Social Innovation Initiative

Co-funded by the European Union

SMART UA

SMART UA project

National report on mapping employment stakeholders

Hungary

August 2025

Acknowledgements / Authors

This country report was prepared by Róbert Schumann and Judit Zatykó, researchers at Szociometrum, based on a mapping of organisations providing services in the Hungarian labour market.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the organizations that contributed to this mapping, as well as to the Hungarian partners[1] of the SMART UA project, who supported the implementation of the research.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Social Fund Agency. Neither the European Union nor the Granting Authority can be held responsible for them.

1. Summary

Our mapping showed that civil society, church and market organisations in Hungary play a significant role in the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees. Their services are diverse, flexible and often innovative, but their operations are fundamentally project-based and fragmented, raising concerns about their long-term sustainability. The biggest challenges in the support system are inclusion gaps, language and skill barriers, and funding constraints.

All this suggests that strengthening partnerships, securing longer-term funding and developing a coordinated support system based on accurate data will be essential for the successful and sustainable integration of refugees into the labour market in the future.

Purpose and background of the research

As a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war that broke out in February 2022, Hungary has become one of the main host countries for refugees from Ukraine. By activating the Temporary Protection Directive, the European Union has guaranteed refugees the right of residence, the opportunity to work, and access to basic social and educational services. Accordingly, Hungary introduced the temporary protection

[1] Jesuit Refugee Service, The Evangelical Lutheran Church - Diakonia

status, which grants a number of rights to those affected, but access is often limited, and support systems remain fragmented.

The aim of this research was to map the labour market support provided to Ukrainian refugees by civil society, church and market actors in Hungary. The study sought not only to explore the range of existing services and their target groups, but also to identify the obstacles perceived by the organisations, the shortcomings they face, and the innovative solutions they have developed over the past three years.

The research included 26 organisations, institutions and businesses that are directly or indirectly involved in the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees. However, it is important to note that the sample is not representative, so the results cannot be extrapolated to all actors – rather, they provide a guideline and exploratory picture of the current situation.

Data collection was carried out using an online questionnaire survey.

The range of labour market services provided

The study clearly showed that the organisations provide diverse and complementary services. The most common forms of support are general counselling (85%) and mentoring (62%), which are the first steps in orientation and longer-term integration. Job placement and language training (46–46%) are also significant, as are direct job placement and its follow-up (38%).

Supplementary support also plays an important role: more than a third of organisations offer career planning (35%), nearly a quarter offer legal advice (23%), and a smaller proportion offer vocational training, skills development (12%) and internship opportunities (8%). The qualitative responses also highlighted specific activities such as CV writing, job clubs, employer search, onboarding support, and teaching Hungarian as a foreign language.

Overall, the picture shows that although the support system is fragmented, organisations strive to offer a wide range of services that cover both basic orientation needs and elements that support longer-term integration.

Target groups and the issue of inclusion

Most organisations provide general services, i.e. they do not limit their activities to a specific group. At the same time, a significant proportion (50%) provides targeted support to women and mothers with young children, which is in line with the fact that the majority of refugees in Hungary are women with children.

Particularly vulnerable groups – such as Roma communities (27%), the elderly (19%), people with disabilities (19%) and LGBTQ+ refugees (8%) – receive targeted services to a lesser extent. Although services are in principle open to everyone, actual access is often limited by eligibility criteria, capacity constraints and regional inequalities.

The main barriers to labour market integration

According to the responding organisations, the most significant obstacles are refugees' lack of language skills (77%) and limited recognition of qualifications and professional competences (69%). Bureaucratic obstacles (65%), discrimination and lack of childcare services (54–54%), and disadvantages due to mental health conditions (50%) were also identified as serious problems.

Other obstacles mentioned less frequently but regularly include lack of local work experience (42%), lack of soft skills (35%), underqualification (31%) and lack of digital skills (31%). Several of these are directly related to the socio-demographic background of refugees living in Hungary: it is particularly difficult for overrepresented women and those with lower levels of education to enter the labour market.

Good practices and innovations

One-third of organisations reported good practices that could be replicated by others. A common feature of these is that they treat labour market integration not as a separate issue, but as part of social integration.

Examples include the Job Compass training series, which focuses on soft skills and long-term career planning, and peer mentoring, which helps integration through support based on personal experience. Flexible, demand-driven programmes combining legal and social counselling, language training, and direct job placement are considered particularly innovative.

The use of digital tools is less widespread, but several organisations operate internal databases and informal collaboration platforms to facilitate coordination. However, in the absence of a national database, coordination is often difficult, and beneficiaries are sometimes 'referred from one organisation to another'.

Capacity gaps and needs

The research clearly revealed gaps in human, financial, and infrastructural capacities. The vast majority of organisations consider the financing of services to be the most important form of support (92% consider it important or very important), followed by coordination platforms (81%) and staff training (73%).

The needs assessment showed that organisations are simultaneously seeking both immediate financial resources to maintain operations and longer-term investments in professional capacity building, which can provide more sustainable solutions.

2. Introduction

The purpose of mapping within the SMART UA project

The following report aims to identify the roles, challenges and best practices of organisational and non-organisational parties currently providing services to ensure or facilitate the participation and access of Ukrainian refugees in the Hungarian labour market.

The situation of Ukrainian refugees in the context of the Hungarian labour market

In recent years, the Hungarian labour market has been struggling with a persistent labour shortage, particularly in the lower-wage segments of industry, construction and services. In this environment, refugees from Ukraine represent an important but unique labour reserve. Although, in legal terms, temporary protection beneficiaries are immediately entitled to work in the Hungarian labour market, their actual entry is hampered by a number of obstacles: their lack of language skills, difficulties in getting their qualifications and professional certifications recognised, and their family responsibilities – especially childcare – also limit their employment opportunities.

Another characteristic is that the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees living in Hungary are women, many of whom arrived with small children, which further limits their employment opportunities and access to a stable income. This precarious position in the labour market also directly affects their housing opportunities, as it is almost impossible to maintain independent rental accommodation without a regular and adequate income.

This is exacerbated by the fact that the Hungarian government has increasingly tied access to housing subsidies to employment, meaning that refugees who are in work are given priority, while those who are unable to work or in need of care have less access to secure housing. Labour market integration is therefore a key factor not only in terms of livelihood but also in terms of housing stability.

It is estimated that there are currently between 50,000 and 70,000 Ukrainian nationals working in Hungary. Most of them had settled in Hungary several years before the outbreak of the war, mainly in the construction, electronics, manufacturing and hospitality sectors.

The labour market situation of Ukrainian refugees in the EU context

In March 2022, the European Union activated *Council Directive 2001/55/EC*, the so-called "Temporary Protection Directive", which provides refugees with residence permits, the right to work and basic social benefits. This decision has enabled Ukrainian refugees to enter the labour markets of Member States relatively quickly and without hindrance.

However, the experience of the past three years shows that, despite the rights granted by the directive, actual labour market integration faces obstacles in many countries. The most common difficulties include limited language skills, lengthy recognition procedures for professional qualifications, insufficient childcare, and structural labour market segregation.

During 2023-2024, several Member States introduced tightening measures, such as shortening supported employment programmes or reducing employer incentives to hire refugees. This was further compounded by economic uncertainty and increasingly heated political debates on the social integration of refugees.

At the same time, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and other EU funds have enabled pilot programmes in several Member States that combine labour market integration with education, language training, mentoring or employment-based housing support. These experiences demonstrate that sustainable labour market integration requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both social and labour market dimensions.

3. Methodology

The methodology and key points of the exploratory research were as follows:

- Data collection tool: We used an online self-administered questionnaire (CAWI), which respondents accessed via the Lime Survey platform. Data collection was conducted in Hungarian.

