



Documentation

## Ifa Cross Culture Synergy Exchange Ukraine-Germany

The Berlin-based umbrella organisation for migrant organisations moveGLOBAL e.V. and the Kyiv-based think tank Cedos organised a series of online events on "Strengthening the Participation of Displaced Persons and Migrants in Municipal Decisions on Emergency Assistance and Integration" as part of the Cross Culture Synergy programme funded by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa). The events were simultaneously translated into Ukrainian, German, and English. In two online-events speakers from NGOs and German and Ukrainian municipalities were invited to exchange their good practices, challenges, and synergies regarding participation on the local level.

### First event

#### Participatory Practices in Emergency Assistance for Displaced People in Ukraine and Germany

#### **Informal Communication Channels: Good Practice from the District Lichtenberg of Berlin Speaker: Zhanna Kramer, Coordinator for Community Work in the Lichtenberg District of Berlin**

In the first months after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, many Ukrainians fled to Berlin, a city which became a central point of arrival. For some of them Berlin was their final destination, while others only stayed for a few days or weeks and continued their travel further. Informing people about services and offers of the district was very difficult because many people did not stay in shelters but in private households with their friends, families, or volunteers. In order to reach them Zhanna Kramer (who is a native Ukrainian herself) and her team in the integration office of Lichtenberg decided to create a Telegram group for informing people about different offers of the district and where to receive help or information. Currently (September 2023), in the district of Lichtenberg, Ukrainians are the third biggest community with around 5,000 people registered.

After the first arrival and emergency response the focus shifted towards integration of these people. The district supports them with education, kindergarten access, housing, and integration into the job market—through Telegram and Ukrainian diaspora organisations. This informal communication and assistance is seen as a good practice by the overall Berlin administration and was specifically mentioned in the "Action Plan Ukraine in Berlin: Complementing the Overall Concept for the Integration and Participation of Refugees", which is a major policy paper that was created in collaboration with the civil society—especially Ukrainian organisations—and the administration of the districts together with the Division of Berlin's Integration Officer in the Senate Department for Labour, Social Affairs, Equality, Integration, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination. The Action Plan is an important policy paper which



focuses on different fields of integration and policies as well as practices in the integration process of Ukrainians who have been coming since the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

## **Leadership and Participation Programm of IsraAID Germany e.V.: Good Practice for Emergency Response and Integration**

**Speaker: Alissa Rentowitsch, Leadership & Teilhabe group facilitator, IsraAID Germany e.V.**

Alissa Rentowich is one of the three facilitators of the Project 'Leadership and Participation' of the humanitarian and social NGO IsraAID Germany e.V., which offers humanitarian assistance among others within Ukraine and works with local NGOs. At the same time, they help with the social inclusion of displaced people from Ukraine. The “Leadership and Participation” program aims at empowering people who came to Germany as a consequence of the war—first of all through social engagement and volunteering activities. Participating in their own aid operations helps participants regain their self-efficacy, which is an important first step towards a successful integration in a new country. Aid operations include for example visiting nursing homes, organising and distributing food to homeless people, cleaning up around town, helping in community shelters, and much more. The program runs for approximately 6 months for a group consisting of up to 15 Ukrainian refugees. Each group meets once a week and plans the next aid operations together with the facilitator. At the end of the program, participants receive a certificate.

More on the project can be found here: <https://www.israaid-germany.de/en/ukraine-deutschland>

## **Emergency response of non-governmental organizations in Ukraine: Experience of Charitable Foundation "Right to Protection"**

**Speaker: Anastasiia Burau, Advocacy Coordinator, CF “Right to Protection”**

The Charitable Foundation "Right to Protection" has been helping IDPs since 2014. However, the full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine caused new challenges in the activity. The Foundation tried to adapt to the actual needs of internally displaced persons: they refocused the Foundation’s activities, moved many offices to the west of Ukraine (because the main flows of IDPs went there), tried to monitor the problems of IDPs and quickly respond to them. In the first part of 2022, the Foundation's main activity was aimed at providing IDPs with material and humanitarian aid—food, hygiene products, and household items. Then, the focus of activity shifted to providing equipment, improving conditions in places of compact living, increasing inclusiveness, and arranging bomb shelters.

The main challenges in the Foundation’s activities were ensuring safety for both workers and aid recipients, adapting to work in new regions, developing strategies for coordinating the needs of IDPs and opportunities for assistance from partners, and lack of logistical routes. To overcome difficulties, the following solutions and approaches were helpful for the Foundation: coordination of project implementation with local authorities, involvement of volunteers and IDPs in the activities of support providing, formation of temporary teams depending on the project needs, application of various methods of monitoring the needs of IDPs.

