Polish Humanitarian Action

Best Practice Toolbox for Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration

IARI Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration
Fundacja EMIC
Red Nova Connecting Actions, Defending Rights
OPORA
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Best Practice Toolbox for Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration

Introduction

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine without a doubt has changed Europe. The old paradigms of safety and security were revisited and some of them tested – like the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). The initial humanitarian response was a test for civil society organisations, while the current situation is moving from humanitarian and development responses to the longterm processes of building social cohesion. Yet, those processes are hindered by systemic barriers and thus, people affected by the full-scale Russian invasion find themselves in the state of "protracted temporariness".

This is the reality in which four organisations: Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), RED Nova, Emic Foundation and OPORA Foundation have to operate and try to change, so that the quality of life of Displaced Persons from Ukraine (DPUs) is enhanced. As a Consortium working together under the project "Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration: Bridging Employability and Social Inclusion Through Mutual Exchange" (henceforth: IARI), we develop and test a set of practices aiming at enhancing the inclusion of DPUs in Polish and Italian societies.

The practices presented below, along with the tools developed for the continuation and piloting of interventions, aim at strengthening social and labour inclusion of displaced persons across different contexts. They were applied in a specific context – in the Piedmont region, Italy, and Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland, and for a specific demographic, focusing on people from Ukraine who came to Poland and Italy due to the full-scale invasion. However, the tools for community engagement, monitoring and organisational learning can be adjusted and applied across contexts. Along with the tools and short descriptions, we propose a set of exercises and examples of their use.

For whom is the Best Practice Toolbox? For everyone working with displaced persons, both staff of non-government organisations as well as public authorities. If you would like to learn more about how to meaningfully engage the people you assist in programme design or how to use the knowledge and data you collected as a by-product of the provision of assistance and aid. If you work on the front line – the toolbox presents tools and guidelines useful for assessing the needs of the people you help, structuring the data collection process and guiding you through the communication process, including its psychological burdens. If you work in the back office – the toolbox helps you design the programmes that are participatory and adaptable; it also helps you create a space where challenges can be addressed in a productive manner.

Let's start our journey through the Best Practice Toolbox by introducing the organisations and people involved in its creation. Secondly, we will briefly discuss the context and framework of our approach. Finally, we will discuss the practices along with the tools developed to enhance the support. In case of questions or feedback, please contact us at *social.inclusion@pah.org.pl*.

List of Acronyms

CHS
Core Humanitarian Standard

DPU
Displaced Person from Ukraine

IARI
Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration: Bridging Employability and Social Inclusion Through Mutual Exchange

OSS
One-Stop Shop

TPD
Temporary Protection Directive

Who are we

Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)

PAH leads the Consortium and brings over 30 years of experience in humanitarian and development response in various countries, including Poland and Ukraine. PAH operates across multiple contexts, with its expertise in Poland focusing on protection and livelihoods. PAH's programmes are anchored in the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), with particular attention to the meaningful participation of affected people. Since the outset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, PAH has supported DPUs with cash assistance and launched a Social Inclusion programme, supporting almost 500 people with housing assistance and integration support by providing access to language classes, vocational training and mental health support. Building on that experience, in the IARI project, PAH further developed the area of vocational training and employment-related courses so that DPUs have an opportunity to upskill or reskill and find employment aligned with their qualifications. PAH contributed its expertise and extensive experience in application monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning to the design of interventions.

RED Nova - Connecting Actions, Defending Rights (RED Nova)

RED Nova, a non-profit organisation operating primarily in the Piedmont region, but also in Liguria and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, supports people experiencing socio-economic, housing and health vulnerabilities. RED Nova's team delivers socio-legal and health assistance through the helpline and linguistic-cultural mediation. RED Nova brings its expertise in stakeholder mapping and engagement, as well as in working across different levels: bridging humanitarian and development response with advocacy efforts and collaboration with the public and private sectors. Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, RED Nova launched a helpline that quickly became a central response tool. Offering multilingual support, it has assisted more than 13,000 users. Initially, it focused on acute needs, such as information on accessing shelter. It progressively shifted to socio-legal and health aid, responding, among other things, to residence procedures. Within the IARI project, RED Nova broadened its assistance repertoire by expanding its helpline and mediation assistance to include job counselling and job-matching activities.

Emic Foundation (Emic)

Emic, a non-governmental organisation operating in Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship in Poland for over a decade, supports refugees and migrants to achieve self-sufficiency and integration. Emic brings experience in running a One-Stop Shop (OSS), where people in need can receive comprehensive assistance: among other things, consultations and support in accessing social services, job counselling and placement, and Polish language classes. In addition, mobile consultations are offered to vulnerable groups in remote locations, for example in the Centre for Foreigners in Grupa or in collective accommodation centres. Emic's OSS operates on a walk-in basis and functions as a comprehensive everyday problem-solving hub where people receive tailor-made assistance. Emic, as the largest NGO in the region and a highly experienced organisation, shares its expertise not only within the IARI project, but also with the National Integration Network. On top of that, within the IARI project, Emic advanced their language courses and consultations as well as broadened their offer to an online Entrepreneurship Academy where issues not only related to business but also to protection andlegal aspects are consulted to a wider audience.

OPORA Foundation (OPORA)

OPORA, a non-governmental organisation specialising in action research in the area of migration, brings to the Consortium its expertise in translating data into actionable recommendations. Based in the Netherlands, OPORA combines research with practical implementation, including initiatives such as Empatia, which focuses on improving access to mental health support for displaced Ukrainians. Within the IARI project, OPORA firstly assessed the current political frameworks in Poland and Italy that shape the lives of DPUs and significantly affect the operations of NGOs such as PAH, RED Nova and Emic. Secondly, OPORA focused on assessing the current needs of DPUs in Poland and in Italy. Both reports are available here and inform the evaluation and adjustment of the interventions conducted by the rest of the Consortium partners. Finally, OPORA built a format of mutual learning events and facilitated them so that partners could share their challenges and practices and discuss them.

Framing our approach

Our approach is embedded in the CHS and in the experience we have gathered implementing emergency and development projects. The affected population is at the centre of our interventions, thus, after the short-term interventions related to the emergency situation of DPUs, we saw the need to look for long-term solutions.

The IARI project is focused on piloting new interventions within the OSS model, in other words, the model where a person can receive comprehensive support and a scope of services during a single in-person visit. The services that are the centre of our work are related to accessing social and health services, legal support and inclusion on the labour market. Yet, the context in which we're operating, as well as the needs of the DPUs, shape our response.

According to the Needs Assessment report evaluating the situation of the DPUs in Poland and Italy (OPORA, 2026), the needs of the population are heavily gendered and this aspect is reflected in the markers and means of integration, i.e., core aspects of public life, such as employment, housing or health.

The majority of persons who left Ukraine after the full-scale Russian invasion are women, many of them with dependents, either children or elderly persons. Running single-headed households and securing the situation of the dependents through work is not only burdensome and stressful, leaving no space for self-development. On top of that, women with dependents are the ones feeling the most stress if the care infrastructure is not in place.

Another aspect is that while the employment rate among DPUs is high, they tend to be stuck in low-income jobs, very often below their qualifications, due to the language barrier. Yet, the opportunities to learn the majority language are limited due to the work and care work responsibilities. Additionally, this vicious circle is then emphasised with the housing situation. Low-income jobs affect the financial stability which translates into less stable housing opportunities. Language proficiency in Poland and Italy are one of the main barriers to finding better employment opportunities. However, the language teaching infrastructure is underdeveloped and the provision of language courses is delegated to the NGOs that depend on short-term projects and unstable funding.

All of the above aspects are embedded in the broader context: the war is still taking place in Ukraine, which puts additional stress on DPUs, yet, the legislation across Europe, tends to treat it as an economic migration. On top of that, protection-related uncertainty around the implementation and gradual phasing out of the TPD across the EU contributes to a situation that increasingly resembles protracted displacement and further destabilisation.

In such a context, the de facto implementation of integration support for DPUs is delegated to NGOs, such as RED Nova, Emic or PAH. The strength of our approach is that we don't divide the people's situations into sectors, such as housing, employment or education – we offer holistic and comprehensive support to the displaced persons.