  In order to clarify certain aspects of the area to be surveyed, the online data collection was supplemented with a targeted, semi-structured qualitative interview (one of the organisation's labour market integration specialists undertook to provide the clarifications).

- Target group: The target group included organisational and non-organisational parties (institutional data collection) that currently provide services to ensure or facilitate the access of Ukrainian refugees to the Hungarian labour market. This included local governments, civil society organisations, religious and community organisations, and in principle also employers, temporary employment agencies and employment agencies (three of the latter were included in the sample).

- Sampling: Targeted sampling based on current participation in the employment and labour market support of UA refugees.

- Planned sample size: N=minimum 20 organisations, companies, institutions; actual sample size: N=26 organisations.

  The final sample size exceeded the planned minimum; however, due to the nature of the research design, the results are not suitable for drawing broad statistical conclusions. The primary aim of the analysis was to map the services and experiences of organisations engaged in

the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees. Accordingly, the findings highlight prevailing trends and typical practices, but should not be automatically generalised to all actors in Hungary. At the same time, the diversity of the sample allows for a sufficiently relevant picture of the main challenges, shortcomings, and innovative solutions that currently characterise Hungarian practice.

- Data collection period: July-August 2025.
- Ethical and data protection framework: The research was conducted in a GDPR-compliant manner with transparent data management. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents could give their consent to the use of their contact details (in a public stakeholder list or confidential contact database).

Factors influencing the implementation of fieldwork

During the research, several practical and contextual difficulties arose that significantly affected the efficiency of data collection.

The most notable of these were timing and capacity constraints: many organisations operate at reduced capacity during the summer period, while several parallel research projects targeted the same actors, resulting in low respondent willingness. Organisations operating in the civil sector are busy regardless of the summer period and in many cases were unable to devote time to completing the questionnaire.

Content and methodological overlaps posed further difficulties. Several ongoing projects (including other ESF+ funded initiatives) target similar target groups, which dampened the willingness to cooperate, especially when perceived as competing data collection.

The limitations of online surveys – similar to those of B2B corporate or organisational research – also applied to the current target group, so the efficiency of fieldwork had to be supported by more time-consuming personal and telephone contact.

In several cases, data collection was also hampered by mistrust and the politicisation of the research topic. We experienced mistrust towards publicity and data sharing, particularly in the case of UA-related community organisations and Ukrainian local governments. This may be partly related to the political context in Hungary and the government's anti-Ukrainian narratives, which may influence the willingness to cooperate.

Another factor affecting the implementation of the fieldwork (achieving a minimum of 20 completed questionnaires) was the narrowing of the range of service providers. Several smaller civil society organisations that were previously active in helping UA refugees find employment and enter the labour market have recently stopped providing this type of service due to a lack of resources. As we learned, they have transferred their former UA clientele to large charitable organisations. However, these organisations, which are close to the state, typically operate under strict internal protocols that often do not allow for the provision of information.

Institutional mediation and the involvement of relevant coordinating actors (international and state actors) in facilitating data collection did not bring about any significant breakthrough either.

Finally, the limited availability of background information also contributed to the difficulties, as the organisational service map compiled and made available to us by an international organisation was outdated, limiting its practical usefulness.

Given the circumstances, the fieldwork required more time and methodological experimentation to achieve the planned number of elements. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organisations that completed the questionnaire, as well as the Hungarian partners of the SMART UA project who supported us in contacting the organisations concerned.

Usage of the term refugees in the report

In this report, we use the term refugees in a broad sense to refer to all persons displaced from Ukraine, including those with temporary protection status (TP) as well as dual (Ukrainian–Hungarian) citizens. In sections dealing with legal provisions, we specifically refer to the official temporary protection status. Even here, however, we continue to include dual citizens in the analysis, while acknowledging the distinction between refugee and temporary protection status in the legal framework.

4. Stakeholder profiles

As mentioned in the methodology subchapter, the target group included organisational and non-organisational parties currently providing services to ensure or facilitate access to the Hungarian labour market for refugees from Ukraine. This included local governments, civil society organisations, religious and community organisations, and those directly involved in employment (employers, temporary employment agencies, employment agencies).

Among those currently providing employment and labour market services who participated in the research, civil society organisations are in the majority. Civil society organisations constitute the largest group, accounting for more than half of respondents. The remaining four-tenths were represented by religious organisations/organisations with religious affiliations, businesses, local governments and an international organisation.

Table 1. Distribution of organisations in the sample by type

	Number of cases	%
Civil society organisation (NGO)	15	58
Religious organisation	5	19
Business	3	12
Local government agency	1	4
Other organisation (local government social institution; international organisation)	2	8

Profit-oriented organisations

There are market-based employment agencies and temporary employment agencies operating in Hungary that specialise in placing Ukrainian citizens, dual (Ukrainian-Hungarian) citizens and Ukrainian refugees in the labour market. These companies do not operate on the basis of grant funding, but on a commercial basis: their income is covered by agency fees paid by employers and the costs of additional services provided to employees (e.g. accommodation, administration). Their role is primarily to provide quick access to jobs for those who turn to them, especially in industry and the service sector. The most significant of these companies (none of which were available for our research) are:[2]

- Prohuman (Safe in Hungary programme). Prohuman is a Hungarian employment agency that helped Ukrainian refugees find work under a contract with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which was tasked with handling issues related to the situation in Ukraine. On behalf of the ministry, it did all this in 2022 with over 7 billion forints: Prohuman used this public money to create the safeinhungary.hu platform and its Ukrainian-language customer service for Ukrainian refugees in 2022 (they were also present in the BOK hall). After registration, they provided them with job opportunities, often in cooperation with state and GONGO organisations. They registered more than ten thousand interested people, and approximately 400 people found work with their help, according to their statement.[3] The company continues to operate and accept Ukrainian workers, but there is no information on how actively it does so. (

[2] From 1 January 2025, significant restrictions came into force on the issuance of residence permits for employment purposes (guest workers): only third-country nationals who are citizens of countries that have a readmission agreement with Hungary or the EU can obtain such a permit. This restriction represents a structural tightening.
Refugees from Ukraine do not receive guest worker status, but rather TP status in Hungary under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) activated by the EU in March 2022. TP status automatically grants the right to work without a permit. This means that they do not need a work permit or an OIF procedure. In other words, they can continue to work freely in Hungary, and employers only have their usual reporting obligations.
However, it is important to note that Ukrainian workers who come to Hungary to work on a market basis, rather than as refugees, are subject to the same rules as other third-country workers. This means that they would have to apply for a residence permit for employment purposes, but the restrictions introduced in January 2025 (e.g. no permits issued to certain countries, guest worker quotas, priorities) also apply to Ukrainians if they do not enter the system as refugees (TPs or dual citizenes). Thus, from 2025, almost all new Ukrainian workers will have TP status or dual citizenship.
Government Decree 180/2024 (VII. 8.) on the list of countries whose citizens may be employed with a guest worker residence permit: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2024-180-20-22
(In line with its operating practices, the government immediately created loopholes: under the immigration law that came into force, so-called certified employers and certified temporary employment agencies may employ guest workers from countries outside the EU that are not included in the list. The first group includes the government's strategic partners. The second group includes 29 labour hire companies. https://kormany.hu/dokumentumtar/minositett-foglalkoztatok-listaja-1)

[3] Interested employers had to register on the website www.safeinhungary. The database was freely available to all companies, employers and temporary employment agencies at no charge. After registering, interested parties were given access to the database of applicants and could select suitable candidates based on the information provided. Prohuman's experts then contacted the selected potential employees and helped them prepare for the interview, overcome technical or language difficulties, and even travel to the interview location. Infostart+13Adó Online+13hrpwr.hu+13 (https://www.prohuman.hu/)

- DRAMEX Ltd. This company is a Hungarian human resources service provider that operates specifically in the field of hiring or mediating Ukrainian labour, but does not specialise in refugees.[4]
- The Hungarian agency of Primework (part of the Polish Primework Group Sp. z o.o.). The agency is involved in labour mediation, which includes the mediation of Ukrainian workers. Their website offers guidance on how to legally employ Ukrainian workers in various economic sectors (agriculture, construction, services, etc.).[5]
- Jobtain HR Szolgáltató Ltd. The company has been recruiting Ukrainian workers for several years and currently employs more than 2,000 Ukrainians as temporary workers. They also provide embedded logistics and integration support.[6]
- HREXpress Ltd. This is also a recruitment and employment agency that assists in the placement of Ukrainian workers.
- Fusework Ltd. They place foreign (Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Indian) workers in several sectors, such as manufacturing, hospitality and logistics. In the case of Ukrainians, they do not focus exclusively on refugees.

