Social Innovation Initiative

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SMART UA

FINAL REPORT MAPPING EMPLOYMENT OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN SLOVAKIA

Research report prepared by Trnava University for the Family Support Center as part of the Smart UA project

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Slovak Republic

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1. Executive Summary

Brief overview of the aim:

- The primary objective was to map stakeholders using desk research, supplemented by the collection of primary and secondary data. It focused on institutions and organizations in Slovakia that provide assistance to Ukrainian refugees/displaced persons in the area of housing.
- The research looked not only at the scope of services provided, but also at the links between actors, barriers to cooperation, and proposed solutions.
- The analyzed data and its results are intended for:
    - state and public institutions of the Slovak Republic involved in the creation and implementation of policies in the area of housing and integration of refugees from Ukraine,
    - non-governmental and church organizations, non-profit entities, and community centers that provide accommodation and accompanying services to Ukrainian refugees,
    - the European Union and its institutions, in particular the European Commission, which, within the framework of the Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion (2021–2027) and through the ESF+ and AMIF funds, support inclusive housing and the integration of persons under temporary protection,
    - as well as experts, researchers, and donors who monitor the impact of the implementation of European and national policies on housing and refugee integration in Slovakia.
- The aim of the report is to provide a basis for strategic decision-making, financing, and the creation of long-term sustainable solutions in the area of housing for Ukrainian migrants, in accordance with the policies of the Slovak Republic and the European Union.
- The research was conducted in accordance with the uniform methodological standards of the SMART UA project, which allow for a comparison of findings between Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. All national reports are based on the same data collection tools, the same analytical procedures, and a common evaluation framework, which ensures full comparability of results across the countries involved in the project.

Sample:

- A total of 68 actors were approached, and after completing the questionnaire, 26 participating actors (state institutions, local governments, non-profit organizations, private service providers) operating in the field of employment services were included in the research.

Methods and tools used:

- The questionnaire in Slovak was distributed by email.
- At the same time, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with most of the participating actors due to the low response rate to the email and the need for qualified clarification of some questions.
- The questions were designed to capture the range and type of services provided, forms of inter-organizational cooperation, examples of good practice, and suggestions for systemic improvements.

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Major findings:

- **Diversified assistance:** The integration of Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia is a dynamic process involving a wide range of actors. The research showed that non-governmental organizations (NGO) and religiously affiliated organizations play the most significant role in this area, but local governments and community initiatives are also heavily involved. These organizations most often provide services such as job placement, language training, and legal advice, which are key to entering the labor market. Less widespread, but very much needed, are specialized programs focused on developing digital and soft skills, or internships. Although funding is provided from several sources—the state, the EU, the private sector, and the community—it remains insufficient in most cases, and state aid does not cover the actual needs.

- **Targeted support for vulnerable groups:** Services and support are targeted at various vulnerable groups, with the greatest attention being paid to women, including mothers with children. These women face specific obstacles in balancing work and family life. However, support is also provided to older adults (65+), people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Specific forms of assistance are available for these groups, such as individual advice, psychological support, and assistance with administrative procedures.

- **Main barriers:** Despite the support, Ukrainian refugees continue to face a number of obstacles that complicate their full integration into the labor market. The most serious barriers include language difficulties, lack of recognition of qualifications and the problematic situation with placing refugee children in preschools and schools. Research has also shown that a lack of local labour market experience**,** discrimination, bureaucratic hurdles and psychological difficulties that prevent entry into employment are also problematic.

- **Lack of state strategy and systematic approach**: The current support system has weaknesses that hinder the long-term sustainability of integration measures. The main institutional gaps include a lack of stable funding, a lack of coordinated national policy, and ineffective information exchange between actors. Research has also revealed that cooperation between organizations and private employers or chambers of commerce is very weak or non-existent.

- **Innovation and best practices:** Research has identified several effective and proven approaches that could improve the situation. A key element is integration centers that combine counseling with community activities. Another important measure is simplifying the process of recognizing educational documents, which enables Ukrainian refugees to find jobs that match their qualifications more quickly. For mothers with children, an approach that combines accommodation with employment opportunities and childcare has proven successful.

Key recommendations:

- **Expand funding and political support:** Research points to a lack of stable, long-term funding and coordinated national policy for the employment of refugees. It is therefore essential to create a national strategic framework for the employment of Ukrainian refugees with long-term funding.

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- **Improve language and retraining programs**: The language barrier is one of the main obstacles for Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia when looking for work. Although language courses are provided, it is important to strengthen them and supplement them with practical training, including digital and soft skills.

- **Create fast and transparent procedures for validating diplomas and certificates**: Simplifying this process would enable Ukrainian refugees to find employment more quickly in professions for which they have education and experience.

- **Support the availability of childcare**: Problems with placing children in preschools and schools are one of the key obstacles, especially for mothers. Recommendations include expanding the capacity of nurseries and schools and providing more flexible care, for example when a child is ill. This step is crucial for women to find and keep a job.

- **Build integration centers**
  Promote them not only as places for counseling, but also as places for community meetings and networking.

- **Intensify cooperation with employers and chambers of commerce**: Create incentive mechanisms for companies to actively employ Ukrainian refugees.

- **Support psychological assistance and inclusive services**: Focus specifically on mothers, seniors, people with disabilities, and minority groups.

2. Introduction

Context of UA refugee situation in the national labour market context:

- In the context of Ukrainian refugees, Slovak legislation uses the official term "departed person," which defines temporary refuge for Ukrainian citizens. As a result of the war in Ukraine, the so-called Lex Ukraine (Act No. 92/2022) was adopted, introducing a new legal instrument – temporary refuge. Upon entering the territory of the Slovak Republic, Ukrainians are usually granted a document of tolerated stay marked: "Leaver" (before March 30, 2022) or "Temporary Shelter" (from March 30, 2022), with the older "leaver" document[1] having the same validity. This is a separate category granted on the basis of a specific situation. [2]
- After the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022, more than 100,000 people seeking protection came to Slovakia, mainly women and children. Most of them were granted temporary refuge status, which allows them to work without the need for a special permit – all that is required is for the employer to notify the labor office of their employment within seven days and provide proof of their refugee status (IOM, 2022, ÚPSVR, 2023).[3]

[1] In accordance with the agreed terminology of the project (Smart UA), we will use the term UA refugee, i.e. Ukrainian refugees
[2] https://www.ip.gov.sk/lex-ukrajina-a-jeho-vplyv-na-zamestnavanie-cudzincov/
[3] https://www.emn.sk/sk/publikacie/vyrocne-spravy-emn-o-migracii-a-azyle/item/download/3139_6a0893f574f8a23829edaf4566082f82.html

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- In the first year after the start of the war, the employment rate of Ukrainian refugees increased from 11% to approximately 34%, demonstrating their relatively rapid integration into the labor market (MPSVR SR, 2023). However, the mismatch between education and job placement remains a problem—up to 46% of refugees work in positions that do not match their qualifications, which is more than among regular Ukrainian migrant workers (MPSVR SR, 2023).[4]
- The biggest obstacles to integration are the language barrier (felt by 52% of refugees), family responsibilities related to childcare (24%), and health problems (11%) (UNHCR, 2023). Nevertheless, their participation in the labor market has a positive economic effect—according to analyses, their contribution to GDP in the coming years is expected to offset government spending on integration by approximately 0.2% of GDP (UNHCR, 2023).[5]
- As of January 2025, Slovakia had provided temporary refuge to more than 132,000 people, most of whom are women, with approximately 47% having completed higher education (SAV, 2024). Although their integration is progressing, challenges remain, particularly in terms of improving language skills, recognizing qualifications, and creating conditions for work-life balance.[6]

Purpose of mapping within SMART UA:

- Mapping the actors in Slovakia who are or have been involved in providing employment for Ukrainian refugees is essential for understanding the link between legislative changes in the area of state support and their actual implementation by institutions and organizations. This process makes it possible to identify not only the available capacities and forms of assistance, but also the gaps that remain despite the existing measures. It is essential to examine the perspective of the employment providers themselves, as they are in direct contact with Ukrainian refugees and at the same time face the practical consequences of legislative and financial constraints.
- The period 2022–2025 can be characterized as a transition from spontaneous, solidarity-driven assistance to institutionalized, but financially and capacity-limited forms of support. While the first months after the arrival of Ukrainian refugees were marked by a high level of mobilization of civil society, the following years point to the need for long-term sustainable employment policies that would enable permanent integration and reduce the risk of social exclusion.
- The two largest cities, Bratislava and Košice, as well as the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, point out that the funds available for the operation of activities and integration centers are insufficient. Many local governments therefore have to find funding in their own budgets or rely on the non-profit sector. Without systemic changes, there is a risk that a significant part of the integration activities built up in recent years will disappear (EURACTIV, 2024).

Brief national policy reference or EU labour context:

- Temporary Protection Directive: The EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC) at the start of the war in Ukraine in March 2022 to ensure that people fleeing the war could quickly access housing, work, healthcare, social benefits, and schooling without a lengthy immigration process (European Commission, 2023).

