to measure the transformative benefit of a service that deals with invisible and gradual changes)