The Hungarian government made it possible to employ Ukrainian refugees in the spring of 2022 by making rapid changes to the law. Temporary protection (TP) automatically grants the right to work in Hungary without a separate permit.

In the initial period following the outbreak of the war, Hungarian regulations specifically facilitated the entry of refugees into the labour market: TP status automatically granted the right to work, and in certain cases there were also employment incentives for employers. By 2024–2025, however, the emphasis had shifted: by withdrawing direct subsidies and benefits, the government was no longer actively promoting employment, but rather emphasising the need for self-sufficiency. In practice, this means that refugees are in principle free to take up employment, but for the most vulnerable – those struggling with housing and financial insecurity – the lack of support makes long-term labour market integration difficult.

In the spring of 2022, the Hungarian government responded quickly to the refugee situation: TP status automatically granted the right to work, allowing those affected to start working in Hungary without a permit. In addition, employers were also supported in this process: Government Decree 96/2022. (III. 10.) made it possible for them to apply for non-repayable subsidies to cover their employees' accommodation and travel costs — up to HUF 60,000 per month per employee, with an additional HUF 12,000 per child. [7] These subsidies ceased on 1 August 2023, meaning that general financial incentives

[4] They provide labour recruitment services for people arriving from Ukraine, offering solutions to companies and employers to overcome labour shortages. According to their Facebook page, they undertake the recruitment and placement of Ukrainian workers and provide contact details (e.g. telephone, WhatsApp, e-mail) facebook.comukranszakember.hu.
[5] The company is involved in labour recruitment, placing skilled workers from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and South America in several European countries. primework.hu
[6] HR Express Kft.+15Jobtain+15Növekedés.hu+15
[7] https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-96-20-22?utm_source=chatgpt.com

for employers are no longer available in the country.[8] Currently, temporary protection beneficiaries are still free to take up employment, but there is no direct financial support from the state.

https://k-xconsulting.com/2022/03/17/ukrajnai-menekultek-nyujthato-tamogatasok/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[8] Government Decree 337/2023. (VII. 24.) repealed Government Decree 96/2022. (III. 10.), thus the subsidy scheme was definitively terminated on 1 August 2023, and no further applications may be submitted from that date.
Magyar Közlöny+11
https://nfsz.munka.hu/cikk/2060/Ukran_allampolgarsaggal_rendelkezo_szemelyek_munkavallalasanak_tamogatasa?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Geographical distribution

Although the national distribution of Ukrainian refugees is unknown, and their exact number can only be estimated,[9] it is known that most of them live in Budapest, the capital, and its immediate vicinity.

According to a 2023 survey by UNHCR and TÁRKI, which was not representative but covered 682 households, one-third of the Ukrainian refugees surveyed lived in Budapest, which corresponds to the national central distribution. The other significant groups are located in the counties of eastern Hungary, with particularly high concentrations in these counties: Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Komárom-Esztergom and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén.

As for the organisations providing labour market services included in our survey, they also show a tendency to be concentrated in the capital. The vast majority of those involved operate from their headquarters in Budapest. In the case of religious organisations/organisations with religious affiliations, however, their presence in the capital is complemented by a certain degree of nationwide activity. In the case of charitable organisations, this may indeed mean nationwide coverage, while in the case of smaller religious organisations; it may mean certain activities or specific partnerships with a given rural settlement.

A fraction of the civil organisations in the sample provide labour market support in rural areas. These organisations are located in Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties.

As mentioned earlier, many smaller civil society organisations have recently been left without funding and have been forced to hand over their clientele of Ukrainian refugees to other, larger organisations (charities) that are also active locally. During our fieldwork for this research, we encountered this phenomenon on several occasions, primarily in relation to civil society organisations operating in Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.

Funding sources and organisational capacity

Among the organisations in our sample that support the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees in some way, the most common source of funding comes from international organisations and donors. In addition to international organisations, foreign church organisations and church aid organisations are also likely to play a significant role in this regard, particularly religious and faith-based organisations.

In terms of the significance of funding sources, resources from international organisations and donors are followed by state/municipal subsidies and EU funds.

[9] On 31 December 2024, the number of persons enjoying temporary protection in Hungary was 39,168. However, a significant proportion of refugees in Hungary are not eligible for temporary protection due to their dual citizenship (Hungarian-Ukrainian), so their numbers can only be partially tracked in the records, e.g. in the case of residence permits. Including them, the broader estimate is around 65,000 people at the beginning of 2024.https://lakmusz.hu/2025/02/24/valoban-magyarorszag-tortenetenek-legnagyobb-humanitarius-akcioja-lenne-az-ukrajnai-menekultek-segitese

Table 2. Sources of funding

	Number of cases	%
Support from international organisations and donors	16	62
State and/or municipal resources	15	58
European Union funds	14	54
Public and/or community support	9	35
Corporate support	8	31
Other sources of support (US and German church funds, Kantharosz Foundation)	3	12
They do not receive support from any of these sources.	2	8

Currently, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is the only major EU source in Hungary that can be used in a targeted and structured manner to support refugees from Ukraine in the labour market, provided that the programme participant is granted temporary protection. Most of these projects are implemented by large charitable organisations.[10]

In the sample, the role of the private sector (corporate support: 31%) is moderate, with one-third of the organisations surveyed receiving support from the public and/or community. The latter proportion far exceeds the support based on 1% personal income tax donations, suggesting that civil society mobilises resources in many different ways to support refugees. Such support includes online and local fundraising, community actions and voluntary work. These resources are important tools for flexible response and social solidarity, especially where state or institutional support is scarce.

Two organisations reported receiving no support from any listed sources, suggesting they operate with limited resources or on a voluntary basis.

Social groups requiring special attention in the work of organisations

The majority of the responding organisations described themselves as helping adults of working age to integrate into the labour market in general or providing general services to refugee clients in Ukraine (58% and 54%). A significant proportion of them – 50% – also pay special attention to women and mothers with young children. Particularly vulnerable groups, such as Roma communities (27%), the elderly (19%) and people with disabilities (19%), are also among the target groups receiving support,

[10] Maltese Charity Service, Hungarian Reformed Charity Service.

albeit to a lesser extent. Support for LGBTQ+ refugees, on the other hand, is only marginally present (two organisations).