Our experience shows that long-term solutions are possible and needed. We draw on our experience of operating across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors and working with different actors. We see that, while the emergency phase seems to be behind us, humanitarian response is still required, especially in relation to protection. At the same time, we focus on the development and social cohesion aspects of our interventions, supporting the social and labour inclusion of DPUs and strengthening their capacities and resilience. As humanitarian and development organisations, we aim to support DPUs and local communities and contribute to more just and sustainable inclusion practices and strategies. Therefore, through the proposed tools and approaches, we aim to support frontline workers and colleagues from other NGOs, as well as displaced communities, so that services and aid can better take their voices and needs into account.

Best practices and tools

How to design a participatory action aimed at social and labour inclusion? How to switch from an emergency response to a long-term one designed for development and social-cohesion? The presented tools and guidelines aim to help with four particular areas.

Feedback and accountability discusses how to meaningfully include affected persons' feedback and opinions, in our case, the opinions and feedback of DPUs, in the project design, planning and adjustments throughout the course of the intervention and – at the same time – remain accountable to the people we serve.

Scaling up and testing the approach tackles the aspect of testing new solutions and approaches and shows how to approach new activities, track progress and results, and then how to draw conclusions and inform future interventions.

Stakeholder engagement showcases the methods and tools that can be applied to, first, map and differentiate among stakeholders who are key actors in social and labour inclusion locally and/or nationally; and, second, to monitor the engagement of the stakeholders.

Learning and adaptation discusses the ways in which organisations can make sense of the knowledge gained and data collected through the ongoing and past interventions and activities.

The tools are designed to be transferable and easily adjustable to different contexts. They are presented in English, however, in practice, they were used in multiple languages, usually in a bilingual format combining Ukrainian and Polish or Ukrainian and Italian.

Feedback and accountability

People are at the centre of our interventions, and we are accountable to them first and foremost. However, translating such a statement into the project design and actual intervention is not that easy. Consulting every person who might be in need of our services is an impossible job to do, given the usually limited resources and the dynamics of the changing needs depending on context. However, there are ways to monitor clients' or project participants' views and opinions regarding the activities and to incorporate them into interventions. Here, we propose a checklist that allows us to design the services and programmes in a participatory manner, and in the next subsection, tools that help us involve people in our projects.

Participatory Design Checklist

1. Understand needs and context

- Go through the data collected in previous projects and interventions. It does not have to be limited to data from your client database, stored documents or client forms. It can also come from conversations with co-workers or from a team meeting. What trends do you see? What common issues emerge? Conversely, which issues appear only rarely?
- Consult people affected by the issue through your available networks. This can include people from self-advocacy groups, people using your services, or community leaders.
- Compare what you know with publicly available data. What do recent reports show, and what is the general public narrative? Does it converge or diverge from your own data?
- Based on previous programmes and interventions, group the needs. Differentiate between recurring needs, urgent needs, and needs linked to long-term processes.
- Look again at your data and check the demographics. Who uses your services, and do different groups experience different barriers? For example, single caregivers, youth, or people living in collective accommodation.
- Discuss new or changed assumptions and the conditions that need to be in place for the activity to be successful and/or scalable.

2. Set the target groups and check who is included and excluded

- Decide which needs, and whose needs, your intervention responds to.
- Define what success would look like for the activity. Where possible, consult these criteria with people using your services or with community representa-

tives, so that success is not defined only from the organisation's perspective.

- Check the accessibility and availability of the activity. Take into account different language levels, timing, mobility, care responsibilities, and who might be missing or excluded, and why.

- Assess how many people the activity can realistically reach. If your capacity is limited and a smaller group needs to be selected, make the selection criteria transparent from the beginning. For example, explain them in the application form, information materials or first communication with potential participants. After the selection, inform applicants about the result and, where possible, explain how they can ask for feedback or join a reserve list.

3. Consult affected population through ongoing monitoring

- During conversations with project participants, make sure they have all the necessary information about your programme and offer. Explain what you can provide and what is beyond your scope, so that expectations are clear.

- Decide what types of monitoring are feasible for the team. Ideally, participants should have more than one way to provide feedback, including anonymous feedback. For example, monthly surveys can be complemented by community interviews or focus group discussions.

- Make sure there is a safe and accessible way for participants to provide anonymous feedback or submit complaints.

  Make sure that the purpose of the intervention or specific activity is clear to participants, not only at the beginning. Maintain contact with people using your services on an ongoing basis.

- Close the loop: inform participants what happened with their feedback and how their opinions were processed.

- When working with a selected group of participants, conduct baseline and endline monitoring to track progress and changes in knowledge. This can be done through a short survey.

- When talking with participants, be prepared to provide psychological first aid. Sometimes conversations about one issue related to the programme can quickly turn into more complex situations. In group conversations, make sure the space remains safe: explain that the group is not the right place to discuss private or sensitive issues, and offer an individual follow-up channel instead.

- During contact with participants, make sure they know how to provide feedback or contact you if something does not work as expected. Reinforce this through emails or printed materials with the main information for project participants.

4. Adapt the activity accordingly

- Once feedback and opinions about the project have been collected, use them to check what worked well and what needs improvement. Meet as a team and decide what should be stopped, changed or improved. Document your thought process for future projects.

- Create space for people working on the project to share their experiences, exchange knowledge and brainstorm ideas. Look for solutions and ways to improve or redesign interventions.

Participatory Design Tools

This section presents tools that can be used to support participatory design, learning and adaptation. It begins with monthly surveys, then presents a baseline and endline monitoring survey, and closes with a feedback and accountability survey.

Monthly survey

We propose two versions of the monthly survey. The first one is shorter and focuses on a specific activity. Its length makes it more likely that people will complete and submit it; however, it will produce limited information about the activity.

Example questions for short survey related to labour inclusion activities:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you think [name of the service, for example info sessions, consultations, etc.] will help you find a job in the future?

1 ☐ Not at all
2 ☐ A little
3 ☐ Moderately
4 ☐ A lot
5 ☐ Very much
☐ I prefer not to answer

2. Please share your general feedback on the training. What did you like, and what could be improved?

....

....

....

[open-ended]

3. Would you recommend this activity to others?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Other answer: ....

The longer version can be used as a general survey within an OSS, as it covers broader aspects of inclusion. It can also be used for pilot activities when more specific information is needed. The survey is modular, so specific sections can be excluded, added or introduced in a different order.

The survey is modular, so specific sections can be excluded, added or introduced in a different order.

1. Basic information

1. Please select today's date:
[date]

2. What is your age?
[add age groups]

3. What is your gender?
☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ I prefer not to answer
☐ Other: ....

4. What is your nationality?
[open answer]

5. **How long have you been using our services?**
- ☐ 0–6 months
- ☐ 6–12 months
- ☐ 12–24 months
- ☐ More than 2 years

6. **Which activity or service did you participate in this month?**
- ☐ Legal/social consultation
- ☐ Help with documentation
- ☐ Job counselling
- ☐ Job search support
- ☐ [name of the country] language course
- ☐ Vocational training
- ☐ Entrepreneurship/business support
- ☐ Help with accommodation
- ☐ Mediation/accompaniment
- ☐ Other: ....

7. **Which channels of communication with our organisation do you use?**
- ☐ Website
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ Viber
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ In person
- ☐ Other: ....

2. Satisfaction with support this month

1. **On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the support you received this month?**
   1 means "not satisfied at all", 10 means "fully satisfied".

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. **What is the reason for your answer?:**
   [open answer]

3. **What would make your answer closer to 10?**
   [open answer]

4. **Were the activities helpful for your personal or professional development?**
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Partly
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

5. **If not, please explain why:**
   [open answer]

6. **What did you enjoy most this month?**
   [open answer]

3. Accessibility, clarity and communication

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how do you assess the clarity of the support offer?
1 means "not satisfied at all", 10 means "fully satisfied".

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

2. What would make the offer clearer for you?
[open answer]

3. Do you feel that the activities were well organised and accessible to you?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Partly
- ☐ No

4. If no or partly, please explain what could be improved:
[open answer]

5. On a scale from 1 to 10, how do you assess communication with our staff?
1 means "very poor", 10 means "excellent".

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

6. Did you feel respected and heard by the team?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Partly
- ☐ No

7. On a scale from 1 to 10, how comfortable did you feel while receiving support, for example during consultations or activities?
1 means "not comfortable at all", 10 means "fully comfortable".

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

4. Inclusion and everyday life

1. Do you feel more included in [name of the country] society compared to last month?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Partly
- ☐ No
- ☐ Hard to say

2. Have you made new social connections or friendships through the programme?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not yet

3. Have you used any public services this month, for example school, health care, job centre or social services?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. **How confident do you feel navigating life in [name of the country], for example language, transport, public services or documents?**
   1 means "not confident at all", 10 means "very confident".

   ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

5. Labour market and skills

1. **Do you feel your work-related skills have improved this month?**
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ Partly
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Not applicable

   If not, please explain why:
   [open answer]

2. **Have you applied for any jobs or attended any interviews recently?**
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Not applicable

3. **Do you feel more prepared for the labour market compared to last month?**
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ Partly
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Not applicable

4. **What kind of support would help you most in finding or keeping a job?**
   [open answer]

6. General opinion and future needs

1. **On a scale from 1 to 10, to what extent do you see our organisation as credible and trustworthy?**
   1 means "not credible at all", 10 means "fully credible".

   ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

2. **What are the main strengths of our organisation?**
   [open answer]

3. **What should we improve?**
   [open answer]

4. **What services or solutions are you missing?**
   [open answer]

5. **What kind of services or activities would you expect from us in the future?**
   [open answer]

6. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for next month's activities?
[open answer]

7. How likely are you to recommend our organisation or activities to others?
1 means "not likely at all", 10 means "very likely".

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

8. What is the reason for your answer?
[open answer]

9. What else would you like to share with us?
[open answer]

10. The survey is anonymous but you can share your name and contact data if you wish to be connected:
[open answer]

Baseline and endline monitoring

Baseline and endline monitoring are useful practices for tracking changes in participants' situations, as well as for assessing the effectiveness and impact of a project. They can be used, for example, to check whether participants' coping strategies have changed, or whether their confidence in navigating life in a new country has increased or decreased.

In its emergency programmes, PAH used baseline and endline monitoring to assess participants' ability to cover their basic needs. Within the IARI project, PAH, together with Emic Foundation, focused on participants' orientation towards the labour market. The surveys are not anonymous, as they are used to measure change among specific project participants. The example survey was prepared for the Polish context, but the name of the country can be changed depending on the country of implementation.

Name and surname:
[open answer]

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1. Which statement best describes an employment contract?
- ☐ A contract for a one-time task without social insurance.
- ☐ A standard employment contract that gives employee rights, such as paid leave and social insurance.
- ☐ A contract only for freelancers.
- ☐ A volunteering agreement.

2. Which statement best describes a service contract?

- ☐ A permanent employment contract with paid leave.
- ☐ A civil law contract often used for flexible or short-term work, with limited social protection.
- ☐ A contract only for public institutions.
- ☐ A contract that always guarantees paid leave.

3. Which documents are most often needed when applying for a job in [name of the country]? Select all correct answers.

- ☐ Passport.
- ☐ Residence permit.
- ☐ Birth certificate.
- ☐ School certificates or diplomas.
- ☐ Course completion certificates.
- ☐ CV.
- ☐ Motivation letter / cover letter, sometimes required.
- ☐ Medical certificate.
- ☐ Criminal record certificate.
- ☐ Reference letter.
- ☐ Passport-style photo.
- ☐ No documents are needed.

4. How confident do you feel about preparing or updating your CV for the labour market in [name of the country]?

1 means "not confident at all" and 5 means "very confident".

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5

5. How confident do you feel about looking for a job in [name of the country], including searching for vacancies, submitting applications and contacting employers?

1 means "not confident at all" and 5 means "very confident".

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5

Focus Group Discussions scripts

Focus group discussions can help understand clients experiences, opinions or recommendations in more depth than structured surveys. They are particularly useful for checking how services offered by OSS are delivered and experienced, what works well, what are the gaps, and what could be improved.

The discussions usually follow a semi-structured discussion guide, organised into thematic sections that gradually move from introductory questions to more in-depth reflections and conclude with recommendations for future improvements. Each discussion should ideally last 45–60 minutes and include 6–10 participants. A facilitator should encourage active participation from all group members, use follow-up questions where appropriate, and create a respectful environment that allows participants of the discussion to openly share their experiences and opinions.

The discussion guide presented below can be used to assess the accessibility, relevance, quality and perceived outcomes of one of the services provided within the IARI project, while also gathering feedback on accountability, participant engagement and opportunities for improvement. It can be adapted for different OSS activities.

Subject:
Assessing the relevance, quality, and short-term effects of vocational training

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Facilitator:
Date: ..../......./2026

Number of participants: ....
out of them:
women: ....
men: ....

Age group:
- ☐ 0-17
- ☐ 8-59
- ☐ 60+

Introduction (opening section):

Hello. My name is .... and I work for [organisation name]. I am conducting this focus group discussion to better understand the results of the project in which you were participating, and in particular, your perspective of the [name of the activity/service]. We would like to know your opinion on how the services were provided and if there is anything that should be improved. This information will help us to assess the effectiveness of this project and also improve the design of future projects.

The discussion will not take more than 45-60 minutes. The participation is voluntary and no remuneration is offered. If you do agree to take part, you can still refuse to answer any questions at any time. All information collected remains confidential and no names or personal data mentioned will be used externally. We encourage you to share your opinions openly and honestly, as there are no right or wrong answers. All discussions between the group members are welcomed. Notes will be made during FGD for our internal use.

Do you agree to participate?
All participants:
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Following the introduction and informed consent, the focus group discussion should continue with a series of open-ended questions organised into thematic sections. The exact questions will depend on the project activities; however, the discussion guide should generally cover the following themes:

1. Participant background and context to understand participants' characteristics and circumstances relevant to the project. This may include demographic information, previous experiences, current situation and needs before participation.

2. Awareness, access and participation to explore how participants learned about the project, their reasons for participating, the selection process and any barriers or facilitators to participation.

3. Experience with project implementation to understand how participants experienced the activities. This may include the quality of facilitation, relevance of the content, communication with project staff, organisation of activities and participant engagement.

4. Perceived outcomes and impact to understand what changes participants connect with the project. This may include changes in knowledge, skills, behaviour, confidence, wellbeing, livelihoods, employment or access to services.

5. Challenges and remaining needs to identify difficulties that participants continue to face despite taking part in the project.

6. Accountability and participant feedback to assess whether participants felt informed, respected and able to raise concerns or provide feedback.

7. Recommendations for improvement and future programming to gather participants' suggestions for strengthening the intervention and informing future projects. This may include recommendations on programme design, accessibility, content, duration, delivery methods or additional support services.

Accountability and Feedback Survey

General accountability surveys help organisations monitor activities, collect feedback from participants, and understand how the organisation and its support are perceived. They can be used to assess whether services are accessible, safe, relevant and respectful. The survey presented here includes questions related not only to the quality of services, but also to protection-relevant aspects, such as safety, respect, inclusion and the possibility to provide feedback or report problems. It is based on the survey implemented by RED Nova within the IARI project and follows the **protection indicator methodology** (*European Commission, 2021*).

1. **In your opinion, did the organisation's staff treat you with respect while providing assistance?**
   - ☐ Not at all
   - ☐ Not entirely
   - ☐ Mostly yes
   - ☐ Yes, completely
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ No answer

2. **Was it easy for you to contact and communicate with the helpline staff?**
   - ☐ Not at all
   - ☐ Not entirely
   - ☐ Mostly yes
   - ☐ Yes, completely
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ No answer

3. **Was the support provided useful in addressing your needs or problems?**
   - ☐ Not at all
   - ☐ Not entirely
   - ☐ Mostly yes
   - ☐ Yes, completely
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ No answer

4. **Are you satisfied with the support received?**
   - ☐ Not at all
   - ☐ Not entirely
   - ☐ Mostly yes
   - ☐ Yes, completely
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ No answer

5. **If you had any suggestions regarding the assistance provided, or if you encountered a problem while receiving it, do you think you could report this to the organisation's staff?**
   - ☐ Not at all
   - ☐ Not entirely
   - ☐ Mostly yes
   - ☐ Yes, completely
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ No answer

6. **Would you recommend this assistance service to other people who may need similar support?**
   - ☐ Not at all
   - ☐ Not entirely
   - ☐ Mostly yes
   - ☐ Yes, completely
   - ☐ I don't know
   - ☐ No answer

7. Did you feel safe throughout the whole period of receiving assistance?

- Not at all
- Not entirely
- Mostly yes
- Yes, completely
- I don't know
- No answer

8. Were your views taken into account?

- Not at all
- Not entirely
- Mostly yes
- Yes, completely
- I don't know
- No answer

9. Do you know of any people who needed assistance but were excluded, meaning they did not receive it??

- Not at all
- Not entirely
- Mostly yes
- Yes, completely
- I don't know
- No answer

Scaling up and testing the approach

New interventions require courage, but they also need preparation and practical tools. In IARI, we piloted several interventions aimed at strengthening the OSS models run by Emic and RED Nova. Building on experience from ongoing activities, we tested new approaches and engagement pathways. This section starts with a form for the initial interview with a client and then moves to a tool for structuring the case management process. It closes with a proposed pathway for piloting new activities with a smaller target group.