[4] https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/uvodna-stranka/informacie-media/aktuality/odidenci-z-ukrajiny-slovenskom-trhu-prace-uplatnuju-tazsie.html
[5] https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/109522
[6] https://uesa.sav.sk/en/projects/social-survey-of-ukrainian-displaced-refugees-in-slovakia/

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3. Methodology

Data collection tool:

- The primary data collection was carried out as a combination of secondary analysis of available sources (desk research) and a targeted questionnaire survey.
- The online questionnaire was compiled in Slovak and distributed via the vyplnto.cz platform. This tool enabled anonymous completion and secure archiving of responses.
- After the field phase was completed, the data was exported to MS Excel and further processed and analyzed in the SPSS software environment, which was used for basic descriptive statistics and qualitative coding of open-ended responses.

Languages used:

- All phases of data collection (questionnaire, accompanying instructions, email and telephone communication with participating actors) were conducted exclusively in Slovak, ensuring linguistic consistency and minimizing the risk of interpretative inconsistencies.
- The national report was prepared in Slovak and then translated into English for comparison of the countries involved in the research and creation of an international comparative report for the UA Smart project.

Number and type of respondents:

- A total of 68 stakeholders were approached, and the research sample consisted of 26 participating actors, with each participating actor representing one relevant organization or institution in the field of employment.
- State authorities, regional and local governments, non-profit organizations, foundations, and private service providers were represented.
- All entities had proven experience in providing employment to Ukrainian refugees.

Data collection period:

- Data was collected over a two-month period from July to August 2025.

Sampling approach:

- Purposive sampling was used.
- The basis for the creation of stakeholders was:
    - official registers and lists available at the level of individual regions of Slovakia,
    - internal databases of partner organizations,
    - the research team's expert knowledge of active entities in the field.
- The aim was to capture the maximum range of actors operating in the areas under review without regional or sectoral restrictions.

Limitations of the research:

- The research is limited mainly by the low response rate of the questionnaires, which may affect the representativeness of the findings.
- The data are based on information provided by the organizations, which may vary depending on their internal capacities, methods of recording, or interpretation of the questions.

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- The lack of a unified national database of services and capacities limited the ability to compare data across regions.
- The sample was obtained by purposive selection and therefore may not capture all relevant service providers.
- Telephone interviews or additional explanations may also have affected the level of detail and consistency of responses.

Ethical safeguards:

- The research was conducted in accordance with applicable personal data protection legislation (GDPR) and with the standards of sociological research ethics and the TU Code of Research Integrity and Ethics.
- All participants were informed in advance about the purpose and scope of the research, how the data would be handled, and their right to withdraw their participation at any time.
- Informed consent was implicitly granted by completing and submitting the questionnaire.
- The data was anonymized and processed in aggregate form within the national report so that it was not possible to identify individual subjects or their representatives.

4. Stakeholder profile

Organizational types:

- NGO- non-governmental organizations (13)
- Private organization (2)
- Religiously affiliated organization (5)
- Public national institution (2)
- Public local institution (2)
- Local/Community initiative (1)
- Collaborative local platform (1)

The composition of actors providing employment to Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia highlights the diversity of civil society and its ability to respond flexibly to crisis situations. The dominant presence of non-governmental organizations (NGO) that assist in the integration of refugees plays a significant role in this case. The involvement of religiously affiliated organizations, private organizations, national and local institutions, as well as collaborative local platforms and local/community initiatives, also highlights the interconnection between community initiatives, public administration, and networked forms of assistance.

Scope of involvement:

- National (3)
- Regional:
  - Bratislava Region (7)
  - Trnava Region (11)
  - Nitra Region (5)
  - Prešov Region (7)
  - Košice Region (9)
  - Žilina Region (5)
  - Banská Bystrica Region (6)

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  - Trenčín Region (3)
- Local (3)

The geographical distribution of the actors involved points to the existence of a multi-layered social support system that can adapt to the specific needs of individual communities. Regional organizations play the most important role in this case. The largest number of actors providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees in the area of employment is recorded in the Trnava Region. National organizations are the least represented, which points to limited direct implementation capacity at the central level.

Funding mechanisms and capacity levels:

- Governmental and Municipal Funding Sources (19)
- European Union Funding (17)
- Private Sector and Corporate Support (11)
- Individual and Community Support (11)
- International Organizations and Donors (9)
- Other Self-Generated Revenues (8)
- Local taxes, fees (0)
- Fundraising (1)
- Miscellaneous (1)

Funding is provided from several sources, the most significant being governmental and municipal funding sources (19). This reflects institutional recognition and the social need for systematic support. The second important source is European Union funding (17), which provide a stable basis for the implementation of larger projects and long-term initiatives. Contributions from the private sector (11) and individual or community support (11) also play a significant role, demonstrating the involvement of the public and partners in the organization's activities. A smaller share comes from support from international organizations and donors (9), as well as the other self-generated revenues (8). Marginal but still present sources include collections and various forms of fundraising. Overall, it can be said that funding is diversified, but the dominant dependence on state and European sources points to the need for further development of independent and alternative forms of support.

Focus on specific population groups:

- Women (including mothers with young children) (18)
- We provide general services without specific targeting (9)
- Older adults 65+ (12)
- Adults (general working-age population) (13)
- People with disabilities (9)
- Roma or other ethnic minorities (6)
- LGBTQ+ individuals (3)
- Other - young people (1), persons at risk of food and other material deprivation (1)

Services and support focus on different population groups, with the greatest attention being paid to women, including mothers with young children. This approach reflects an effort to respond to the needs of specific groups, which are often exposed to increased risks in the context of migration.

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A significant proportion of organizations also target the working-age adult population and older adults aged 65+, reflecting a broader scope of support and recognition of the needs of different age groups. In addition, there are organizations that provide general services without a specific focus, which can be an important complement to specialized assistance. Special attention is also paid to people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, as well as LGBTQ+ individuals, taking into account diversity and the need for an inclusive approach. A smaller but still significant proportion of organizations also focus on young people and people at risk of food or other material deprivation. Overall, it can be said that the distribution of services reflects an effort to comprehensively cover the needs of different population groups, with support for women and families with children remaining the dominant element, but without neglecting the broader framework of social inclusion and equality.

5. Employment support activities

Types of employment-related services provided

- Job placement (17)
- Language training (14)
- Digital skills training (4)
- Soft skills training (7)
- Legal advice on employment rights (14)
- Internships (1)
- Other: Psychological counseling, art therapy, developmental activities (1)

In the area of employment support, a wide range of activities are provided with the aim of improving individuals' employability in the labor market. Most often, this involves job placement (17), which directly helps people find suitable employment. Great emphasis is also placed on language training (14), as knowledge of a foreign language is a significant competitive advantage in employment, especially in an international environment. Equally important is legal advice on employment rights (14), which provides better guidance on labor relations and the protection of employees' rights. In addition, several organizations are engaged in skills development through soft skills training (7), such as communication and presentation skills, and digital skills training (4), which are increasingly important in today's technology-oriented work environment. On the other hand, internships (1), which provide practical experience and contact with the real working environment, are less common. Psychological counseling, art therapy, and various development activities that help strengthen personal potential and cope with the stress associated with employment are also complementary, albeit less widespread, forms of support. Together, these activities create a comprehensive support framework that reflects the diverse needs of individuals seeking employment in the labor market.

Number of refugees support:

- 0 (3)
- Less than 25 (5)
- 26-50
- 51-100
- 101-150
- 151-200 (2)

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- 201-300 (2)
- More than 1000 (2)

Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that most of the organizations surveyed provide support to a relatively small number of refugees. The largest group consists of organizations working with fewer than 25 clients, with up to five entities operating in this manner. Another four organizations provide support to between 26 and 50 refugees, and a smaller number of organizations work with 51 to 100 people or 101 to 150 refugees. There are also two organizations in each of the categories of 151 to 200 and 201 to 300 clients. Interestingly, there are also two organizations that are able to provide support on a significantly larger scale – for more than 1,000 refugees. Despite these exceptions, it is clear that the vast majority of organizations focus on working with smaller groups, which may be related to their capacity, specialization, or the local nature of their activities.

Tailored support for specific groups:

- Legal advice on employment rights (in person/online) (2)
- Adjustment of working hours according to their needs (1)
- Focus on children and youth (1)
- Afternoon tutoring for children (1)
- Language training for people aged 65+ (1)
- Workshops (1)
- Psychological advice (1)
- Eco-wardrobe (1)

Support tailored to specific groups is an important tool for responding to the specific needs of different target communities. In practice, this is most often implemented through legal advice on employment rights, which is available in person and online, increasing its accessibility and flexibility. Adjusting working hours to the individual needs of clients also plays an important role, helping single mothers, for example, to better balance work and family responsibilities. Special attention is paid to children and young people, where support focuses not only on leisure activities but also on systematic education through afternoon tutoring. Seniors are also an important group, for whom language training are organized to promote lifelong learning and social integration. Other forms of assistance available include psychological advice, which contributes to the mental well-being of individuals, and the organization of workshops promoting personal and professional development. Another interesting initiative is the eco-wardrobe, which combines environmental considerations with practical assistance to people in need. Together, these activities create an inclusive support system that responds to the needs of various vulnerable groups and strengthens their opportunities to participate in social, work, and community life.