Table 3. Target groups of labour market services

	Number of cases	%
Adults in general (general working age)	15	58
They provide general services, no specific target group	14	54
Women (including mothers with young children)	13	50
Roma or other ethnic minorities	7	27
Elderly (over 65)	5	19
Persons with disabilities	5	19
Unaccompanied minors	2	8
LGBTQ+ persons	2	8
Young people (aged 16 or older)	1	4

It is worth examining the target group focus of the respondent organisations in comparison with the socio-demographic background of Ukrainian refugees living in Hungary. The demographic composition of refugees (especially those receiving temporary protection) in Hungary differs significantly from that of the total population, which partly explains which groups receive more attention. According to the aforementioned 2023–2024 UNHCR and TÁRKI data, 70–80 per cent of refugees receiving temporary protection are women, typically arriving with their children. Meanwhile, the proportion of men (especially those aged 18–60) is low. Children represent a significant proportion of refugees (approximately 35–40%); while the proportion of elderly people is lower (5–10%). In the case of those arriving from Transcarpathia, the presence of the Roma minority is noticeable, but this group often remains hidden from official data collection. Members of the LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities are also underrepresented and often invisible to support systems.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the target group orientation of the organisations participating in the research is only partially consistent with the demographic composition of Ukrainian refugees residing in Hungary. At the same time, the nature of the data and the limitations of the sample do not allow for general conclusions to be drawn. Furthermore, it is also worth taking into account the different activity profiles of the organisations, their funding opportunities and the limitations of their available capacities.

5. Employment support activities

Based on the responses of the organisations participating in the survey, it is clear that the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees is primarily achieved through complex, complementary services, not merely through job referrals" or "not limited to simple job referrals. Most organisations strive to provide a step-by-step support system: from general counselling providing basic guidance (85%) to mentoring to facilitate longer-term integration (62%) and follow-up after job placement (38%).

Our survey also reveals that nearly half of respondents offer programmes to address language barriers and facilitate direct contact between job seekers and employers (46–46%). Without these, stable jobs would often be out of reach for refugees, as language skills and gaining the trust of employers are key requirements.

To a lesser extent, there are also more complex forms of support that require longer-term investment: career planning (35%) – specifically for the highly educated, legal advice (23%), vocational training and skills development (12%). Although these are much more resource-intensive, they can play a key role in long-term labour market integration, as they support not only finding a job, but also staying in the job and advancing in one's career.

It is worth mentioning that two organisations also offer internship opportunities, which can be a novel solution for those who have no previous work experience in Hungary. In addition, a number of practical, everyday tools appeared in the "other" category (CV writing, job clubs, employer search, onboarding – i.e. supporting the integration of newly employed refugees into the workplace, teaching Hungarian as a foreign language), which show that organisations are striving to provide practical, directly applicable assistance.

Overall, the picture is mixed: while most organisations provide basic and immediate services (counselling, mentoring, mediation), services aimed at longer-term career building and skills development is currently available to a lesser extent. This clearly shows the impact of resource and capacity constraints, but also that the civil sector is responding flexibly to the diverse needs of refugees, whether it is finding their first job or establishing a stable livelihood.

Table 4. Forms of labour market support

	Number of cases	%
General counselling	22	85%
Mentoring	16	62%
Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers	12	46
Language training	12	46
Job placement and follow-up	10	38
Career path planning	9	35
Legal advice	6	23

Vocational training / skills development	3	12
Provision of internship opportunities	2	8
Other	4	15

Scale of support: number of refugees reached

The majority of respondent organisations currently assist with the labour market integration of up to 50 (11 organisations, 43%) or 51–100 (27%) Ukrainian refugees in some form. Based on this, it can be said that a significant part of the support activities are small-scale, likely linked to local, community-based initiatives or organisations with limited capacity.

At the same time, a quarter of the sample consists of organisations that support more than 200 refugees, including some with exceptionally large-scale programmes. This indicates the coexistence of large professional service providers with broad outreach and smaller, community-based actors offering flexible but localised responses.

This duality clearly illustrates the unique nature of the support ecosystem in Hungary: the integration of refugees is not ensured by a single system, but by a combination of many smaller and a few larger initiatives. On the one hand, this can be an advantage in terms of flexibility, but on the other hand, it increases the risks arising from fragmentation, such as refugees receiving services of varying quality and scope.

Table 5. Number of refugees supported in their integration into the labour market

	Number of cases	%
1-25	9	35
26	2	8
51	7	27
101 – 150	1	4
151	2	8
201 – 300	2	8
501 – 750	1	4
751 – 1000	1	4
Over 1000	1	4

Support tailored to individual needs for specific groups

As mentioned earlier, most organisations provide general services, but 50 per cent focus specifically on women and mothers with young children, and 58 per cent focus on adults in general. More vulnerable groups – the elderly (19%), people with disabilities (19%) and members of Roma communities (29%) – receive less support, while assistance for LGBTQ+ refugees is marginal (2 organisations).

This partly reflects the demographic composition of Ukrainian refugees living in Hungary: according to UNHCR and TÁRKI data for 2023–2024, 70–80 per cent of those receiving temporary protection are women, often arriving with their children, with children accounting for approximately 35–40 per cent and the elderly for 5–10 per cent. The presence of Roma communities in Transcarpathia is noticeable but often remains hidden.

Services tailored to the needs of given groups

About one-third (31%) of the responding organisations have modified their previous services to better meet the specific needs of vulnerable or marginalised refugee groups. However, the majority (69%) clearly did not introduce such changes, which (together with the dispersion of groups with specific needs) may indicate that either these needs were already widely covered or that capacity and resource constraints did not allow for the restructuring of services.

Those organisations that did change their operations introduced a number of innovations. The content of the training courses and workshops initially developed has been revised over the past three years to better reflect the current situation of clients: today, the focus is mainly on labour law and social benefits.

Some organizations started to employ refugees as assistants. Others sought to overcome mobility and health barriers: for example, they launched "home delivery" services for those who were unable to attend in personally.

Services tailored to needs include group information sessions, exploring job opportunities that match the needs of the target group, and providing support and mediation during the job search process. In some cases, support is differentiated for each client: in some cases, it is limited to simple information transfer, while in others, it includes help with writing CVs or preparing for job interviews.

One or two organisations also reported expanding their services: new language courses, new aid programmes, provision of temporary accommodation, and advice and educational support specifically related to employment have been added to their repertoire.

Overall, it can be said that organisations modifying their services have responded to the changing needs of refugees with flexible, multi-stage solutions. However, these practices are dependent on capacity and resources, and due to the small sample size, they cannot be generalised to the entire sector and are only indicative. Regardless of this, it is clear that where the opportunity and professional background exist, organisations are quickly and innovatively transforming their services to better meet the needs of refugees, whether it is employment law advice, home-based services or language and educational support. However, this is happening on an isolated basis rather than at a systemic level.

Registration systems and data use in refugee support

Current data registration practices mainly serve administrative functions and grant accounting, while longer-term strategic goals – such as comprehensive monitoring of refugee integration or more efficient allocation of resources – are tend to be sidelined:

The vast majority of organisations (all but three) register beneficiaries in their own internal databases, while only three organisations use a database shared with other organisations and only one organisation uses a national database. This is partly due to the local or regional scope of most of the organisations in the sample, where registration requirements are typically limited to internal administration and rarely justify nationwide data sharing.

Interestingly, three organisations do not register their clients at all – these are all smaller foundations with few clients, which typically provide general counselling, mentoring or, in some cases, job placement services.

Table 6. Forms of registration of supported clients

	Number of cases	%
Internal database	23	88
Database shared with other organisations	3	12
National database	1	4
Does not register them	3	12

All organisations without exception use beneficiary data for case management, and nearly half of them also use it to monitor progress, which in many cases may be linked to data sharing with the authorities responsible for the National Security Information System (26%), which is presumably primarily related to the mandatory reporting requirements for EU projects (e.g. AMIF), where data on beneficiaries must also be shared with the Managing Authority (Ministry of the Interior) as part of project progress reports. Use for the purpose of informing donors is less common (4 organisations).

Table 7. Use of records

	Number of cases	%
Case management	23	100
Progress monitoring	11	48

Sharing with authorities	6	26
Informing donors	4	17
Other purposes (monitoring the achievement of project objectives (indicators))	1	4

All this suggests that the register primarily serves operational client work and the mandatory data sharing associated with the grant system, while systematic, coordinated forms of data sharing are limited.