Initial Interview with a Client and Priorities Form

How can we assess people's needs, identify their priorities and structure an action plan? When a person comes to an OSS, they may bring different experiences, needs and expectations. The issue they raise first is often not the only area where support may be useful. For this reason, a form that helps understand the person's situation and define priorities can be a valuable tool. A form may be also used to structure the conversation with the client.

1. Basic information

- Name and surname: ______
- Date of the meeting: ______
- Staff member / advisor conducting the interview: ______
- Citizenship / nationality: ______
- Date of arrival in the country: ______
- Contact details: phone, email, WhatsApp or other preferred channel: ______
- Preferred language of communication: ______

2. Household and living situation

- Family members / household members, if relevant: ______
- Current place of residence: ______
- Is the person living in private accommodation, collective accommodation, reception centre, temporary housing or another place? ______
- Are there any urgent housing-related needs? ______

3. Legal and administrative situation

- Current legal status / residence situation: ______
- Are there any ongoing administrative procedures? ______
- Does the person need support with documents, applications or contact with public institutions? ______
- Does the person plan to stay in the country? If yes, where would they like to live? ______

4. Current social and financial situation

- Main sources of income or support: ______
- Current financial challenges: ______
- Access to public services, such as health care, school, social services or employment office: ______
- Main urgent needs reported by the participant: ______

5. Education, skills and qualifications

- Formal education: ______
- Informal education: ______
- Courses, training, certificates or licences: ______
- Language skills: ______
- Computer and digital skills: ______
- Qualifications that may need recognition or translation: ______

6. Professional experience and preferences

- Previous work experience: ______
- Current employment situation: ______
- Sectors or positions the person is interested in: ______
- Preferred location of work: ______
- Availability for work or training: ______
- Any limitations related to timing, care responsibilities, mobility, health or language: ______

How OSS are operating in practice: prioritisation and action plan

Once needs and priorities have been assessed, it is useful to look at how an OSS operates in practice, how it provides comprehensive support, and how case management can be structured.

Let's start with the case of a family who learned about the foundation running the OSS through social media. A family of six comes to the office or contacts the helpline. During the interview, you learn that they have just arrived in the country.

Weronika is a mother of three children. She arrived together with her mother-in-law, Kateryna, who is 68 and receives a pension. Weronika's oldest daughter, Anna, is 12 and has been diagnosed with an intellectual disability. Her second child is eight, and her youngest child is nine months old. Weronika's family situation is complex and may feel overwhelming at first. However, the case can be structured by identifying the available services and sequencing them over time.

Let's think about the services an OSS can provide in response to Weronika's situation. The family needs legal support and housing assistance. The children need to be enrolled in school. Weronika and her mother-in-law need information about available health care and social services. In addition, although Weronika is currently on maternity leave, some aspects of social and labour inclusion can already be considered.

Service Repertoire

Legal support

- Protection status and options of legalization of stay.
- Assistance with the documentation.
- Additional info on rights and obligation.
- Mediation and translation support.

Housing

- Support in searching of the apartment.
- Support in searching of temporary accommodation.
- Info regarding housing benefits.
- Support in communication when renting the apartment.

Access to Social Services

- Orientation and info on navigating public social services.
- Pension support.
- Support in social insurance systems.
- Support in application for children benefits.

Education

- Support in enrolling children at school.
- Enrollment into Polish language courses.
- Information about childcare options.
- Mediation and translation support.

Employment

- Enrollment in language of the country of current residence courses.
- Local job market orientation.
- Job counseling and job search assistance.
- Business set-up guidance.

Healthcare

- Referrals to the specialists.
- Orientation in healthcare system in Poland.
- Assessment of the disabilities.
- Assistance in doctor registration.
- Mediation and translation support.

The list of the possible assistance is not exhaustive. However such a list helps define the services that should be priorities and potential challenges. The following timeline serves to structure the assistance so that family and case manager can plan for the future.

Timeline

The timeline can be more detailed and divided even into days, depending on the context.

Service Activation Timeline: Coordinated Deployment

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2–4	WEEK 5–8	WEEK 9–12
LEGAL SUPPORT				
HOUSING				
SOCIAL BENEFITS				
EDUCATION				
EMPLOYMENT				
HEALTHCARE				

Client engagement pathways

Let's now have a look at the ways to test new approaches based on data collected through feedback, ongoing conversations with clients, and external data analysed. Our goal was to test new approaches for labour inclusion based on the previous activities.

Example 1:

Piloting new approaches for up- and reskilling

Since 2023, PAH has offered courses and training for displaced people to support their access to employment in Poland. In the first phase, many participants chose short vocational courses, such as driving licence or forklift training. These courses often helped participants find work quickly. However, in practice, some found work through digital platforms, especially in taxi and delivery services. These solutions responded to immediate income needs, but were mostly short-term and not sustainable.

Learning from the emergency phase, PAH recognised that long-term and safe employment required a different approach to courses and training. We reviewed the data collected through previous activities, compared it with recent reports on employment trends and labour shortages, and took into account participants' demographic profiles and specific needs. For example, single caregivers may have limited availability to attend training and may later look for work with flexible hours.

Based on this analysis, PAH focused on courses that could support both access to employment and longer-term self-reliance. These included courses in the beauty sector, which can offer additional income and flexible working arrangements, especially for women; online bookkeeping and accounting courses, responding to identified labour shortages; and training related to the care of older persons and people with disabilities. Shortages were also observed in selected technical professions and in pedagogical work, such as nursery education.

Piloting services: client engagement pathway from application to post-implementation monitoring

1. Think about the selection criteria: what will be assessed in practice, for whom the activity is especially important, and for whom it has the highest chance of improving the situation. Decide what the minimum criteria are and what additional qualitative criteria should be considered.

2. Think about the selection process: will it be based on a scoring system, qualitative responses, or a mixed approach? In PAH's and Emic's case, participants' motivation and readiness were especially important.

3. Set up a selection committee: identify people who can discuss and evaluate the application forms. The committee can include project staff, technical or themat-

ic specialists, and, where appropriate, a community representative or another person with relevant lived experience. Their role should be clear, and the process should avoid conflicts of interest. Ideally, prepare short terms of reference for the committee.

4. Prepare the application form. It should be accessible, but at the same time it should serve its purpose: to identify the group most suited to the pilot. Test the application form before dissemination.

5. Publish and disseminate the application form through your communication channels, such as a website, mailing list or group chats. Recruitment can be open to the wider public or targeted at people already using your services.

6. Prepare a management file based on the application form results, which will help you discuss and evaluate the applications.

7. Organise a committee meeting to assess the applications.

8. During the first assessment session, check whether the evaluation system works and which factors are most relevant for selection once the applications are reviewed.

9. After the selection, prepare a list of eligible applicants, a reserve list and a list of applicants who were not selected. Inform selected applicants, people on the reserve list and those not selected about the results. Explain how they can contact your organisation for feedback.

10. Prepare the terms and conditions for participation in the piloted activity, so that participants have a clear point of reference throughout the process.

11. Set up individual meetings with the selected project participants. During these meetings, share the terms and conditions, explain the process, and explain how participants can contact you or submit feedback.

12. Conduct baseline monitoring during the meeting.

13. Once a person is participating in a service, such as a language course, vocational training or another activity, keep in touch with them through monthly surveys and regular contact by SMS or phone. To track communication, you can prepare a communication log.

14. Collect feedback through different methods, such as surveys, interviews and focus group discussions.

15. After the completion of the activity, conduct endline monitoring.

16. Evaluate the impact of the activity. Think about the initial assumptions and the final results and decide what needs to be adjusted.

Application form - template

The application form can be adjusted to the needs, in our case – it was used for the piloting activities aimed at labour inclusion, specifically for vocational courses for Elderly and People with Disabilities Carers, hence the focus is on the professional background and motivation. The form can be published in the most convenient way such as Google or Microsoft forms or KOBO.