Integration of digital or skills assessment tools:

Use of digital tools for data monitoring

- National digital registration system (1)
- Internal database of the organization (6)
- Not used (5)

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Ways of using digital tools for data monitoring

- Case management (11)
- Progress tracking (7)
- Internal reporting (11)
- Sharing with national authorities (6)
- Reporting to donors (3)

Most organizations prefer their own internal databases, while a smaller proportion rely on the national digital registration system. At the same time, it appears that a relatively large group of organizations do not use digital tools for this purpose at all.
In terms of how they are used, digital tools most often serve the function of case management and internal reporting. These two areas represent the fundamental pillar on which organizations base their work with clients and their internal administration. To a lesser extent, digital systems are used to track individual progress, share data with national authorities, and report to donors. The results therefore show that digital solutions play an important role in the work of organizations, but their use is not uniform. Some organizations are more technologically advanced in this area and are able to manage their processes systematically, while others rely on more traditional approaches without digital support. This difference can affect the effectiveness of their work and their ability to provide services in a targeted and transparent manner.

6. Barriers and challenges

Key barriers:

- Language difficulties – very serious
- Lack of recognition of qualification – very serious
- Lack of local labour market experience – neutral to serious
- Discrimination – neutral to serious
- Bureaucratic hurdles – neutral to serious
- Lack of childcare services – very serious
- Mental health of UA refugees – neutral to serious
- Undereducated / underskilled refugees – neutral
- Lack of digital literacy – neutral
- Lack of soft skills – neutral
- Other: Problems with childcare during working hours (1), Educated people have difficulty finding adequate employment (1), Insufficient consistency in working with Ukrainian refugees (1), Registration at national and local level (1).

Ukrainian refugees face several significant barriers and challenges in the area of employment, which hinder their integration into the local labor market. Among the most serious problems are the language difficulties, lack of recognition of qualification, and a lack of childcare services. These factors are often identified by organizations as very important for successful integration and employment in the labor market. In addition, Ukrainian refugees encounter problems that may be less

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obvious but are still significant. These include lack of experience in the local labor market, discrimination, bureaucracy hurdles, and mental health issues of UA refugees. Less serious but still present barriers include undereducated and underskilled refugees, a lack of digital literacy and lack of soft skills. Additional challenges include difficulties in placing children during working hours, insufficient consistency in working with Ukrainian refugees, problems with the employment of highly skilled people, and insufficient registration of refugees at both the national and local levels. These obstacles clearly show that the integration of refugees requires a comprehensive approach that addresses not only employment issues but also the social, family, and systemic aspects of their integration into society.

Challenges for vulnerable subgroups:

- Assistance to women-mothers in finding work + placement of children in institutional care
- Barrier-free access to the integration center
- Increasing the capacity of social facilities
- Providing psychological support to refugees

Ukrainian refugees from Ukraine, and especially vulnerable subgroups such as mothers, face specific challenges in the area of employment. One of the main problems is balancing work life with parental responsibilities. Mothers often need not only support in finding suitable employment, but also access to affordable institutional childcare, which will enable them to actively participate in the labor market. In addition, there is also a need to ensure barrier-free access to integration centers, which are key locations for providing information and services to refugees. It is also important to increase the capacity of social facilities so that they can accommodate a larger number of people in need of support, and to provide psychological assistance, which is essential for coping with stress and successfully adapting to life in a new country. A comprehensive approach that addresses labor integration, childcare, service accessibility, and psychological support is key to ensuring the stability and successful integration of vulnerable refugees into the labor market.

7. Cooperation and good practices

Collaboration types:

- NGO- mostly very effective cooperation
- International non-profit organizations – neutral (or uncooperative)
- Local authorities – neutral or uncooperative
- Regional and national authorities – neutral (or uncooperative)
- Local/community initiatives – neutral
- Employment offices/public employment services – neutral
- Private companies/employers – neutral (or non-cooperative)
- Chambers of commerce – uncooperative
- Religiously affiliated organization – mostly very effective cooperation
- Local government – effective cooperation
- Local administration – effective to neutral
- Public institutions – neutral (or uncooperative)

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- Others – do not cooperate

Organizations working in the field of employment for Ukrainian refugees assess cooperation with various partners differently. The most effective cooperation is recorded mainly with non-governmental organizations (NGO) and religiously affiliated organization which are regularly involved and provide support in addressing employment issues. Effective cooperation can also be observed in the case of local and municipal authorities, which are actively involved in coordinating and implementing various initiatives. Other types of cooperation are mostly rated as neutral, with some organizations not cooperating with them at all. These include most regional and national authorities, local authorities, private companies, chambers of commerce, and public institutions. Chambers of commerce, with which organizations do not undertake any specific activities, received the most critical assessment. Overall, it can be said that partnerships with organizations focused on community support and local initiatives are the most successful and effective, while cooperation with commercial or formal public institutions remains limited.

Good practices in job placement or upskilling:

- Simplified form of recognition of educational documents from different fields
- Need for consistency
- Opening of an integration center where migrants can share their experiences with each other
- Creation of a national housing support system
- Combining accommodation with work for mothers and placing children in preschool and school facilities
- Liaison with the employment office as an effective way to inform refugees about available retraining courses and job opportunities

In the context of integrating Ukrainian refugees into the labor market, several proven approaches have proven effective in responding to their specific needs while promoting long-term socio-economic stability. One of the key measures is simplifying the process of recognizing educational documents, which allows refugees to apply their qualifications in various professional fields more quickly. This step reduces barriers to entering the labor market and increases the chances of finding adequate employment corresponding to their education and experience. Another important factor is the need for a consistent approach on the part of institutions, which includes coordinated and long-term sustainable solutions. Ukrainian refugees often face inconsistent information and procedures, which complicates their orientation in the support system. The opening of integration centers is also considered very beneficial, as they serve not only as a space for counseling and support, but also as community centers where refugees can exchange experiences, build networks, and motivate each other. Such an environment strengthens their self-confidence and sense of belonging, which are important factors in adaptation. In the area of employment for mothers with children, a combination of accommodation with employment opportunities and childcare provision has proven successful – i.e., linking job opportunities with the placement of children in preschool and school facilities. This triple combination creates a more stable environment for mothers who would otherwise face serious obstacles in finding work. Another important element is active cooperation with employment offices, which serve as an effective tool for providing information on retraining courses, job vacancies, and opportunities for further professional growth. Employment offices can also serve as intermediaries between employers and refugees. At the systemic level, it is essential to create a national housing support system that would provide stable and decent housing as a basis for further integration steps, including employment. Housing

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is closely related to the ability to find and keep a job, especially for families with children. These best practices show that the successful integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market requires a comprehensive, interconnected, and people-centered approach that takes into account not only employability as such, but also the broader social context —from the recognition of qualifications, and the availability of services to the creation of a safe and supportive environment.

8. Capacity and needs

Institutional gaps:

- Staff training (1)
- Platforms for networking and cooperation (4)
- Better support for childcare, support during periods of child illness (1)
- Support for national policy (5)
- Increased funding (10)

The employment of Ukrainian refugees faces a number of institutional shortcomings that hinder effective integration into the labor market. Among the most significant challenges is insufficient funding, which limits the capacity of organizations and institutions providing services in the areas of employment, retraining, and support for families with children. Another key area is insufficient support at the national policy level. There is a lack of a coordinated strategic framework and long-term solutions that would enable the systematic and sustainable integration of refugees into the labor market. Organizations also point to the need to improve cooperation and information exchange between actors through networking platforms that would enable the sharing of best practices, the linking of services, and the streamlining of interventions. In the area of services, there is a lack of adequate support for childcare, including solutions in the event of illness, which makes it particularly difficult for mothers to start or keep a job. Another weakness is the lack of training for staff working with refugees, which affects the quality of services provided and the ability to respond to the specific needs of this group.

Interest in pilot testing SMART UA tools:

- Yes (10)
- No (2)
- Maybe (14)

The research shows that most organizations would probably be interested in pilot testing the SMART UA tools, but with regard to their time and capacity. Ten organizations expressed clear interest, and only two organizations did not express interest in pilot testing. These results suggest that pilot testing of SMART UA tools has the potential to attract a wider group of organizations, with the availability of time and resources being a key factor for their participation.