At the same time, the dominance of internal records clearly shows the fragmentation of the service system: there is no common, nationally accessible, standardised database that would reduce duplication and facilitate client tracking. In the absence of such a database, it is common for clients to be "passed around" (the same refugee being registered and served by multiple organisations), while less well-informed refugees are at greater risk of missing support opportunities.

The low rate of shared databases is likely due not only to a lack of resources, but also to data protection concerns and the need for organisational autonomy. This is a particularly sensitive area, as the political, legal and security implications of data relating to refugees are significant.

Finally, progress monitoring is often equated with reporting against project indicators, rather than used as a genuine tool for service development or long-term impact assessment.

6. Barriers and challenges

<u>The most frequently cited obstacles</u>

In the area of labour market support, the vast majority of organisations consider language skills, lack of Hungarian language proficiency (77%) and difficulties with recognition of qualifications and professional skills (69%) to be the most significant challenges. The latter is particularly problematic in fields requiring a degree, as refugees can only take up employment matching their qualifications once these are officially recognised in Hungary.[11]

According to two-thirds of organisations, bureaucratic obstacles pose a significant problem, slowing down or hindering employment, and in many cases causing furthers uncertainty through insufficient information and a constantly changing regulatory environment. The negative attitudes of the majority

[11] "Naturalisation" is the legal and administrative process of recognising foreign qualifications, diplomas or professional qualifications in Hungary. It involves the Education Office and higher education institutions and is essential, particularly in the fields of medicine, law, education and engineering. The process can take several months and often requires additional examinations or the translation and certification of documents.

society and the lack of childcare services (54-54%) also pose serious obstacles. The lack of childcare is particularly critical, as a significant proportion of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Hungary are women who have come with their children.

According to half of the organisations surveyed, mental health challenges among Ukrainian refugees are a significant factor hindering integration. War trauma, the breakdown of family relationships, an uncertain future and financial difficulties all contribute to the difficulty many have in finding permanent employment.

About a third of the organisations highlighted the lack of certain skills among the target group, primarily the lack of soft skills (e.g. communication, adaptability, problem solving, ability to work independently), as well as the lack of digital skills and underqualification. The latter two reflect the socio-demographic composition of Ukrainians who have fled to Hungary: those with lower levels of education and less marketable professional backgrounds are overrepresented among them.

Overall, most of the main obstacles are structural in nature, arising simultaneously from structural features of the Hungarian labour market (language requirements, bureaucracy, lack of childcare facilities), social attitudes (discrimination) and the situation of refugees (mental health, lack of qualifications and skills). This combination makes it particularly difficult to achieve stable, independent livelihoods and places a significant additional burden on both refugees and the organisations that support them.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between factors that can be mitigated in the short term and those that require systemic, longer-term intervention. The former include, for example, expanding language training, developing soft skills and digital competences, and providing personalised mentoring, which can improve employment prospects relatively quickly. In contrast, shaping childcare capacities, speeding up and simplifying the process of recognising qualifications, and changing social attitudes to reduce discrimination would require medium- and long-term measures.

Table 8. The main obstacles to employment and labour market integration

	Not a significant challenge	Moderately significant challenge	Significant challenge
Language difficulties	4	19	77
Lack of recognition of qualifications and professional certifications		31	69
Bureaucratic obstacles	4	31	65
Discrimination	11	35	54
Lack of childcare services	8	38	54
Mental health of Ukrainian refugees	8	42	50

Lack of local work experience	12	46	42
Lack of soft skills (e.g. communication skills, flexibility, problem solving, ability to work independently, etc.)	11	54	35
Underqualification	15	54	31
Lack of digital skills	7	62	31

Differences by type of organisation or region

Based on the research, no significant differences can be identified either by type of organisation or by region of operation. One reason for this is that the most important obstacles identified by the respondent organisations are systemic problems affecting the entire country, which are independent of the profile or geographical location of the organisations.

The characteristics of the sample also limit the possibility of comparison: the majority of respondents are based in Budapest, and only four rural organisations were represented. Thus, the research does not allow for a comprehensive assessment of the differences between rural and urban areas.

Overall, the research suggests that the obstacles identified are predominantly structural and systemic in nature, appearing in similar forms across different types of organisations, but local characteristics may give different weight to the problems.

Cumulative barriers for vulnerable groups

Findings indicate that, in addition to general labour market barriers, certain vulnerable groups – especially those living in a permanently precarious situation – face specific, cumulative difficulties. This means that several hindering factors are present at the same time: low educational attainment or illiteracy, lack of vocational qualifications, lack of Hungarian language skills, strong presence of discrimination and stereotypes, and lack of social security (insecure housing, lack of income). Together, these factors create a system of barriers that far exceeds the "usual" labour market challenges and often carries the risk of complete exclusion.

Low levels of education and even illiteracy are common among Roma refugees, which is an obstacle in almost all areas of employment. Due to traditional family roles, many women had to take up work for the first time after the war and entrust their children to strangers, which resulted in great uncertainty and difficulties in adapting. In some families, extreme coping strategies – such as collecting bottles for recycling to secure daily meals – became necessary for financial survival, which clearly illustrates the intensity of their daily struggles.

Another recurring problem issues such as problematic alcohol use and reliability concerns, which further hinders employability. Respondents emphasised that until basic needs – above all housing – are met, job-seeking is reprioritised, as ensuring daily survival is a priority.

All this suggests that the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market cannot be addressed solely through job search or training programmes: stable housing, adequate social care and forms of support that are sensitive to cultural and social characteristics are prerequisites.

7. Collaboration and good practices

Level of cooperation with other actors

The network of organisations participating in the research is diverse, including relationships with Hungarian civil society organisations (69%) and, including naturally businesses, as employers, temporary employment agencies and providers of specific services (e.g. language courses, training courses) on a commercial basis (65%). A significant proportion of the organisations also cooperate with religious partners (50%), which have traditionally played a key role in humanitarian aid.

Approximately four-tenths of the organisations have links with other actors, such as regional or state authorities, employment centres and local governments, which indicate that links with formal state structures, are often ad hoc or project-based. A further third work with international civil society organisations and legal defence organisations, while the involvement of grassroots groups is more

moderate (19%), but these groups can play a valuable complementary role through their direct links to local communities. Cooperation with law firms is rare (8%), but can be crucial in specific cases, such as those related to labour law or residence permits.

The data suggest that the organisations' cooperation strategies tend to be highly pragmatic: they primarily build close relationships with partners who contribute directly to the labour market integration of their clients (civil society organisations, businesses, training providers). The involvement of state and international actors is important, but less permanent, and tends to be tailored to the framework of projects or specific client needs.

Table 9. Cooperation with other organisations and actors

	Number of cases	%
Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs)	18	69
Businesses	17	65
Religious organisations/religious organisations	13	50
Regional or state authorities	11	42
Employment centres	10	38
Local government(s)	9	35
International civil society organisations (NGOs)	9	35
Legal defence organisations	8	31
Grassroots groups	5	19
Law firms	2	8

Quality and frequency of partnerships

Most of the organisations participating in the research cooperate in some form with other actors – civil society organisations, businesses, religious communities or state institutions – but the quality and intensity of these cooperations vary greatly. Partnerships are often ad hoc, project-based collaborations that are brought about by joint funding sources (e.g. AMIF) or specific client needs.

Two factors fundamentally shape the success of these collaborations:

- the complementary nature of the services – i.e. the extent to which the partners are able to compensate for each other's missing capacities,
- the regularity and formality of the relationships – ranging from ad hoc referrals to close, regular coordination.