Introduction:

Example: Polish Humanitarian Action and Emic Foundation invite you to attend free, professional vocational training courses that will enable you to acquire the practical skills needed to work as a carer for older people and people with disabilities. The course sessions will take place in Bydgoszcz. The course begins in spring 2026. The number of places is limited, participants will be selected based on the form. After that PAH employee will contact you and inform you about the results most probably though SMS.

Section 1: Personal information

Please provide the following information:

1. Name: ____________________
2. Surname: ____________________
3. Telephone number: ____________________
4. Email address: ____________________
5. Gender: ____________________
6. Age: ____________________
7. Type of residence permit: ____________________

8. If you are selected – are you ready to meet us in person to go through the terms and conditions of participation in the programme?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

9. Do you have any additional needs that should be taken into account? What kind of needs (for example care responsibilities, single parenthood). ____________________

Section 2: Background and skills

In this section we ask about your experience and background.

10. Do you know the language of a country of current residence at least at A2 level?
- Yes
- No

11. Do you currently attend the local language course? If yes, at what level
- Currently, I attend a language course at A1 level.
- Currently, I attend a language course at A2 level or higher.
- Currently, I do not attend a language course.

12. What is your highest level of education?
- Primary
- Secondary
- Technical/vocational
- Higher
- I prefer not to answer

13. In what field did you receive your education? ______________________

14. What is your profession? ______________________

15. What was your professional experience in Ukraine? ______________________

16. What is your professional experience in the country of current residence?

17. Did you find it difficult to continue practising your profession in Poland? If so, what exactly were the difficulties (e.g. language barriers, challenges with diploma or qualification recognition) ______________________

18. Are you currently working?
- Yes
- No

19. Is your education related to the offered course?
- Yes
- No

Management file – template for the selection committee

The most practical approach is to connect the management file directly with the registration form, for example through Excel or another spreadsheet tool. This allows the Selection Committee to review the relevant responses during the meeting and discuss them in a structured way.

In our case, we combined a scoring approach with a more qualitative assessment. This allowed us not only to assign points to the candidates, but also to compare each response with the overall pool of applications. We also applied minimum eligibility criteria. For example, participants had to be over 18 years old and reside in the country as a result of the full-scale invasion. If these conditions were not met, the application was automatically rejected.

Since the courses were delivered in Polish, basic proficiency in Polish was also required. We prioritised applications in which respondents clearly explained their motivation, their plans for reskilling or upskilling, and how they intended to use the course in the future.

The responses presented in the template are not real applications. They are fictional examples based on common issues that emerged during the selection process.

Question/Committee score	Application 1	Application 2
Name	Kateryna	Olena
Surname	Bondarenko	Melnyk
Telephone number	000 000 004	000 000 001
E-mail address	kateryna.bondarenko@example.com	olena.melnyk@example.com
Gender	Female	Female
Age	47	34
Type of residence permit	Temporary residence card	Temporary protection
If you are selected – are you ready to meet us in person to go through the terms and conditions of participation in the programme?	Yes	Yes
Do you have any additional needs that should be taken into account? What kind of needs (for example care responsibilities, single parenthood).	Single parenthood; needs afternoon or weekend classes due to childcare responsibilities	No
Do you know the language of a country of current residence at least at A2 level?	Yes	No
Committee score	1	0

Do you currently attend the local language course? If yes, at what level	Currently attending Polish at B1 level	Currently, I do not attend a language course
Committee score	1	0
What is your highest level of education?	Secondary	Higher education
In what field did you receive your education?	General education	Economics
What is your profession?	Caregiver	Accountant
What is your professional experience in Ukraine?	Provided informal care for older family members in Ukraine	Worked as an accountant in Ukraine
What is your professional experience in the country of current residence?	No formal work experience in Poland	No experience in Poland
Did you find it difficult to continue practising your profession in Poland? If so, what exactly were the difficulties (e.g. language barriers, challenges with diploma or qualification recognition)	Yes. Language barrier and lack of formal certificates made it difficult to find stable work	Yes. I do not speak Polish well
Are you currently working?	No	No
Is your education related to the offered course?	No	No
Is your experience related to the offered course?	Yes	No
Could you explain why you would like to take part in the course? Please be specific.	I would like to take part in the course because I have experience caring for older family members, but I need formal skills and a certificate to work legally in Poland.	I want to take part because I need any course and maybe it will help me.
Committee score	1	1
Do you have an idea what you would like to do professionally after completing the course? Please explain.	After completing the course, I would like to look for work as a carer for older people or people with disabilities.	I do not know yet. Maybe I will look for a job or maybe another course.
Committee score	1	0
Do you have an idea where you would like to work and in what position? Please be specific.	Home care or care institution, preferably part-time at the beginning	I do not know. Any job is okay.
Committee score	1	0

Score overall	5	1
Result	Application accepted	Reserve list - contact applicant and discuss the enrollment in the language course first

In the first application, the applicant's language proficiency allows them to participate in the course, and their motivation is clearly stated. In the second application, the score is lower due to the lack of specificity in the applicant's motivation and language proficiency. In this case, the minimum criteria were met, so the applicant was placed on the reserve list and advised to enrol in language classes.

Example 2:

Entrepreneurship Academy – scaling up engagement in a participatory way

The Entrepreneurship Academy was a new initiative for the Emic Foundation. It was developed in response to the growing interest in self-employment and business activity among displaced people from Ukraine living in Poland.

One of the main challenges of this activity was to deliver the programme nationwide and fully online, without face-to-face contact with participants. At the same time, the team wanted to keep the programme participatory and responsive to the actual needs.

Several measures helped make this possible:

1. Participants could suggest training topics already at the application stage. This helped ensure that the programme reflected their needs, questions and expectations.
2. The training agenda was adapted during implementation. New topics were added when legal, administrative or business-related changes in the country affected participants' situations.
3. Each training session included time for questions and answers, as well as discussion of individual cases. The Q&A sessions usually lasted 15–30 minutes, but sometimes continued longer because of participants' high engagement.
4. A dedicated online community was created through social media group chat for programme participants. It was used to share information about upcoming sessions, answer follow-up questions and allow participants to exchange experiences.

5. All training sessions were recorded and shared with participants who could not attend live. This helped keep the programme accessible for people with work, care or other responsibilities.

Based on that experience, we developed a short checklist to help ensure that engagement is maintained even in online activities, and that people have a meaningful way to participate in the programme design.

Community engagement checklist

- Have participants been asked what topics or questions they want the activity to address?
- Does each activity include space for questions, discussion and real-life cases?
- Is there an accessible communication channel between sessions where participants can ask follow-up questions or exchange experiences?
- Can the agenda be adjusted when new needs, repeated questions or urgent topics emerge?
- Are participants who cannot attend live still able to access the key information?

Example 3:

Linking the monitoring with adaptation to the professional lives of the clients

So far, we have discussed participatory design, comprehensive support in the OSS model, and the need to adapt services to a changing context. Let's now look at another example from Emic's OSS, which shows how services can be adjusted to the changing needs and priorities of people using them.

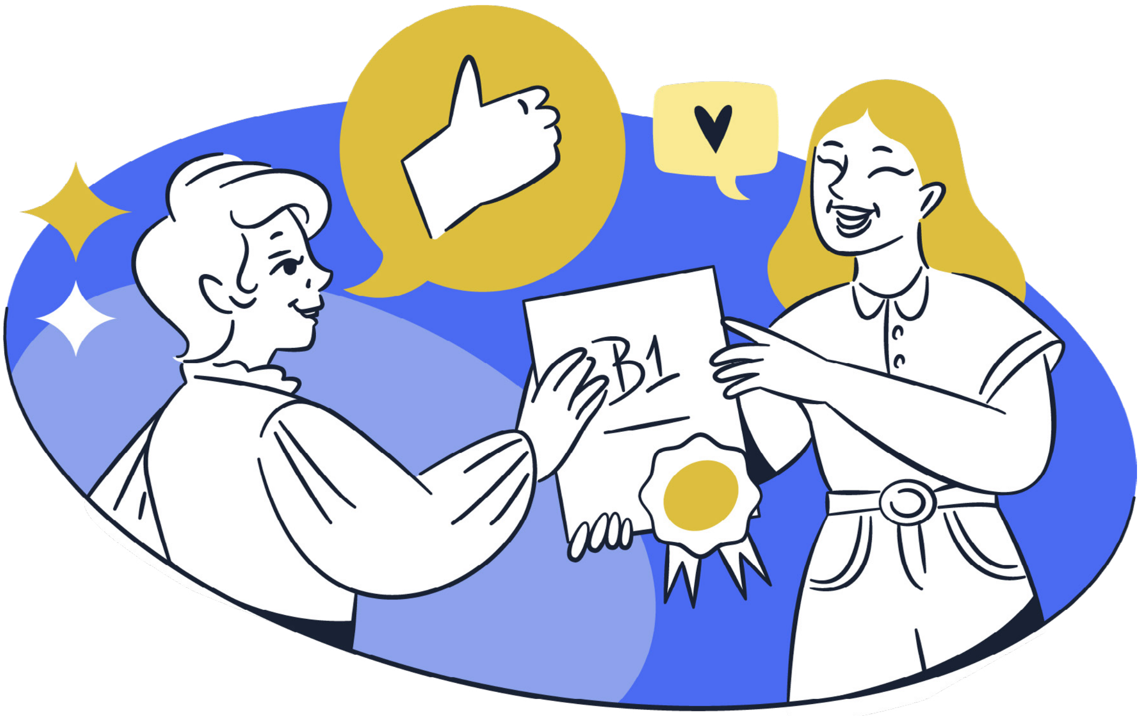
Emic has offered Polish language courses almost from the beginning of its work with people with migration or refugee experience. Over time, Emic has developed a flexible model in which participants can choose the level of the course, from A1 to B2, the preferred days and hours, as well as the format: online or in person.