During its work, the Foundation noticed a number of problems that make it difficult to settle IDPs in local communities: perception of IDPs as a burden, inability to quickly respond to housing needs, differences in labor market offers and qualifications of IDPs, inactivity of older IDPs. The Foundation sees the following steps as important for overcoming these difficulties: changes in the perception of IDPs, emphasis on the ability to participate in community life, development of additional solutions in housing policy, creation of dialogue platforms for IDPs, residents, and local authorities.



## **The Coordination Centres: how the community administration provides support for IDPs** **Speaker: Vitalii Antonenko, Head of Bilokurakyne Village Military Administrations, Luhansk Region**

The territory of the Bilokurakyne community, like many Luhansk region communities, was occupied in March 2022 and the population was forced to move to safer regions. To provide support for displaced people Luhansk regional state administration started the creation of Coordination Centres for the assistance of IDPs in many Ukrainian regions. Bilokurakyne Village Military Administrations joined these activities and created the Centre in Zhytomyr. This city was chosen because a significant part of the population of the Bilokurakyne community and representatives of the community's authorities moved to the Zhytomyr region. The founding of such centres took place in cooperation with the regional state administration, the military administration of the regional communities, as well as the host communities.

In the Coordination Centre of the Bilokurakyne Military Administration displaced people from the Luhansk region can receive humanitarian assistance, social and psychological support, legal protection, and join cultural events. Help to support the Center's activities was sought from international organisations, local authorities, volunteers, and charitable foundations of Ukraine. The activities and coordination of the Centre involve residents of the Bilokurakyne community who moved to the Zhytomyr region.

The founders of the Centre regularly conduct surveys of IDPs in order to identify their needs, adapt assistance projects to these needs, and to plan further activities more effectively. The administration also actively informs citizens about the possibilities of receiving support, so that every IDP can see this information and get help. There is also active cooperation with local authorities of the Zhytomyr region, in particular in the development of solutions to provide IDPs with housing and search for employment opportunities.

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## **Second event**

**Long-term Strategies: How the Participation of Displaced People Can Succeed**  
Wednesday,

**Berlin's Integration and Migration Policy: Participation of Displaced People from Ukraine**  
**Speaker: Julia Portnowa, Officer for Participation at Berlin's Integration Commissioner Office in the Senate Department for Labor, Social Affairs, Equality, Integration, Diversity and Anti-discrimination**

The Berlin Senate Commissioner for Integration and Migration and her department deal with cross-departmental issues related to participation and integration in Berlin. Katarina Niewiedzial has been the Berlin Senate Commissioner for Integration and Migration since May 2019. The department is responsible for the shaping of the migration and integration policy of the Senate of Berlin and to coordinate with other administrations in the state of Berlin. Integration is a cross-sectional task, i.e., all



policy areas and thus all Senate administrations bear equal responsibility for this area. The Commissioner is responsible for steering Berlin's entire integration policy.

In general, the department of the Berlin Senate Commissioner for Integration and Migration tries to overcome the term “integration” which is often associated with assimilation and has a negative connotation. Instead, the department uses the term “participation”. They strive for a participatory approach to develop policies in cooperation with migrant representatives and migrant organisations as set down in the Participation Law (Partizipationsgesetz PartMigG). The goals of the Participation Law include the visibility and representation of people with a migration history in administration and their greater political participation. In general, the department advocates for the use of terms which are more inclusive such as migration history instead of migrants or migrant background. The term migration history means that people can have a history of migration and even being born in Germany but still are facing experiences of discrimination or exclusion because of their skin colour or appearance.

In cooperation with Ukrainian diaspora and refugee organisations the Berlin Senate Commissioner for Integration and Migration and her department aim to centre policies and regulations which directly affect displaced people from Ukraine around their needs. Ukrainians who arrived after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia face different challenges such as finding decent housing, access to education, and integration into the job market. In all these areas the department tries to support Ukrainians and to address these challenges in other departments of the Berlin Senate as well. A corner stone of Berlin’s Integration and Participation policy towards displaced people from Ukraine is the already mentioned so-called “Action Plan Ukraine” which covers all aspects of everyday life and was developed with intensive cooperation with the civil society and especially Ukrainian-led NGOs. Another central support instrument is project funding for organisations which support the participation and integration process of Ukrainians in Berlin. For this reason, the department has created the “Mij Berlin” fund. In order to allow direct and active political and social participation of migrants, Berlin has also reformed its Participation Law in 2021. The main important fields which are covered by the Participation Law can be found on the commissioner’s website in different languages: <https://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig/themen/partizipation-in-der-migrationsgesellschaft/#Materialien>