9. Inclusiveness and target groups

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Population groups receiving targeted employment support:

- Women (including mothers with young children) (18)
- We provide general services without specific targeting (9)
- Older adults 65+ (12)
- Adults (general working-age population) (13)
- People with disabilities (9)
- Roma or other ethnic minorities (6)
- LGBTQ+ individuals (3)
- Other - young people (1), persons at risk of food and other material deprivation (1)

In the area of employment of Ukrainian refugees, there is a clear effort to take an inclusive approach that takes into account the diversity of needs of different target groups. Most targeted interventions are aimed at women, including mothers with young children, who face specific barriers to employment, such as the need to care for children or to balance work and family life. Another important group is adults (general working-age population), who are provided with services to increase their employability, and older adults aged 65+, who often need specific support in adapting to new environments and working conditions. Support also focuses on people with disabilities, Roma or other ethnic minorities, as well as LGBTQ+ individuals, who may face multiple discrimination and marginalization. Organizations also mentioned assistance that should focus on young people and those at risk of food or material deprivation. Employment initiatives for Ukrainian refugees strive to be socially sensitive and inclusive, but at the same time show that support is most concentrated on women and the adult population. Smaller target groups, such as young people, have received less systematic attention so far, pointing to potential for expanding inclusive strategies in the future.

Tailored programs or lack thereof:

- Barrier-free access
- Legal advice
- Psychological advice
- Individual advice (e.g., help with preparing a resume)
- Adjustment of working hours according to their needs
- Employment of a social worker at the integration center
- Afternoon tutoring for children, which helps mothers who are employed
- Language training for seniors aged 65+

Programs tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable groups play an important role, but there are still shortcomings in their coverage and systematic nature.
Positive examples include:

- **Barrier-free access to** certain spaces and services, which also allows access for people with disabilities.
- **Legal and psychological advice** to help refugees navigate the legal system and cope with the stress and crisis situations associated with migration.
- **Individual advice**, such as help with resume preparation or career planning, contributes to better employment prospects.

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- **Adjusting working hours to the needs of specific groups** (e.g., mothers with children), which increases their chances of finding and keeping a job.
- **The employment of a Ukrainian social worker in the integration center** improves communication and trust between refugees and institutions, while ensuring a culturally sensitive approach.
- **Afternoon tutoring for children** makes it easier for mothers to start work, as it solves the problem of childcare during working hours.
- **Language training for seniors aged 65+** help older refugees integrate into society and acquire at least basic communication skills.

These examples show that some programs already reflect the specific needs of target groups such as women, seniors, people with disabilities, and children. However, many of these services are lacking on a larger scale or are not available systematically, which points to the need for their expansion, stable funding, and long-term implementation within integration strategies.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Summary of findings and institutional gaps:
The integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market in Slovakia is proving to be a dynamic process involving a wide network of actors. Non-governmental organizations (NGO) and religiously affiliated organization play the biggest role, supplemented by local governments and community initiatives. These entities primarily provide job placement, language training, and legal advice, which are among the key forms of support. Less widespread, but equally necessary, are programs focused on digital skills, soft skills, and psychological support. Women with children require special attention, as they face the difficult task of balancing work and family life. However, support is also directed at other vulnerable groups, including the elderly, the disabled, and ethnic and sexual minorities. The biggest obstacles include language barriers, lengthy qualification recognition processes, inadequate childcare, discrimination, and mental health issues. Despite this, the employment rate among Ukrainian refugees is gradually increasing, indicating their growing adaptation and contribution to the Slovak economy. Proven solutions include the functioning of integration centers, simplified diploma validation, and better links between work and available childcare. However, the system's weaknesses remain the lack of coordinated policy, stable funding, and effective information exchange between actors. In the future, it will therefore be necessary to fill these gaps and support long-term sustainable integration mechanisms that will enable Ukrainian refugees not only to find work but also to fully integrate into society.

Concrete steps for national and local actors:

- **Funding and policy:** Funding and policy play a critical role in long-term integration. The creation of a national strategic framework for the employment of refugees with long-term funding will ensure the stability of projects, predictability for organizations and employers, and the possibility of planning targeted interventions. Such a framework will also enable coordination between state institutions, local governments, and the private sector.

- **Education and language:** Strategic measures for stakeholders and actors involved are key to the effective integration of refugees and supporting their successful inclusion in society. One of the main pillars is education and language training. Strengthening language courses, developing retraining

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programs, and providing systematic training in digital and soft skills will enable refugees to adapt more quickly to the labor market and social environment. Focusing on digital skills, communication, and problem-solving will also contribute to increasing their competitiveness and independence.

- **Recognition of qualifications:** The recognition of qualifications is also an important aspect. The introduction of fast, transparent, and reliable procedures for the validation of diplomas, certificates, and work experience will enable refugees to use their professional skills and competences without unnecessary delays. This approach promotes the more effective integration of skilled workers into the economy and reduces the risk of underemployment or lost labor value.

- **Support for families and children:** Support for families and children is one of the key factors for successful integration. Expanding the capacity of preschool facilities and supporting flexible forms of childcare will enable parents, especially mothers, to participate more actively in education or work. This approach promotes family stability, reduces social tensions, and contributes to the creation of more inclusive communities.

- **Mutual cooperation:** Cooperation between different actors is essential for effective integration. Strengthening links between the non-profit sector and employers, including motivating companies to hire refugees, will enable the creation of employment, mentoring, and internship programs that are directly geared toward the needs of the labor market. This reduces the risk of isolation and increases refugees' chances of long-term employment.

- **Integration centers:** Integration centers should be developed as comprehensive locations providing counseling, networking, and community activities. Their role is to provide information about rights, job opportunities, and available services, but also to support the building of social ties and community life, which is key to psychological well-being and a sense of belonging.

- **Psychological and inclusive support:** Psychological and inclusive support is another integral part of integration. Specific programs targeting women-mothers, seniors, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups will address their individual needs, ensure equal opportunities, and prevent social exclusion. Such an approach will contribute to the creation of an inclusive society where every individual has the chance to develop their full potential.

Suggestions for SMART UA next phases:

- **Systematic cooperation:** The SMART UA project represents a comprehensive framework for supporting the integration of refugees and requires careful planning of further steps to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. One of the key measures is systematic cooperation. The creation of platforms for the exchange of experiences between project actors will not only enable coordination between non-profit organizations, state institutions, and community centers, but also effective links with the private sector. Such links will enable a better response to current labor market needs, the sharing of best practices, and the promotion of synergistic solutions that increase refugees' chances of long-term integration.

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- **Pilot testing of SMART UA tools:** Pilot testing of SMART UA tools is another essential step. Verifying the practical applicability of these tools according to the capacities of individual organizations will provide valuable data on which methods and approaches are most effective and enable their adaptation to real-world conditions. Such a systematic testing process minimizes the risk of ineffective measures and ensures that the tools will truly benefit everyday work with refugees.

- **Stable funding:** Stable funding is key to the long-term sustainability of the project. Securing long-term resources for integration measures will ensure the continuity of programs and reduce dependence on short-term projects or grants. This approach will enable long-term interventions to be planned, more permanent capacities to be created, and quality services for refugees to be ensured even during unpredictable economic or political fluctuations.

- **Focus on vulnerable groups:** Focusing on vulnerable groups is another priority. Strengthening programs tailored to women, seniors, people with disabilities, and youth will ensure that each individual receives support tailored to their specific needs. Such a targeted approach increases inclusion and fairness and minimizes the risk of social exclusion or marginalization.

- **Supporting the expertise of staff:** Supporting the expertise of staff working with refugees is equally essential. Improved training and regular refresher courses will enable staff and volunteers to better understand the specifics of different cultural, psychological, and social contexts, address issues more effectively, and provide quality support that reflects the individual needs of refugees.

- **Monitoring and data:** Monitoring and data collection are the last but very important pillar. The introduction of an effective system for recording and monitoring the progress of refugees in the labor market will make it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of individual measures, identify areas for improvement, and provide transparent and accurate information for decision-making and future strategies. This approach enables continuous improvement of project interventions and supports the long-term sustainability of results.