Based on our research, partnerships with employers are particularly important in the field of labour market integration. The example of the Evangelical Diaconia job centre clearly shows that partnerships are often not simply intermediary relationships, but mutual, trust-based relationships, where the organisation helps both the employee and the employer. The relationship with 20-30 active partners not only provides clients with job opportunities, but also supports employers in recruitment, administration, and even interpretation or cultural sensitisation. This "dual client" approach – considering both the refugee and the employer as beneficiaries, is a key element of good partnership practice.

However, the frequency of partnerships varies greatly: some employers are regularly looking for workers, while others only do so on an ad hoc basis. According to the experience mentioned in the interview, the success rate of neutral approaches is low (approximately 20% positive receptiveness), while partnerships based on personal acquaintances and recommendations prove to be more durable. This highlights the importance of building trust and reputation for sustainable cooperation.

Overall, the quality of partnerships varies: there are well-functioning, longer-term collaborations, but many relationships are rather short-term and ad hoc. Based on the research, models where organisations build their relationships not only on customer management but also on complex support, continuous communication and joint problem-solving prove to be successful for effective partnerships.

Best practices in the area of employment assistance and case management

One-third of the organisations surveyed reported that they have a labour market or job placement service that they consider to be a good practice and that could be useful to other organisations – most of these are civil society organisations (both small and large). However, the majority (65%) did not highlight such a programme, which may indicate that in many cases the services are highly resource- and context-dependent, or that no established model has yet been developed that could be adapted more widely.

A common feature of organisations with good practices is that they treat labour market support not as an end in itself, but as part of social integration. The programmes complement job search support with social work, mentoring, legal and psychological counselling, and skills development. This complex approach ensures that finding a job is not just a short-term solution, but a means of longer-term integration.

The good practices highlighted by respondents included the following:

- Complex training and skills development, such as the Job Compass training series, which builds on soft skills, personal goals and aspirations to develop employee skills and then provides specific labour market knowledge based on these.
- Integration of social work and mentoring. Several organisations emphasised that they treat labour market placement as part of social work, involving peer mentors who can support refugees in their job search through their personal experiences.
- Promoting legal and safe employment. Some programmes focus specifically on building relationships with employers, pre-screening candidates, assisting with selection and integration,

and providing interpretation and administrative support throughout the process. This serves the interests of both employees and employers.

- Cultural orientation and bridging cultural differences. Organisations consider it particularly important that refugees receive comprehensive information about the Hungarian labour market, taxation, social security and work ethic.
- Additional services. Job interview preparation, conversation clubs, personality assessments, Hungarian language courses, CV writing and individual career counselling.
- New projects and innovations. Several respondents mentioned programmes that are still in the experimental phase (e.g. the RIF4UA project, which focuses on digital and soft skills development) that could become good practices in the future.

The common message of good practices is that job search and placement can only be sustainable if they are complemented by complex support services and if, in addition to involving employers, the cultural, linguistic and social integration of refugees is also prioritised.

Innovation in employment and digital assistance

The good practices presented contain innovative elements in several respects, although often not entirely new models, but innovative combinations of existing solutions. Innovation is primarily evident in the fact that labour market integration is treated as an integral part of social integration, and multi-pillar, flexibly adaptable programmes are created for this purpose. The emphasis is not only on job search, but also on cultural integration, the development of soft skills and active cooperation with employers.

Innovative elements include, for example

- Comprehensive training courses (e.g. Job Compass), which combine job search with the development of personal goals and soft skills.
- Peer mentoring, which enables job seekers to receive support from helpers with their own experience.
- Holistic support models that offer psychosocial support, cultural orientation, and even beauty care or mental preparation for interviews in addition to job placement.
- Matching with employers tailored to individual needs, which is achieved through pre-screening of candidates, personalised integration support and reduction of the administrative burden on employers.

There is little concrete information available on digital tools, but it appears that some organisations operate internal registration systems and, in some cases, have created informal or semi-formal cooperation platforms that facilitate the monitoring of support and the coordination of services. However, there is no common national database, which hinders coordination and contributes to the phenomenon of refugees being repeatedly referred between organisations („circular care").

The organisations are convinced that the only viable long-term digital solution is one that is compatible with GDPR requirements, while effectively reducing duplication and enabling more targeted and efficient access to services. In the future, innovation in digital tools can thus best serve to strengthen cooperation and track the customer journey.

8. Needs

When assessing needs, we presented five different types of support to the organisations and asked them to evaluate how much these would help their work, with a specific focus on labour market services. The results clearly show that all of the factors examined are considered important, but there are some differences in emphasis.

Service financing emerged as the most critical need: three-quarters of respondents (73%) consider it "very important" and a further 19% consider it "important". This clearly shows that in a resource-constrained, project-based environment, a stable financial background is a prerequisite for the operation of any meaningful service.

The organisations also highlighted the vital importance of coordination and cooperation platforms: four out of five respondents (81%) considered these to be important or very important. This suggests that in a fragmented care system, there is a great need to share experiences, coordinate services and avoid the ”passing around” of clients.

Staff training was rated as important or very important by more than seven out of ten respondents (73%). This is consistent with the experience that working with refugees requires specific skills, such as intercultural sensitivity, labour market counselling skills or up-to-date knowledge of legal regulations.

Policy and legal support is also a significant need (65%), indicating that organisations require guidance and advocacy in a rapidly changing regulatory environment.

Finally, nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) consider the introduction of a tool to measure the labour market skills of refugees to be important. Although this is the lowest percentage among the categories examined, it clearly shows that organisations have a need for more conscious and measurable skills assessment of their clients. At the same time, it is also clear that in the under-resourced and overburdened civil sector, the introduction and use of such a tool would mean extra work, which is why enthusiasm is somewhat more subdued.

Overall, the results show that organisations see a need for both immediate financial resources and longer-term capacity building (training, platforms, and competence assessment). The biggest challenge lies in how to coordinate these forms of support so that they have a real, sustainable impact on labour market integration.

Table 10. The importance of factors that facilitate labour market integration and support employment

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Financing of the service	8		19	73
Coordination/cooperation platforms	4	15	46	35

Staff training	8	19	50	23
Policy/legal support	8	27	42	23
Tool for measuring refugees' skills	11	27	50	12

Gaps in funding and human resources

Although we did not ask about this directly in the survey, the responses clearly reveal the structural shortcomings that shape how organisations function in terms of labour market support.

The most critical issue is the funding gap: securing the resources necessary to operate services proved to be by far the most important issue for organisations. Due to project-based, short-term subsidies, the sustainability of programmes is often questionable, creating uncertainty for both service providers and clients.

There are also challenges in terms of human resource capacity. Several organisations try to fill the gaps with volunteer work, and existing staff are often overworked. The emphasis on training needs suggests that there is a need for reinforcement not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of preparedness.

Finally, there are also shortcomings in terms of tools and infrastructure. Although most organisations operate their own internal registration systems, there are hardly any shared databases or standardised measurement tools available. This leads to a lack of coordination, duplication of effort and clients being "passed around". The limited enthusiasm for competence assessment or needs assessment tools clearly shows that, for the under-resourced and overburdened civil sector, new tools are only valuable if they are practical and minimise administrative burden.

Overall, therefore, the lack of funding, human capacity and tools is a systemic weakness of refugee support services, which, together with the fragmentation of services, further hinders long-term, sustainable integration.

Interest in future cooperation and testing SMART UA tools

Among the respondent organisations, the vast majority (88%) were open to such a tool developed within the SMART UA project to assess the labour market competences and skills of the target group, provided that timing and capacity constraints allow. Within this group, four organisations (15%) specifically indicated that they would be willing to participate in testing. This suggests that, although the while the practical added value of such tools may be questioned in a resource-constrained environment, there is nonetheless clear interest in their application within the sector, provided that the content is targeted and relevant and the administrative burden is low.