## **Challenges and Opportunities of Participation from the perspective of the Alliance for Ukrainian Organisations in Germany**

**Speaker: Nataliya Pryhornytska, Co-founder of the Alliance of Ukrainian Organisations**

The Alliance of Ukrainian Organizations is a coalition of Ukrainian civil society diaspora and non-governmental organisations. It was established after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. As an alliance it aims to speak with one voice to German politicians and decision-makers in order to guarantee meaningful participation of Ukrainians in the policymaking which directly affects them. The Alliance has 15 member organisations who are actively involved in humanitarian aid, youth support, political and advocacy work, and in the support of displaced people from Ukraine. All members of the alliance are volunteers. This means that it is often difficult to create sustainable structures and to fund different activities which are funded by temporary projects. The Alliance is also a member of the Berlin State Advisory Council for Participation which is a structure for the permanent exchange with the Berlin Senate on matters of participation and integration for migrants.

Nataliya Pryhornytska, who is the co-founder of the Alliance of Ukrainian Organizations, stressed that they also advocate for participation of people who might like to return to Ukraine after Ukraine’s victory in different networking and communication channels with policymakers. She believes it is important to give people who might only live temporarily in Germany the opportunity to shape their lives in



Germany and to stand up for their home country when dealing with German political representatives. Besides the Berlin level, the Alliance is also consulting ministries and advocates for people who remain in Ukraine during the Russian military invasion. For example, they were involved in the development of the platform for reconstruction of Ukraine, which is a major project of the German government for the cooperation of different stakeholders from Ukraine and Germany in the process of reconstruction. More information can be found on the Alliance's website: <https://ukr-alliance.de/en/>

## **IDP Councils in Ukraine: how to strengthen the voice of IDPs and to build the dialogue with local society**

**Speaker: Valeriia Vershinina, Director on Legal Affairs, CF "SSS"**

SSS has been supporting IDPs since 2014, when the first internally displaced persons appeared in Ukraine in the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This experience has helped in responding to the sharp increase in the number of IDPs in 2022, although many new challenges have emerged.

The SSS was working on the creation of the IDP Council concept before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. The main goal of such Councils is to involve IDPs in community life and in the development of their integration policy. The Councils also perform a number of other tasks: 1) trying to build a dialogue between IDPs and other groups in society in order to avoid conflicts and the spread of stereotypes, 2) working to increase awareness of the rights of IDPs, 3) promoting the personal and professional development of Council members.

There are three ways to join the activities of the IDP Council, depending on the situation in the community:

- 1) writing an application for joining if the recruitment of members is still ongoing
- 2) uniting with active IDPs to create a Council, if it has not yet been established in the community
- 3) if the recruitment of Council members has already ended, joining as an expert or guest.

The activities of the IDP Councils are coordinated by Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 812 dated August 4, 2023. However, the regulations on the activities of the Councils and their powers are currently being refined. Different dialogue platforms are being organised to develop the best solutions for the strategies of the Councils' activities. SSS also promotes interaction between IDP Councils of different communities, exchange of experience between them, training on attracting funding, strategic planning of activities.

## **The experience of creating the IDP Council in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine**

**Speaker: Anastasiya Perepelytsia, Member of the IDP Council of Zaporizhzhia**

The Council of Internally Displaced Persons under the Zaporizhzhia Mayor was established in 2019. The initiators were resettled women who lived in the city. At that time, it seemed that all humanitarian needs had already been met and people were adapting to living in a new place. However only basic needs were met, on the other hand, housing issues had no long-term solutions, and there were problems with voting rights.

The first step of the IDP Council's activity was an audit of local programs for the availability of state services and services for IDPs. Some programs were not available to IDPs due to lack of resident registration. Activities were also started to create new mechanisms for providing housing, issues of observing electoral rights were raised.

In the first year after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Council was mainly involved in humanitarian aid. In addition, there was a need to update the composition and focus of activities, because new IDPs appeared who had slightly different contexts and needs.

Life hacks for creating an effective IDP Council based on the experience of the IDP Council in Zaporizhzhia:

- 1) Have an intention, know why the Council is being created, and what it will do. Actively cooperate with local authorities and the community
- 2) Plan your activities and be active in making proposals, justify your proposals with facts and analytics
- 3) Maintain gender and age balance. Involve people with disabilities. This is necessary to ensure that the interests of all groups are represented.
- 4) Increase your capacity through training, exchange of experience
- 5) Understand that integration is a mutual process. That is why the interaction of both parties—the IDP and the host community—is needed. It is also important to maintain the understanding that not only IDPs have problems, but the local community also faces challenges, in particular due to the increase in population.