A key lesson from Emic's experience is that language support should be adjusted not only to the declared language level, but also to the changing context affecting people's professional needs. During the IARI project, people using Emic's OSS services increasingly raised the need to prepare for the state-certified Polish language exam at B1 level. For some participants, the certificate was directly linked to keeping or accessing employment, for example in schools as intercultural assistants or psychological support staff.

One participant supported by the Foundation started working in an elementary school as a psychological support specialist in 2023. At the time, a certificate confirming completion of a B1-level course at the Foundation was sufficient. Later, due to changed requirements, she needed a state-issued Polish language certificate to continue working. Similar cases showed that language learning was closely connected with job security, professional continuity and long-term inclusion.

In response, Emic adapted its offer and launched Polish language courses that prepare participants for the B1 certification exam, both online and in person. The Foundation also supported participants with exam registration, drawing on its cooperation with the testing centre in Toruń.

The same participatory logic was applied to the up- and reskilling activities co-organised with PAH. Since language skills are closely linked to employment, Emic organised Polish language courses for participants of vocational training coordinated by PAH focusing on specific technical language necessary for the profession. This allowed participants to strengthen the sector-specific language they needed for the course and for future work.



Example 4:

Remote OSS and labour inclusion

Right from the start of the IARI project, it was clear that meaningful integration had to go much deeper than immediate emergency response. This realisation drove a natural, learning-led evolution for RED Nova's Helpline, as it shifted from providing basic social, legal, and general orientation to actively delivering targeted labour market integration and employer matching.

The service was initially set up as a multilingual safety net to help newcomers navigate local public services, legal frameworks, and immediate social needs in Italy. However, through practical tools like direct surveys and peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges, the project gathered critical insights into the real-world challenges facing displaced people from Ukraine in Piedmont, particularly widespread underemployment and deep skills mismatches.

Armed with this first-hand learning, the Helpline qualitatively scaled up its capabilities to bridge the gap between initial survival and true economic self-sufficiency. Today, the service pairs a dignified, holistic approach to skills profiling with specialized labour orientation. Instead of just routing individuals toward reskilling opportunities, it proactively collaborates with local corporate networks like the Unione Industriali and individual employers to facilitate direct job matching.

Ultimately, this structural evolution shows how a service entry point built on initial safety and trust can dynamically expand its scope based on experience, ensuring that newcomers aren't just guided through their first steps in a new country, but are genuinely empowered to reclaim their professional agency and thrive in the workforce.

Stakeholder engagement

Social and labour inclusion of displaced persons cannot be achieved by a single organisation acting alone. Civil society organisations often provide direct support to displaced populations, but long-term inclusion depends on the coordinated involvement of multiple actors, including public institutions, employers, community organisations, media, and people affected by displacement themselves.

Searching for long-term solutions leads to more complex services and pathways to inclusion. It requires cooperation between different actors, and organisations increasingly need to build sustainable partnerships beyond humanitarian assistance. Without such a network, organisations may duplicate services, create fragmented support pathways, miss employment opportunities, or struggle to continue activities once project funding ends.

Therefore, stakeholder engagement becomes a key component of programme design and implementation. In practice, good stakeholder engagement can support several aspects of inclusion work:

1. Mapping existing initiatives and exchanging information can help prevent duplication of services.
2. Establishing clear referral mechanisms and defining roles can reduce fragmented support pathways.
3. Engaging employers, employment services and training providers early can increase access to employment opportunities.
4. Engaging policymakers throughout the project can strengthen policy uptake and help align activities with local and regional priorities.
5. Organising regular coordination meetings and joint planning sessions can improve coordination among local actors.
6. Involving communities and institutions in decision-making can strengthen ownership of interventions.

Building local capacity and embedding successful practices into existing services can support sustainability beyond project funding.

Within the IARI project, stakeholder engagement was used as a practical mechanism for strengthening inclusion pathways for DPUs. Within the IARI project, the experience showed that meaningful stakeholder engagement needs a structured but practical process:

- mapping stakeholders;
- prioritising and categorising stakeholders;
- planning engagement activities;
- monitoring stakeholder engagement over time.

The approach aims to create opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, mutual learning, and co-creation. The practice works because inclusion is inherently multi-sectoral: employment support requires employers, access to services requires cooperation with public authorities, social inclusion often depends on community organisations and informal networks, policy change requires engagement with decision-makers. Effective stakeholder engagement creates bridges between these actors and allows organisations to move beyond isolated service delivery. However, several conditions are important:

- clear objectives for engagement;
- dedicated staff capacity;
- consistent communication;
- realistic expectations regarding partnerships;
- understanding stakeholders' motivations and interests;
- regular monitoring and follow-up.

Stakeholder engagement should not be understood as a one-time activity. Relationships require maintenance and follow-up. For this reason, we propose a practical step-by-step guideline that can be used during team meetings and project updates. The guideline is accompanied by the following tools: a stakeholder mapping matrix and tracker, a tool for defining engagement objectives and tracking stakeholder engagement, and a stakeholder engagement form to collect contacts.

Stakeholder Engagement Guideline

Step 1.

Stakeholder Mapping

The first step is identifying who influences, contributes to, or is affected by the intervention. In IARI, stakeholders were grouped into five broad categories:

1. **Displaced Persons and Beneficiaries**
The primary stakeholders of the intervention.

Examples:

- displaced Persons from Ukraine;
- clients;
- community leaders;
- informal support networks.

2 **Public Institutions and Policymakers**
Actors responsible for creating enabling conditions for inclusion.
Examples:

- municipalities;
- regional authorities;
- employment offices;
- educational institutions;
- social welfare departments;
- national ministries.

3 **Employers and Business Networks**
Actors that create employment opportunities.
Examples:

- local companies;
- chambers of commerce;
- employers' associations;
- human resources networks;
- social enterprises.

4 **Civil Society Organisations**
Actors providing complementary services and expertise.
Examples:

- refugee-led organisations;
- migrant associations;
- humanitarian and development organisations;
- community groups;
- volunteer networks.

5 **Media and General Public**
Actors shaping public perception and narratives around migration and inclusion.
Examples:

- local media;
- national media;
- online media;
- influencers;
- local communities.

Step 2.

Define the Engagement Objective

Not all stakeholders require the same type of engagement.
Before contacting a stakeholder, ask: Why do we want to engage this stakeholder?
Possible objectives include:

- participatory design of the intervention;
- information sharing;
- service referrals;
- joint implementation;
- policy influence;
- knowledge exchange;
- participant recruitment;
- advocacy;
- sustainability planning.

One lesson learned from IARI was that engagement efforts are significantly more successful when the expected value proposition is clearly articulated. For instance, several stakeholders expressed interest in the project but were uncertain about what exactly was being requested from them. This was particularly visible during the testing of an online stakeholder engagement form. While the form generated initial interest, conversion into active collaboration remained limited because the proposed forms of involvement were not always sufficiently concrete.

For example, a general invitation to "join our network" was less effective than specific requests such as offering a three-month internship for two displaced persons, participating in a mentoring programme, or hosting a workplace visit. Clearly defined opportunities make it easier for stakeholders to understand how they can contribute and to commit to meaningful engagement.