9. Inclusion and target groups

Groups receiving targeted employment support

The majority of respondent organisations assist with the labour market integration of adults of working age or provide general services to refugee clients from Ukraine (58% and 54%). This indicates that most activities are not targeted at a narrow segment of the population, but provide broad access. At the same time, half of the organisations pay special attention to women and mothers with young children, which is in line with the demographic composition of refugees (70-80% are women, most of whom arrived with their children).

Among vulnerable groups, Roma communities (27%), the elderly (19%) and people with disabilities (19%) are represented to a smaller, but still significant extent, while support for LGBTQ+ refugees was only marginally mentioned by two organisations.

Evidence of targeted or adapted services

The study shows that targeted or adapted services are present in practice, but their impact and accessibility are severely limited by formal eligibility criteria (e.g. linked to refugee status or age), short-term project-based funding and a lack of systemic coordination. While interventions often respond flexibly to the changing life situations of refugees, their long-term sustainability remains uncertain. This is particularly true after the end of the project period, when there is no guarantee that the labour market and housing situation of participants will stabilise.

Gaps and risks in inclusion

In social and social policy practice, inclusion means that all affected groups have effective access to services, support and opportunities, regardless of social, ethnic, gender or other differences. In terms of labour market integration, inclusion means not only that TPs can formally enter the labour market, but also that, despite structural and individual barriers, they have a real chance of finding employment, retaining their jobs and advancing their careers. This also means that support programmes should take into account the specific needs of more vulnerable groups, such as women, Roma communities, older people, people with disabilities or LGBTQ+ refugees (although the latter three groups are less represented among refugees) – are taken into account in support programmes and are not excluded from services for legal, financial or practical reasons.

In contrast, our research shows that although most civil society services are in principle open to everyone, the eligibility criteria for official state and EU programmes (e.g. AMIF) exclude several groups.

For example, dual (Ukrainian-Hungarian) citizens are–generally excluded from state or EU-funded programmes.

A further problem is that the exact number of Ukrainian refugees living in Hungary (especially those with dual citizenship) is unknown, and accordingly, their detailed socio-demographic background remains largely uncharted (apart from what is known from the UNHCR research referred to earlier). As a result, it is impossible to form a clear picture of the inclusiveness of the subsidies. The support system is fragmented and uneven in terms of geography and programmes, so there is a risk that certain groups – especially Roma women, people with disabilities, illiterate people or those with limited access to digital tools – will remain permanently excluded from the support structure. In order to strengthen inclusion, it is therefore essential to collect more accurate data, identify the real needs of target groups, and plan support in a more long-term and targeted manner.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Key lessons learned from mapping labour market services

The research highlighted that civil, church and international organisations operating in Hungary provide diverse and varied forms of labour market support to Ukrainian refugees. The services offered range from general counselling to provide basic guidance, to longer-term mentoring and language training, to job placement and follow-up support. Some of the programmes feature particularly innovative solutions, such as peer mentoring, complex integration programmes and training aimed at developing soft skills.

However, these services are mainly funded on a project basis, typically from EU sources (primarily AMIF). This means that they are limited in terms of both time and resources: support is often only available during the project period, and its sustainability is questionable. One of the most important findings of the research is therefore that, in the current system supporting the labour market integration of refugees, ad hoc, project-based solutions dominate at the expense of long-term stability.

At the same time, the study also showed that civil society and religious organisations have significant capacity for innovation: most targeted programmes and good practices originate from this group, often in the form of partnerships. This clearly indicates that the civil sector has become the main coordinating and innovative force. The role of the state is most evident in defining the legal environment and redistributing EU funds, but it is marginal in the direct provision of services.

Another important lesson is that the heterogeneity of the target groups poses a significant challenge for service providers. The vast majority of programmes focus on adults of working age, particularly women and mothers with young children, while the most vulnerable groups – such as Roma refugees, people with disabilities or LGBTQ+ people – often remain invisible. The inclusiveness of services is therefore

limited, and actual access is often influenced by legal conditions (e.g. requirement of TP status), capacity constraints or regional coverage inequalities (over-representation of Budapest).

Finally, the research highlighted one of the most serious systemic shortcomings: there is no accurate data available on how many Ukrainian refugees live in Hungary, their socio-demographic composition, and their needs. This lack of data makes the situation of hidden groups living in undignified conditions particularly dangerous, as they may remain on the margins of the support system.

Overall, the current service structure is valuable and diverse, but due to its project dependency, lack of coordination and data gaps, it has only limited capacity to provide a long-term and comprehensive solution for the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees.

Strategic measures for stakeholders and decision-makers

The research findings clearly show that the services supporting the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees are diverse and valuable, but they are isolated, project-dependent and not sustainable in the long term. Resolving this situation requires not only financial stability, but also systemic coordination, capacity building, and targeted tool development. The following strategic measures would represent the most important steps forward in the Hungarian context:

1. Strengthening partnership models and cooperation

   Cooperation between civil society, religious organisations, international actors and market players is key to supporting refugees' integration into the labour market. The research highlighted good examples of partnerships with employers or vocational training institutions. These models can be truly effective when the partnership is not ad hoc but structured and continuous, covering the entire process of recruitment, training, placement and follow-up.

2. Promoting longer-term funding and resource diversification

   The current 1-2 year project-based funding of labour market services does not allow for the development of sustainable, stable programmes. Multi-year support cycles (at least 3–5 years) are essential, especially in the areas of training, language learning and mentoring, which take longer to pay off. In addition, resource diversification should be encouraged: alongside international donors and EU funds, greater scope should be given to the involvement of the private sector (corporate social responsibility, joint training programmes).

3. Impact measurement and introduction of results-based evaluation

   Most of the programmes examined do not systematically measure long-term labour market outcomes: for example, how long clients remain in employment, whether they are able to advance in their careers, or whether their vulnerability has been reduced. In the case of AMIF and other EU projects, it would be important for impact measurement should become

a standard requirement, measuring not only the number of clients reached, but also their actual social and economic integration.

4. Capacity building and knowledge sharing among organisations working in the field

   Most organisations operate with limited capacity, which hinders the development of larger-scale programmes. There is a need for targeted capacity building – for example, involving labour market experts, lawyers and psychologists – as well as regular experience sharing. Workshops, joint training courses and the creation of an accessible knowledge base of good practices could help different organisations to work in a mutually reinforcing way rather than in parallel.

5. Strengthening language training and skills development

   Language difficulties and the lack of recognition of qualifications are the two biggest obstacles in the labour market. Expanding Hungarian language training, flexible forms of learning alongside work (online, blended, workplace training), and targeted development of digital and soft skills could significantly improve the employability of refugees. In addition, speeding up and simplifying the process of recognising professional qualifications are also crucial.

6. Enabling mothers' labour market participation

   As there are a significant number of mothers with children among Ukrainian refugees, it is essential to provide daytime childcare facilities (nursery places, family daycare centres, flexible childcare options) in order to promote their employment and help them retain their jobs. The lack of childcare services is currently one of the biggest barriers to entering the labour market: more than half (54%) of the organisations surveyed highlighted this as a significant challenge.[12]

   However, in order to encourage employment, it may be crucial not only to promote childcare, but also to encourage flexible working arrangements (part-time work, working from home), to raise awareness among employers and to provide social and psychosocial support. Such a complex approach enables women with children to remain in the labour market on a long-term basis.

7. Reducing discrimination and raising awareness among employers

   According to the research, discrimination and social prejudices remains a serious obstacle. To address this, targeted employer awareness programmes, intercultural training and support measures are needed to create a safe working environment, especially for female, Roma or disabled refugees.