11. Annexes

- Annex 1 – List of stakeholder organizations
- Annex 2 – Data visualization and aggregated response tables
- Annex 3 – References

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Annex 1 – List of participating actors active in the field of employment assistance for Ukrainian refugees (anonymized, organizational data provided for research purposes only)

No	Name of organization	City	Email	Type of organization	Services provided	Target groups	Cooperation
1.	Diocesan Charity Nitra	Nitra	sekretariat@charitanitra.sk	Non-profit church organization	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
2.	League for Human Rights	Bratislava	hrl@hrl.sk	Non-profit organization	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults,	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations,

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No	Name of organization	City	Email	Type of organization	Services provided	Target groups	Cooperation
						older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
3.	TENENET OZ	Banská Bystrica	info@tenenet.sk	Civic association	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
4.	Diocesan Charity Žilina	Žilina	charitaza@charitaza.sk	Non-profit church organization	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	Local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
5.	National Institute of Education and Youth	Trnava	adriana.lancaricova@mpc-edu.sk	State, departmental educational organization	Employment	Youth	Local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local

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No	Name of organization	City	Email	Type of organization	Services provided	Target groups	Cooperation
							government, local administration, public institutions
6.	Mareena	Bratislava	info@mareena.sk	Non-profit organization	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, business chambers, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
7.	Archdiocesan Charity Košice	Košice	silvia.hrabcakova@charita-ke.sk	Non-profit church organization	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
8.	Family Support Center	Trnava	cppr@cppr.sk	Civic association	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults with children	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
9.	DMUCH Trnava initiative educational space	Trnava			Employment		

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No	Name of organization	City	Email	Type of organization	Services provided	Target groups	Cooperation
10	Development Agency of the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region n.o.	Banská Bystrica	socialne@bbsk.sk	Self-government	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
11.	Office of the Commissioner for Children	Bratislava	info@komisarpredeti.sk	State institution	Employment and housing	Children	Local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, Local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
12.	SME SPOU o.zo	Bratislava	ukrajina.sk.sos@gmail.com	Non-profit organization	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions

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No	Name of organization	City	Email	Type of organization	Services provided	Target groups	Cooperation
13.	OZ SaUvedom	Trnava	ahoj@baterkaren.sk	Social enterprise and reuse center	Employment	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
14.	Pontis Foundation	Bratislava	pontis@pontisfoundation.sk	non-profit organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
15.	Greek Catholic Eparchial Charity	Košice	vankova.anna@grkatke.sk	religious organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations,

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							local government, local administration, public institutions
16.	Contact point for foreigners COMIN	Nitra	comin@comin.sk	Cooperative platform	Employment and Housing	Employment and accommodation	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
17.	Diocesan charity	Rožňava	charitaroznava@caritas.sk	religious organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
18.	Ukrainian House	Žilina	uadomza@gmail.com	non-profit organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions

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19.	Interest group RODINA	Trnava	dstrnava@gmail.com	non-profit organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, institutions
20.	ConnecTT Support Center for Foreigners	Trnava	connectt@trnava.sk	public local institutions	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities	local non-profit organizations, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, local government
21.	City of Košice	Košice	socialne@kosice.sk	public local institution	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, older adults 65+, people with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
22.	Trnava Archdiocesan Charity ( ), Integration Center	Trnava	sekretariat@charitatt.sk	religious charity organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, adults, seniors 65+	local non-profit organizations , international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public

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							institutions
23.	A smile as a gift	Bratislava	info@usmev.sk	non-profit organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
24.	o.z. Stopa Slovakia	Bratislava	stopa.slovensko@gmail.com	non-profit organization	Employment and Housing	adults, older adults 65+, Roma and other ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiatives, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
25.	SPDD Smile as a Gift	Košice	kosice@usmev.sk	non-profit organization	Employment and Housing	women, mothers with children, older adults 65+, people with disabilities	local non-profit organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/ /employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions
26.	Greek	Prešov	gkcharita@gkchar	religious	Employment		local non-profit

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	Catholic Charity		ita-po.sk	organization	and Housing		organizations, international non-profit organizations, local authorities, regional and national authorities, local/community initiative, employment offices/public employment services, private companies/employers, chambers of commerce, religious organizations, local government, local administration, public institutions

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Annex 2 – Data visualization and aggregated response tables

Chárt 1: Responses to the question: Does your organization help or has it helped Ukrainian refugees in the past with

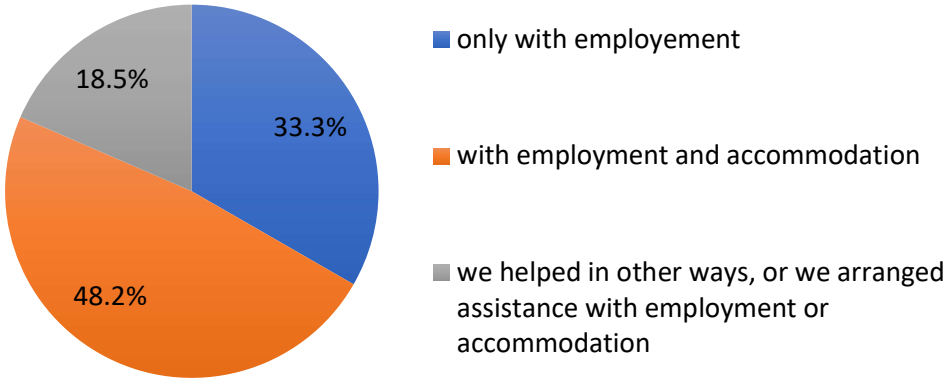


Chart 2: Percentage of responses to the question: *Please indicate which of the following best describes your organization*

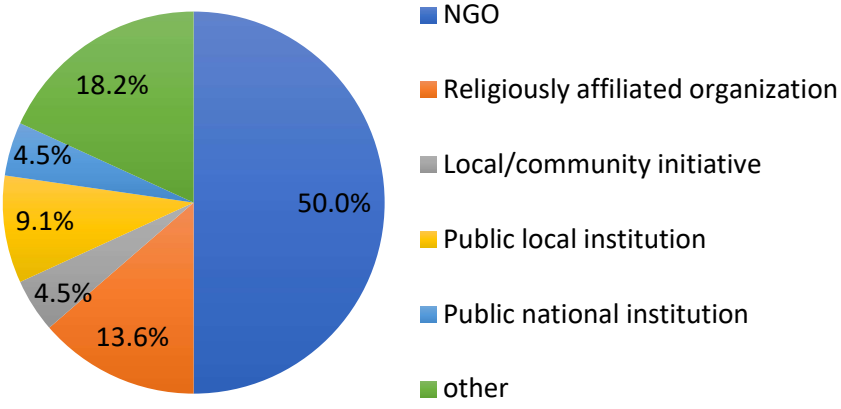


Chart 3: Percentage of responses to the question: Annual budget (EUR):

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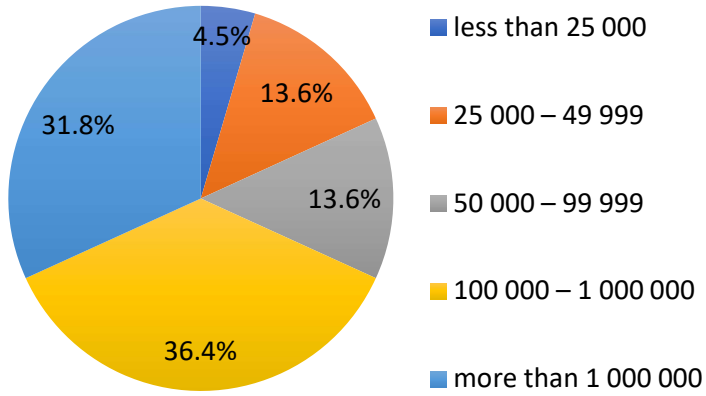
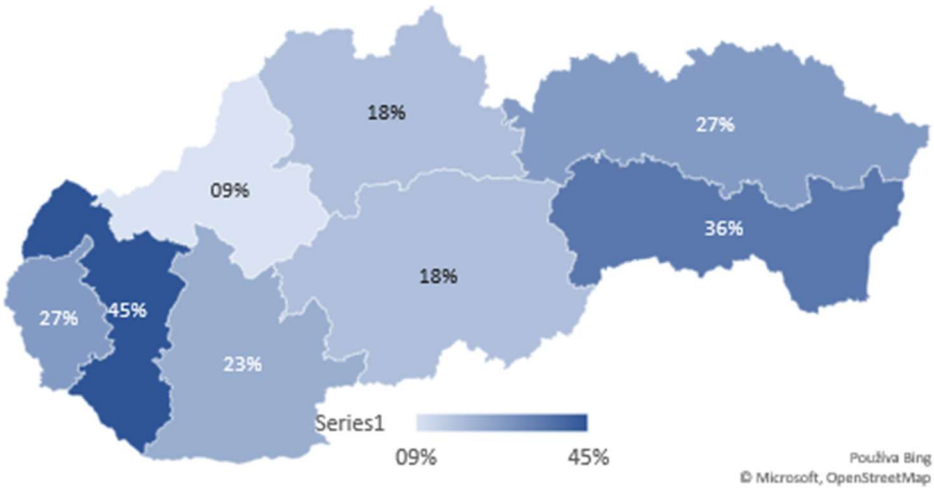
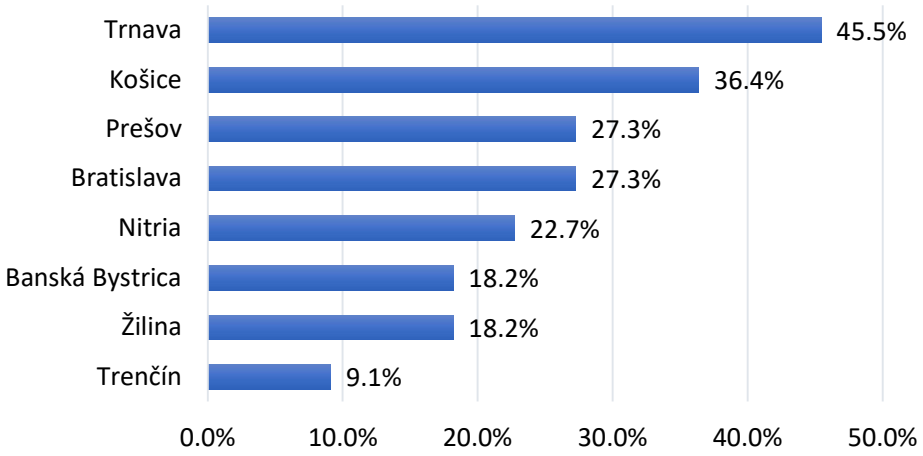