The lesson learned is simple: Stakeholders need a clear answer to the question: **"What are you asking from me, and what do I gain from participating?"**

Step 3.

Select Engagement Methods

Different stakeholders require different communication channels and approaches.

Target	Objectives	Possible methods	Key lesson
Displaced Persons	• participation; • feedback collection; • community ownership.	• information sessions; • webinars; • focus group discussions; • surveys; • social media groups; • OSS communication channels, such as social media group chats (Telegram, Viber, WhatsApp).	People engage more actively when communication is practical, accessible, multilingual, and delivered through trusted intermediaries.
Public Authorities	• policy dialogue; • referrals; • coordination; • sustainability.	• bilateral meetings; • policy briefs; • newsletters; • roundtables; • participation in public • consultations.	Institutional stakeholders respond better to evidence-based communication linked to existing policy priorities.
Employers	• employment opportunities; • internships; • mentoring; • workplace inclusion.	• networking events; • business breakfasts; • LinkedIn campaigns; • employer roundtables; • direct outreach.	Employers are more likely to engage when communication focuses on practical benefits rather than humanitarian narratives alone.
Civil Society Organisations	• referrals; • knowledge exchange; • joint programming; • mutual learning.	• thematic workshops; • webinars; • networking events; • mailing lists; • communities of practice.	Partnerships become stronger when organisations exchange practical tools and lessons learned rather than only project updates.

Media and General Public	• awareness raising; • combating stereotypes; • dissemination.	• press releases; • success stories; • social media campaigns; • interviews; • public events.	Human-centred stories are often more effective than statistics in generating engagement and public interest.

Step 4.

Monitor Engagement

Stakeholder engagement should be monitored in the same way as project activities. Within IARI, partners developed a stakeholder monitoring database to track relationships over time.

When using a stakeholder mapping tool, organisations should ensure full compliance with applicable data protection legislation, including the GDPR. Personal data should be collected only when necessary, stored securely, accessed only by authorised staff, and processed for clearly defined purposes. Where information is shared across project partners, data ownership, access rights and responsibilities for data management should be agreed in advance and documented in accordance with the project's data management and privacy procedures.

The monitoring file made it possible to:

- avoid duplication of contacts;
- track stakeholder journeys;
- identify inactive relationships;
- coordinate engagement across project partners.

The aforementioned steps can be realised through the following mapping tool and engagement tracker.

Stakeholder Mapping Tool and Engagement Tracker

Name	Write the name of the institution, organisation, company or informal group.	Municipal Labour Office
Sector	Select: ☑ public institution ☐ private sector ☐ civil society organisation ☐ community group ☐ media ☐ other	
Contact Person	Name and role of the contact person	Career counselling / employer cooperation department
Mail	Email address	contact@example.org
Phone number	Phone number	000 000 000
Location	City/region/country	Warsaw
Engagement priority	Select: ☐ Low ☐ Mediun ☑ High	
General objectives	Select: ☐ Advocacy ☑ Institutional support ☐ Communiation & Visibility ☐ Joint initiaties ☐ Employment opportunities, etc	Institutional support; referrals; employment opportunities
Specific objectives	Write what you would like to achieve through this contact, for example: joint event, participation in meetings, referral pathway, internship offer, policy dialogue.	Establish cooperation around referral pathways, labour market information and possible job-matching support for displaced persons.
Expected Outcome	Write the expected result of the contact, for example: contact established and maintained, memorandum of understanding, participation in an event, referral mechanism, cooperation on activity.	Contact established and maintained; regular information exchange; participants referred to relevant labour market services; possible joint information session organised.
Progress - to be updated monthly	Select: ☑ active follow-up ☐ contact maintained ☐ no response	
Website		ExampleWebsite.org

Step 5.

Diversify Stakeholder Engagement Channels

Within IARI, we also developed an online stakeholder registration form to complement direct outreach activities and create an additional channel for engagement. The form was disseminated through LinkedIn and made available via the project landing page, allowing organisations and individuals to express their interest in the project regardless of their geographical location or previous connection with project partners. The objective was to broaden the stakeholder network and facilitate participation by offering a simple and accessible way to engage with the project.

Through the form, stakeholders were invited to connect and collaborate with organisations across sectors, contribute to practical solutions supporting the employability and social inclusion of DPUs, gain visibility through project communication activities and events, and participate in shaping interventions such as training opportunities, internships, and policy initiatives. The tool proved useful for identifying organisations interested in the project's themes and for collecting contact information in a structured manner.

However, the experience also highlighted an important lesson for future initiatives: while stakeholders expressed interest in the project objectives, the proposed forms of engagement were not always sufficiently concrete or immediate. As a result, registration through the form did not automatically translate into active participation. This demonstrated the importance of clearly communicating not only the goals of a project but also the specific actions expected from stakeholders, the level of commitment required, and the potential benefits of their involvement. Future stakeholder engagement forms should therefore include more explicit collaboration options and clearly defined pathways for participation.

Stakeholders Registration Form

Thank you for your interest in engaging with the **Innovative Approaches to Refugee Integration (IARI) project**: *Bridging Employability and Social Inclusion Through Mutual Exchange.*

IARI aims to improve the social and labour market inclusion of **displaced people from Ukraine (DPU)** in Poland and Italy. By joining the stakeholder network, you can:

- Connect and collaborate with organisations across sectors
- Contribute to practical solutions for DPU employability and integration
- Gain visibility through project communications and events
- Influence and shape interventions such as training, internships, and policy initiatives

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Please complete the form below to register as a stakeholder and indicate your areas of interest.

1. **Organisation name:** ____________________

2. **Sector:**
   - ☐ Private sector
   - ☐ Public sector
   - ☐ NGO/Civil society
   - ☐ Advocacy platform
   - ☐ Other
3. **Website:**
4. **Country:**
5. **Contact person name:**
6. **Position/Role:**
7. **Email:**
8. **Phone number:**
9. **Preferred way of contact:**
10. **Email**
11. **Phone call**

Example 5:

Building the connection with Unione Industriali Torino

How did engagement work in practice? In Italy, RED Nova recognised from the very beginning that sustainable labour market integration for displaced people requires moving beyond purely humanitarian narratives to engage the private sector as a co-design partner. Already at the project proposal stage, RED Nova initiated a strategic dialogue with Unione Industriali Torino, the main association representing major businesses in the Piedmont region. By involving this critical stakeholder before the project was even funded, RED Nova was able to align the project's objectives directly with the concrete recruitment needs of local industries. This early engagement transformed Unione Industriali from passive external observers into active institutional allies who understood the mutual value proposition: bridging the gap between displaced beneficiaries seeking work and local enterprises facing labour shortages. This foundational partnership proved that involving employers' networks both at the design phase and when implementation begins is essential for reaching the targets and expanding the project's reach.

Learning and adaptation

Continuous learning, based on the ongoing interventions, and then adapting the activities accordingly, are something that we approached very seriously within the IARI project. They require time for reflection and discussion, and, as we know, time is a limited resource, especially in the context of aid provision, where there is always something more urgent.

However, when moving from humanitarian aid provision through development and peace-building, it is necessary to dedicate the time to strategic meetings, draw conclusions and see what actions should be continued, what shouldn't and what should be improved. On top of that, since the affected population is at the centre of the activities, it's a good practice to evaluate whether the activities included vulnerable groups.

The aspect of mutual learning is especially of value and stakeholders can be engaged in this activity. It can be conducted in the form of a focus group discussion or through the mutual learning sessions with partners from the third, private or public sector.

This is why we propose the project review tool checklist with a scoring tool to assess the project's accountability. Within the project, we used and adapted this checklist on a quarterly basis to see the progress, discuss the challenges and possible solutions.

Within the project, we also had an opportunity to have mutual learning sessions, where we discussed our past and current practices and elucidated what practices we would like to sustain and improve. Thus, we propose a set of exercises to apply during the mutual learning session to share the knowledge and experience.

Project Review Tool

The project review tool can be used to discuss and score the current state of the project, evaluate what aspects and areas need additional attention. Finally, project review is an opportunity to discuss the solutions for the raised issues and seek an improvement. The evaluation and scoring are not necessary, however, they can be used to standardise the evaluation of the projects across time and see the overall progress or long-term struggles and solutions. Proposed scoring system:

0 — No evidence / not addressed

The issue has not been addressed, or there is no clear evidence that action has been taken. For planning-oriented questions, this means that no clear plan, reflection or decision has been presented.