8. Improving data collection and monitoring

[12] Such programmes are currently supported by the National Employment Non-Profit Limited Liability Company (OFA) in the form of grants. Despite our repeated requests, they have not responded, so the experience of the programme is unknown. https://ofa.hu/program/ukrajnabol-erkezok-foglalkoztatasanak-osztonzese-erdekeben-vallalati-gyermekmegorzes-es-nyelvtanfolyam-tamogatasa

Even today, it is not known exactly how many Ukrainian refugees

are working in Hungary, in which sectors, and what obstacles they face. It is the responsibility of the state to share the data it has collected, but civil society and international organisations can also improve their own data collection. Coordinated, shared data platforms could contribute to more effective planning and help avoid duplication.

Recommendations for the next phases of SMART UA

Based on the results of the research, the next phases of the SMART UA project should focus on practical applicability, stakeholder involvement and sustainability. The following aspects may be particularly important during the development and testing of pilot tools:

1. Selection of pilot sites
    - Budapest's prominent role: the majority of UA refugees live here, and services are also heavily concentrated here. Labour market pressures and housing costs are also higher in the capital, making testing here particularly relevant.
    - Involvement of rural locations: although to a lesser extent, Ukrainian refugees also live in rural towns and villages, often in sectors struggling with labour shortages (e.g. food industry, manufacturing, agriculture). In these areas, the SMART UA tool could help connect local employers and refugees.
2. Content directions for the tool to be developed
    - Measuring labour market skills: research has shown that a lack of language skills, soft skills and digital skills is a fundamental barrier. The tool should help to map these skills to enable targeted development.
    - Individual needs assessment: it is important that the tool not only tailors support for refugees to the needs of employers, but also records the refugees' own needs, life situations and long-term plans.
    - Identifying training and employment pathways: the tool should highlight specific opportunities (e.g. language courses, vocational training, internship programmes) that would enable refugees to realistically enter the labour market.
3. Involvement of stakeholders
    - Civil society organisations and professional service providers: their involvement in the pilot phase is essential, as they have direct insight into the needs of refugees.
    - Employers: the tool will only be useful if it reflects the needs of employers, e.g. what skills are required in specific sectors.
    - Direct participation of refugees: during development, regular feedback must be collected from the target group to ensure that the tool is truly user-friendly and relevant.
4. Data collection and monitoring function

    One of the greatest added values of the SMART UA tool could be that it collects data on the labour market situation of refugees, which is currently lacking. This would help to:

    - make refugees visible to decision-makers
    - identify hidden needs (e.g. illiteracy, childcare problems),

- measure the impact of projects and enable comparison between them.

5. Sustainability

   The tool will only be viable in the long term if:

   - it ensures GDPR-compliant data processing,
   - it can be easily integrated into organisations' existing workflows (without increasing administration disproportionately),
   - and it can be adapted to other countries or combined with similar initiatives.

11. Annexes

No.	Organisation name	City/county	Contact person	E-mail	Type of organisation	Services	Target groups	Collaborations
1	The Evangelical Lutheran Church - Diakonia	Budapest	Attila Mészáros	mesata@gmail.com	Religious organisation	Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers, Vocational training / skills development, General counselling, Career planning, Job placement and follow-up,	Women (including mothers with young children), Adults (general working age), Members of Roma or other ethnic minorities, Provide general services,	Local government(s), Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), International civil society organisations (NGOs), Regional or national authorities, Job centres, Businesses, Faith-based organisations/religious organisations, Grassroots groups, Advocacy organisations,
2	Carpathian Foundation Hungary	3300 Eger Felvégi u. 53.	Égető Eszter	eszter.egeto@cfoundation.org	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers, Language training, General counselling, Mentoring,	Providing general services,	Local government(s), Hungarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), International non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Regional or state authorities, Job centres, Businesses, Religious organisations, Grassroots groups, Advocacy organisations,
3	From Street To Home Association	Budapest	Balázs Krivácsy	info@utcarollakasba.hu	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	General counselling, Mentoring,	Women (including mothers with young children), Adults (general working age), Members of Roma or other ethnic minorities,	Hungarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), International non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Religious organisations/religious

No.	Organisation name	City/county	Contact person	E-mail	Type of organisation	Services	Target groups	Collaborations
								organisations,
4	Artemisszió Foundation - Mira! Community Space	Budapest	Atilla Farkas	info@mira.artemisszio.hu	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	Language training, General counselling, Mentoring,	Women (including mothers with young children), Adults (general working age), General services,	Local government(s), Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), International civil society organisations (NGOs), Advocacy organisations,
5	Hungarian Interchurch Aid	Budapest	Lili Lupsán	segelyszervezet@segelyszervezet.hu	Religious organisation	Language training, Legal advice, General advice, Career planning,	Women (including mothers with young children), Adults (general working age), Elderly (over 65),	Hungarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Regional or state authorities, Businesses, Religious organisations/religious organisations, Other types of organisations
6	Dévai Inn Community Centre	Budapest	Márta Bolba	devaifogado@devaifogado.hu	Religious organisation	Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers, Language training, General counselling, Mentoring,	Providing general services,	Local government(s), Hungarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Job centres, Businesses, Legal aid organisations,
7	Catholic Caritas	Budapest	Balázs Szalma	office@caritas.org.hu	Religious organisation	Language training, General counselling, Career planning,	General services,	Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), Religious organisations/religious organisations,
8	Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants	Budapest	Kata Bognár	menedek@menedek.hu	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	Job placement / matching job seekers with job offers, Language training, Vocational training / skills development, Legal advice, General advice, Job placement and	They provide general services,	Local government(s), Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), International civil society organisations (NGOs), Regional or state authorities, Job centres,

No.	Organisation name	City/county	Contact person	E-mail	Type of organisation	Services	Target groups	Collaborations
						follow-up, Mentoring, Other		Businesses, Religious organisations, Grassroots groups, Advocacy organisations,
9	Budapest Metropolitan Municipality	Budapest	Tamás Virág	virag.tamas@budapest.hu	Municipality	General counselling,	Women (including mothers with young children),	Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), Employment centres, Religious organisations, Legal defence organisations,
10	Fess Napfényt Association	Nagygeresd	Viktória Galambos	fessnapfenyt@gmail.com	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers, Legal advice, General advice,	Providing general services,	Local government(s), Hungarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), International non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Regional or state authorities, Businesses,
11	Body and Soul Foundation	Budapest	Magdolna Rózsa	testeslelekszepito@gmail.com	Civil organisation (NGO)	General counselling, Mentoring, Other	Women (including mothers with young children), Adults (general working age), Elderly people (over 65), People with disabilities, Roma or other ethnic minorities,	Local government(s), Hungarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Regional or state authorities, Religious organisations/religious organisations,
12	Bachtalo Drom Association	Postal address: 1055 Budapest, Falk Miksa u. 6.	Magdolna Szécsi	szecsi.magdolna0403@gmail.com	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers, General counselling, Career path planning, Job placement and follow-up, Mentoring,	Women (including mothers with young children), Adults (general working age), People with disabilities, Roma or other ethnic minorities,	Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), International civil society organisations (NGOs), Religious organisations/religious organisations, Businesses, Advocacy organisations

No.	Organisation name	City/county	Contact person	E-mail	Type of organisation	Services	Target groups	Collaborations
								Businesses,
13	Reformed Church in Hungary	1045 Budapest Istvántelki út 8.	Katalin Vereb	mrsz@jobbadni.hu	Religious organisation	Job placement / connecting job seekers and job offers, Language training, Vocational training / skills development, Legal advice, Providing internship opportunities, General advice, Career path planning, Job placement and follow-up, Mentoring, Other	Women (including mothers with young children), Unaccompanied minors, Adults (general working age), Elderly (over 65), Persons with disabilities, Roma or other ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ persons, General services, Other groups	Local government(s), Hungarian civil society organisations (NGOs), International civil society organisations (NGOs), Regional or state authorities, Employment centres, Businesses, Religious organisations/religious organisations, Grassroots groups, Advocacy organisations,