Chart 4: Percentage of responses to the question: In which regions does your organization operate? (multiple response)





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Chart 5: Percentage of responses to the question: Sources of funding (multiple response)

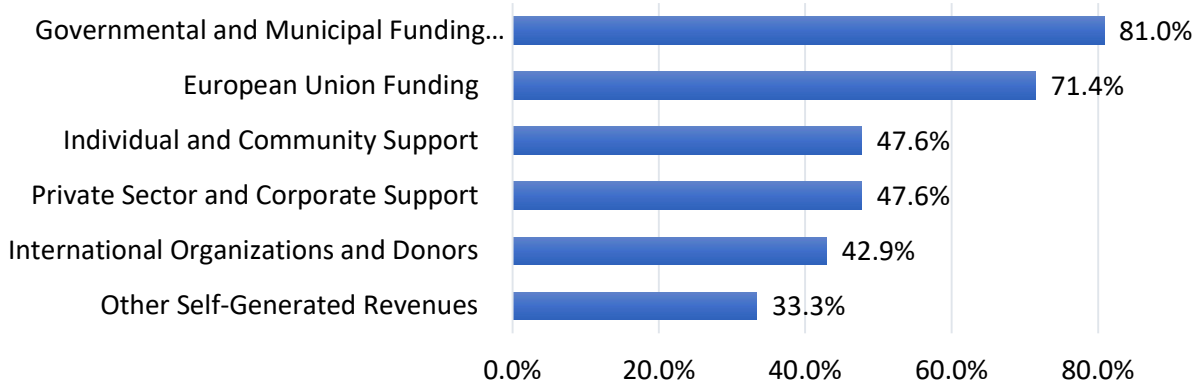


Chart 6: Percentage of responses to the question: Does your organization currently support the employment of Ukrainian refugees?

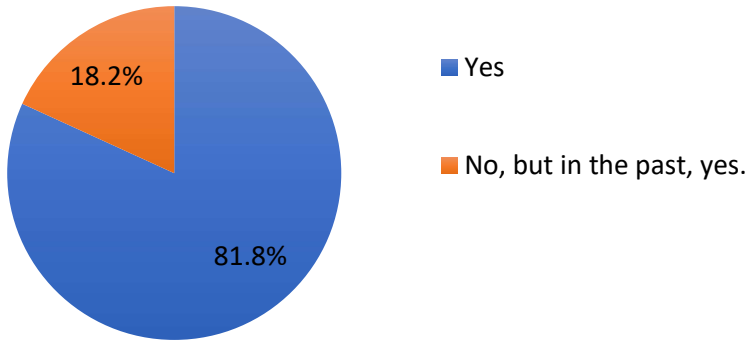
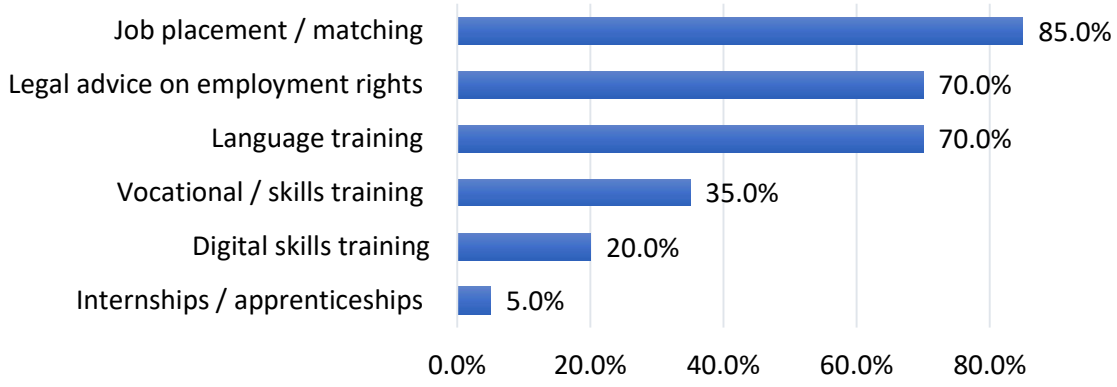


Chart 7: Percentage of responses to the question: What types of employment support does your organization currently provide? (multiple response)



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Chart 8: Percentage of responses to the question: How many Ukrainian refugees are you currently supporting in employment?

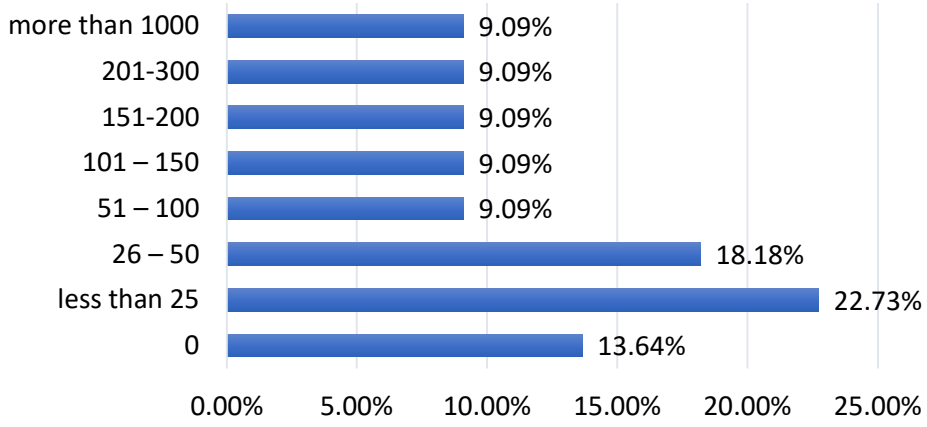


Chart 9: Percentage of responses to the question: How significant are the following barriers for Ukrainian refugees entering the job market, in your opinion?

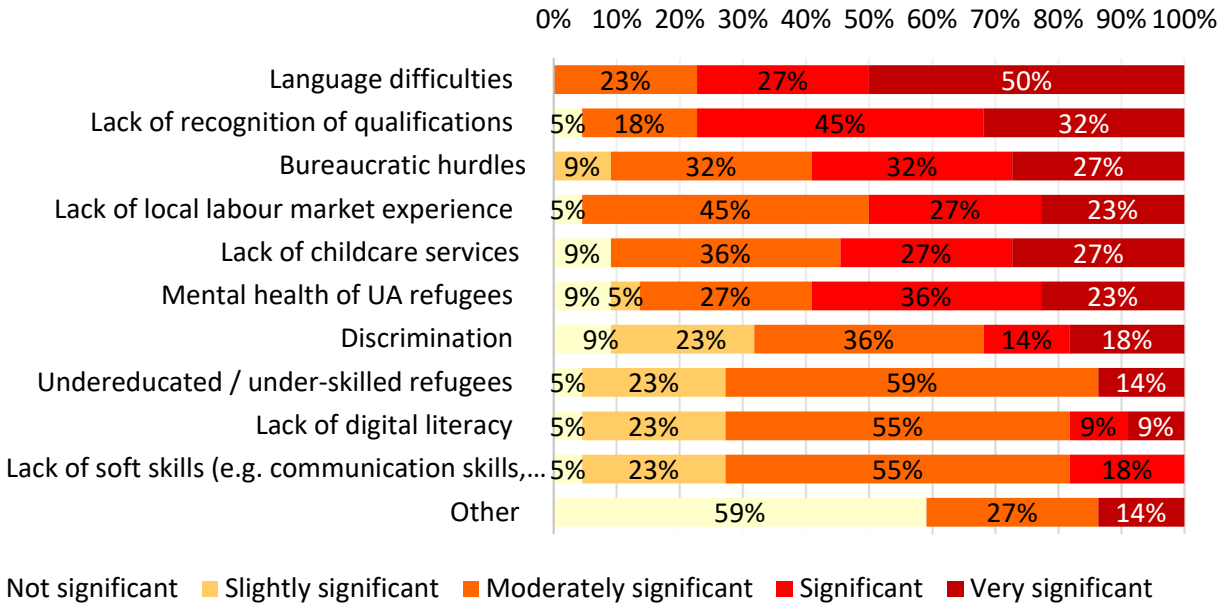
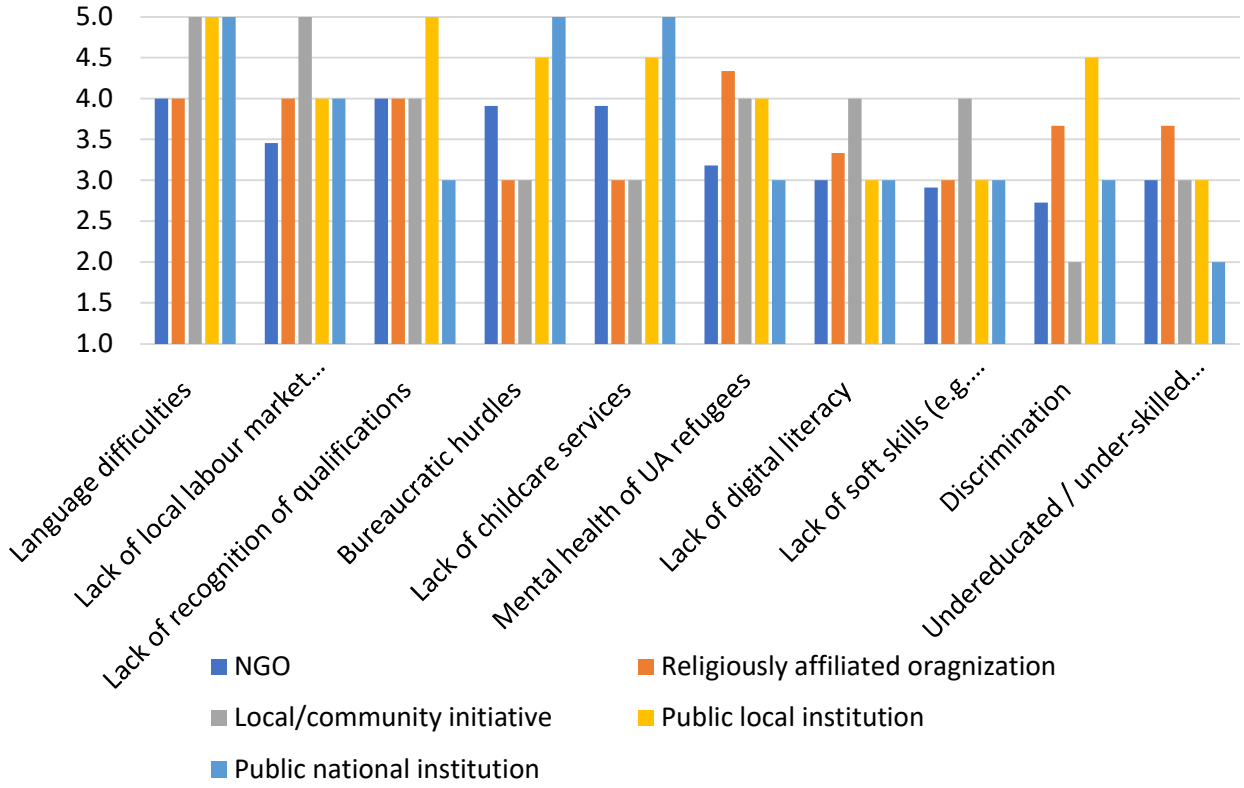


Chart 10: Average score of perceived barriers to Ukrainians entering the labor market by type of organization (where 1 = insignificant and 5 = very significant) – barriers ranked from most significant to least significant)

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Chart 11: Percentage of responses to the question: How would you rate your cooperation with the following actors?

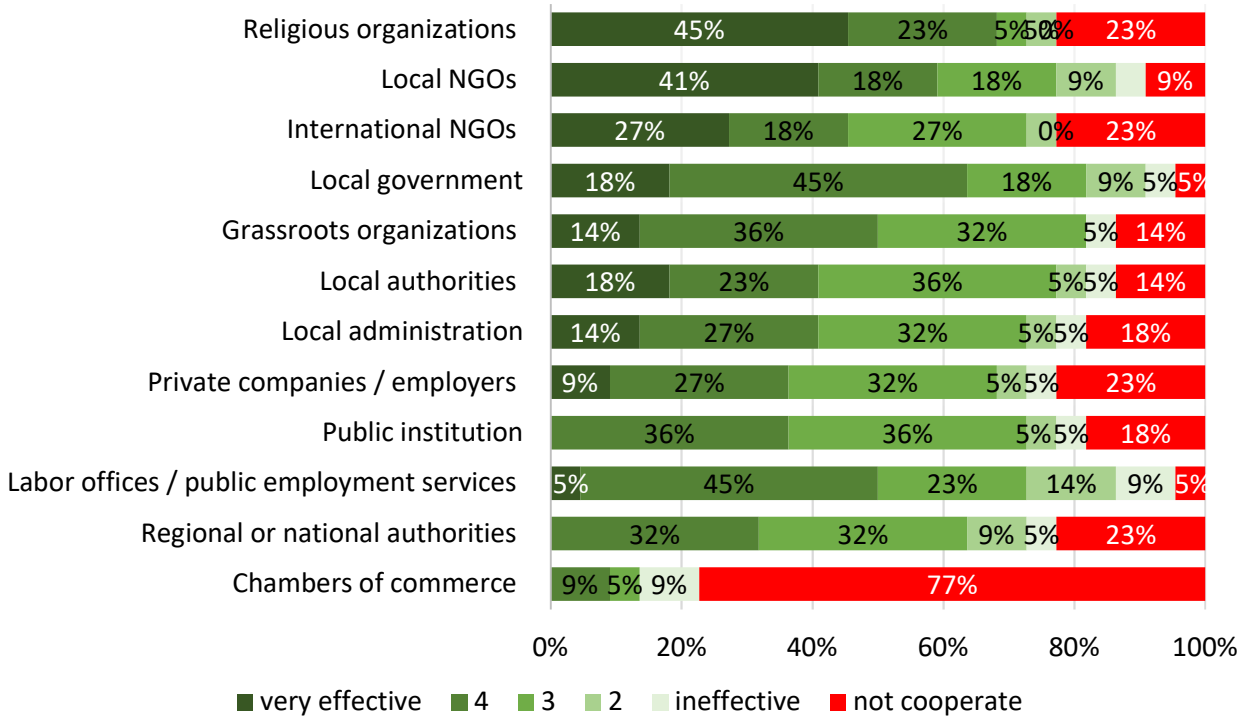


Chart 12: Average score for perceived cooperation with specific actors by type of organization (where 0 = no cooperation, 1 = ineffective, and 5 = very effective) – actors ranked from best perceived cooperation to worst perceived cooperation

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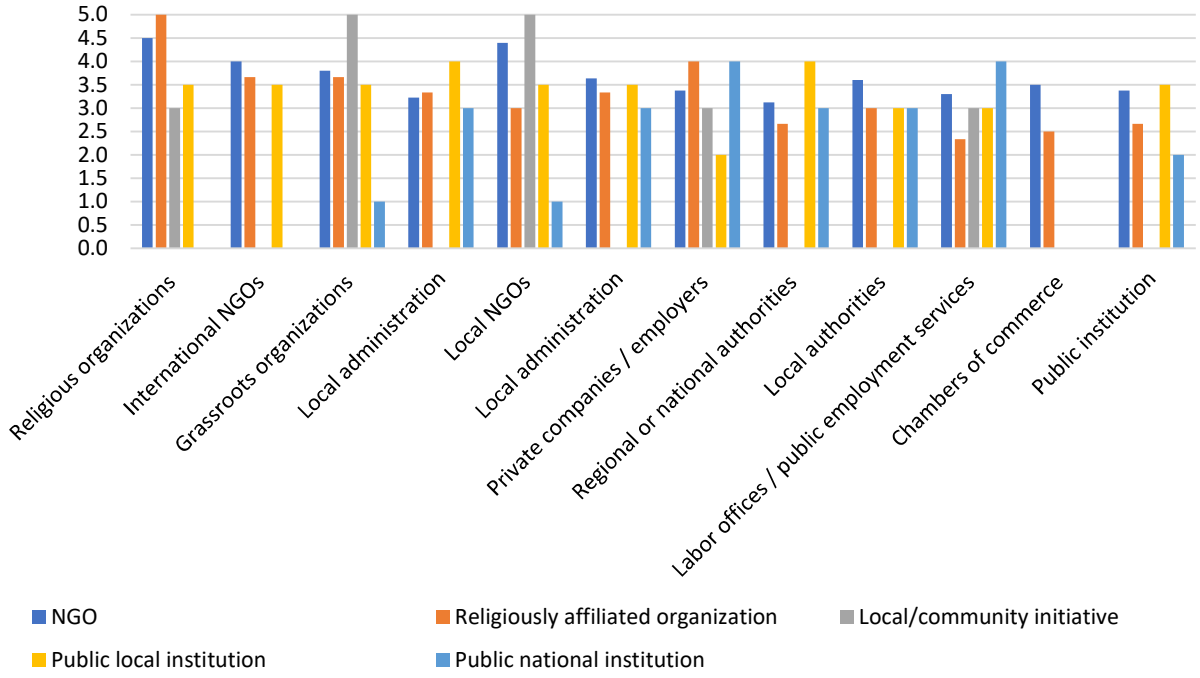


Chart 13: Percentage of responses to the question: Have you implemented any good practices that you would recommend?

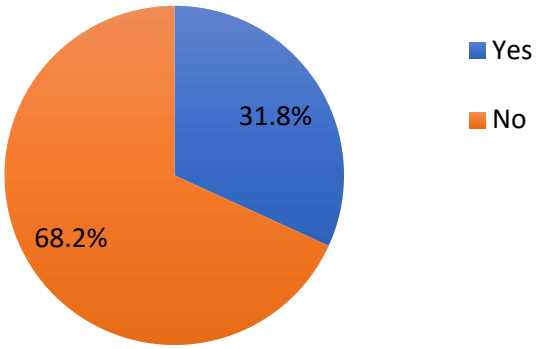


Chart 14: Percentage of responses to the question: What would help your organization better support refugee employment?

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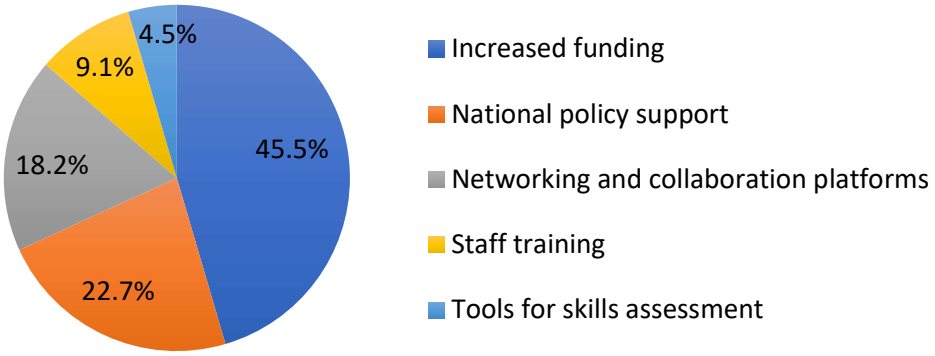


Chart 15: Percentage of responses to the question: Does your organization provide tailored employment support for the following groups? (multiple response)

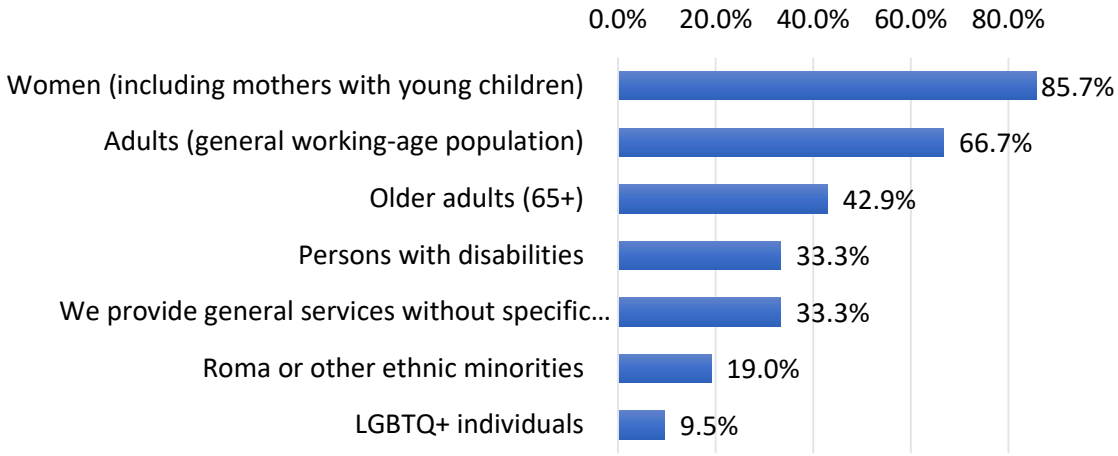


Chart 16: Percentage of responses to the question: Have you adapted any services to better meet the needs of vulnerable or marginalized groups of refugees?

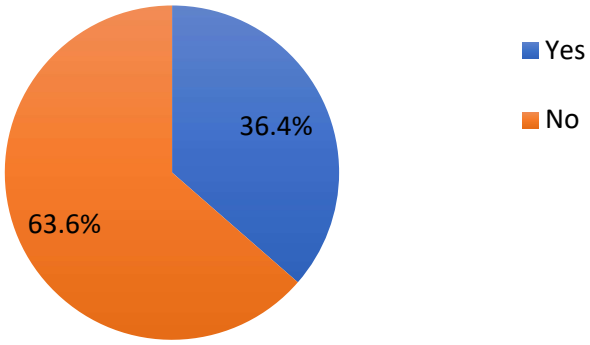


Chart 17: Percentage of responses to the question: Do you use a digital system to keep track of employment support recipients?

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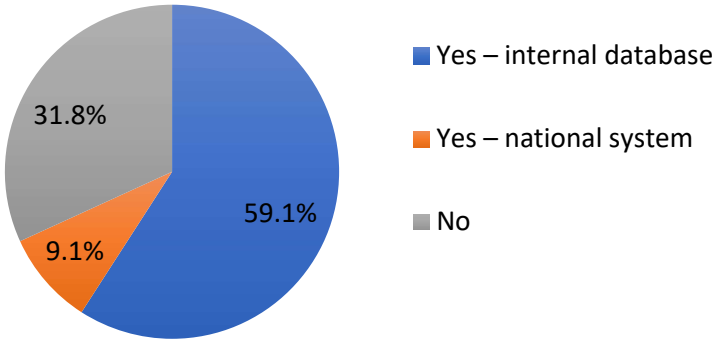
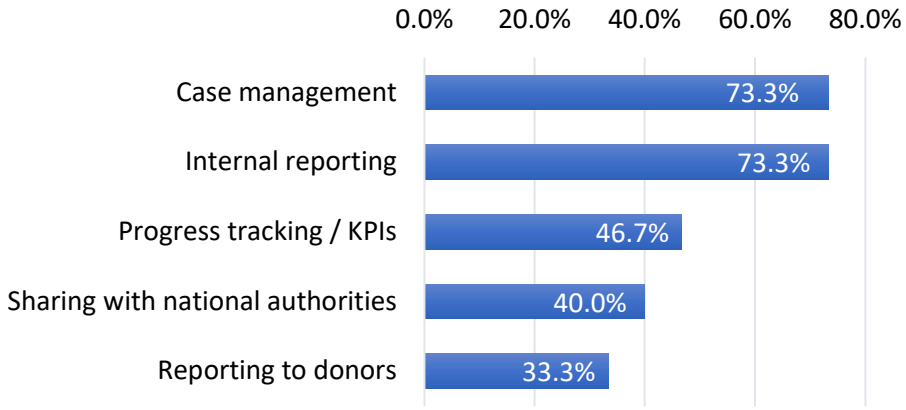
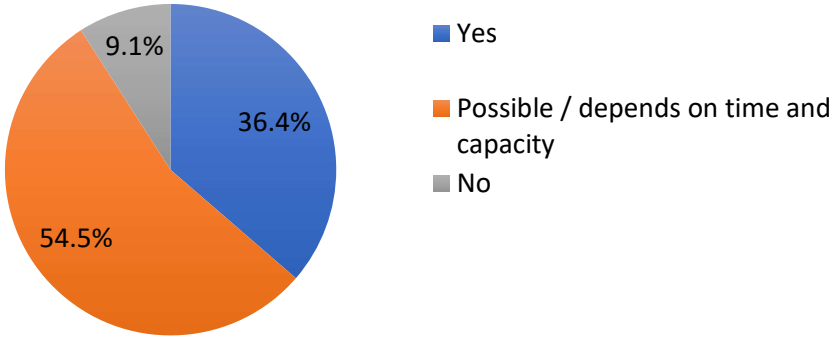


Chart 18: Percentage of responses to the question: How does your organization use the digital data collected through the above systems? (multiple response)

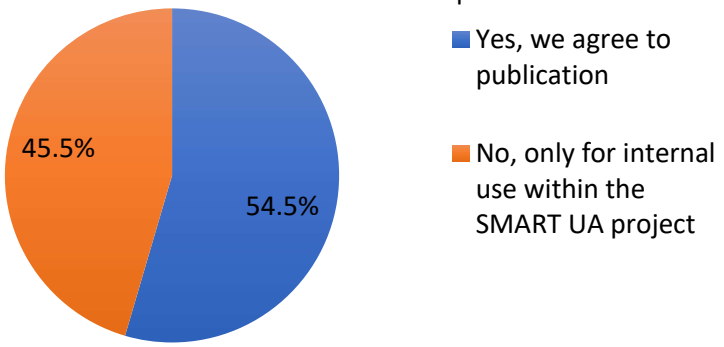


Graf č. 19: Percentage of responses to the question: Are you willing to test or provide feedback on the assessment tool developed as part of this project?



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Graf č. 20: Percentage of responses to the question: Do you agree to the publication of your organization's contact details in the list of interested parties?



Annex 3 – References

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