1 — Initial / limited progress

Some initial steps have been taken, but the approach is still limited, informal or not yet systematic. Evidence is partial, and further work is needed.

2 — Moderate progress

Most relevant actions have been taken or are clearly planned. The approach is becoming structured, but there are still gaps, uncertainties or areas requiring further follow-up.

3 — Good progress

Relevant actions are implemented in a structured way. Responsibilities, tools or procedures are clear, and there is evidence that the approach is being used in practice.

4 — Strong progress / good practice

The approach is well implemented, evidence-based and adapted when needed. Learning is documented and can be shared with partners, communities or stakeholders. The practice shows potential for replication, continuation or innovation.

N/A — Not applicable

The question does not apply to the partner's role, activity or context.

Area	Supporting Question	Evaluation
Progress against targets	What goals and targets were set at the beginning of the project? Are they achievable or require revision?	**0–4, NA**
	What is the current status of the targets in relation to the agreed workplan and timeline?	
	Which results require additional review?	
Accountability to Affected Population	To what extent did the project identify and address gender-specific risks and barriers?	**0–4, NA**
	Were specific aspects such as gender, age, disability, and protection considerations integrated into project design, implementation, and monitoring? How?	
	Does the project collect, handle, and respond to feedback in a safe and accessible way?	
	Are feedback and complaint channels easy to use, confidential, and linked to real action and adaptation?	
Quality of Beneficiaries' Engagement	Who is currently reached by the project?	**0–4, NA**
	What are the main barriers preventing clients from participating in activities?	

	Are referral pathways between partners, public institutions, employerd, NGOs and specialised services functioning?	
Quality of Stakeholders' Engagement	What concrete results have stakeholder relationships produced so far?	**0–4, NA**
	What obstacles are partners facing in engaging employers, public institutions, and local authorities?	
Quality of Learning and adaptation	How do you track and evaluate the project results internally?	**0–4, NA**
	How have mutual learning sessions influenced practical changes in Poland and Italy?	
	Which practices have been adapted or newly implemented?	
Quality of Sustainability and continuation	Which project activities are likely to continue after completion of the project?	**0–4, NA**
	Which activities depend fully on new funding?	
	How will knowledge and tools be used after the project?	
	What sustainability actions are planned before the next Steering Committee and before project closure?	

Mutual Learning Sessions

Over eighteen months, the Consortium held four mutual learning sessions: one in person and three online. They were designed and facilitated by OPORA. During each session, partners looked at their ongoing programmes, compared them with the research evidence, and reflected on what could be adjusted. Below, we propose the format and the exercises, so that they can be applied by other organisations, also without a research partner involved. Please note that the exercises are based on Emic's, RED Nova's and PAH's services and activities. They can be adjusted to a different context.

When is mutual learning useful?

Mutual learning works best when there is something concrete to compare. Before investing time in it, it is worth checking a few conditions:

- at least two organisations do comparable work, ideally in different contexts;
- each organisation brings a programme that is actually running, rather than a plan or a proposal;
- there is a shared body of evidence to work with, such as a needs assessment, service data, or structured notes from team meetings;
- participants can influence decisions in their organisation. Sessions attended by people without such a mandate tend to produce good conversations and few changes;
- a neutral facilitator who is not defending a programme.

In our case, OPORA, the research partner facilitated the sessions, which meant that no organisation had to host the discussion and present its own model at the same time. If there is no research partner involved, facilitation can rotate, so that it is always held by someone whose programme is not being discussed.

Equally important is the facilitator's familiarity with the participating organisations and their operating context. Mutual learning becomes considerably more valuable when the facilitator has already established trust with the organisations and understands their missions, organisational capacities, community contexts, and the challenges they face. This contextual knowledge allows the facilitator to ask more relevant questions, identify meaningful points of comparison between organisations, and ensure that discussions remain grounded in participants' realities rather than abstract concepts. It also helps create a safe and constructive learning environment in which participants feel understood, are more willing to share both successes and challenges, and can receive feedback that is tailored to their specific circumstances. Rather than simply moderating the conversation, the facilitator acts as a bridge between different organisational experiences, helping participants recognise common patterns while also appreciating the differences that shape each organisation's approach.

How were the sessions sequenced?

The sessions were planned as a sequence, and each one assumed that the previous one had taken place.

1.	**In person, 2 days**	Getting to know each other's models in depth and identifying what might transfer.	What works, and why does it work?
2.	**Online, 2.5 hours**	Comparing the models with the research evidence and making strategic choices.	Given what the evidence shows, what should we stop, scale and redesign?
3.	**Online, 2.5 hours**	Building the capacity needed to act on those choices.	How do we know whether a change has worked?
4.	**Online, 2.5 hours**	Reflecting on implementation and consolidating the learning	What actually happened, and what would we pass on to others?

Two observations may be useful here. First, if it is at all possible, it is worth starting in person. The first session builds the trust that makes the later online sessions honest, and participants pointed to the in-person workshop as the moment when people stopped presenting and started talking. Second, the session on monitoring and evaluation did not come first, and in our experience this was helpful. Methods tend to land better once organisations have identified a decision they need evidence for.

What rules did we apply?

The same four rules applied in every session:

1. No presentations after the first session. Slides tend to turn participants into an audience. From the second session onwards, we worked only through exercises.
2. Mixed groups, in every exercise. Organisational and national groupings are broken up, so that the discussion is between contexts rather than within them.
3. The evidence is a mirror, not a verdict. Participants are never asked to agree with a research finding, only to say whether it matches their reality, and to explain why if it does not.
4. What is said about weaknesses stays in the room. Sessions are documented in terms of practices and structural patterns, not in terms of individual or organisational shortcomings. This is what makes it possible to speak openly.

The exercises

Let's now have a look at the exercises themselves. We propose five, in the order in which we used them. Each of them can also be run separately.

Exercise 1: Building Blocks of Change

Around 20 minutes. In person. Materials: building blocks, paper, markers.
Each organisation builds a physical or drawn representation of one programme that it considers scalable, and then presents its components in about three minutes.

Building something makes it necessary to decide which parts of a model are load-bearing. In our sessions, teams regularly found that they could not represent their programme without including elements that appear nowhere in their project documents, such as a trusted caseworker or an informal relationship with an officer in a local institution. Those elements are usually the ones that matter most when a practice is transferred. The exercise also gives the group a shared vocabulary for the rest of the session.

Exercise 2: Deep Dives and the "Impact DNA"

Around 75 minutes per organisation. In person.
For each organisation: 15 minutes presenting the programme (services, activities, etc), 5 minutes for questions, 15 minutes on a real case study that was difficult or instructive, 30 minutes of peer brainstorming in mixed groups, and 15 minutes of response from the presenting organisation. The case study is the part that makes the exercise work. Without it, a deep dive easily turns into a pitch.

The output is a map of each organisation's "Impact DNA": the specific ingredients – people, processes, partners, context – that make a practice effective, and therefore the ingredients that would need to travel with it if another organisation were to adopt it.

Exercise 3: Reality Check – does the evidence match your world?

Around 15–20 minutes. Online or in person.
Take six to ten findings from your needs assessment or from your service data. In mixed groups, participants mark each finding as:

- matches our reality;
- partly matches our reality;
- does not match our reality.

It is worth spending the discussion on the divergence rather than on the agreement. Where a finding does not match, it helps to ask why: is it the organisation's mandate, the municipality, the national framework, or the organisation's position in the local system? This is how patterns that are genuinely shared can be distinguished from patterns that are local. That distinction largely determines whether a practice can be transferred to another context.

Exercise 4: Stop, Scale, Redesign, Transfer

Around 45 minutes. This is the central decision-making exercise.
Take one organisation at a time and list its current activities. For each activity, mixed groups discuss what is happening around it – whether the need is growing, stable or declining, and whether the activity sits inside or outside the organisation's mandate – what the evidence suggests, and which decision follows.

Decision	What it means	Typical situation
Scale	Invest more, expand	High need, supported by evidence, inside the mandate, supports long-term independence
Redesign	Keep the aim, change the format or the target group	The need is real, but attendance is low or dropout is high, which usually points to the delivery rather than the need

Transfer	Better done by another actor	The organisation is substituting for a public service that could absorb the task
Stop	No longer strategic	An emergency-phase mechanism that now absorbs resources or fosters dependency

Two rules help keep the exercise honest. Decisions should be justified by evidence and future relevance rather than by history or funding momentum. And it is worth asking every organisation to leave with at least one activity in the "Stop" column, since this is usually the hardest decision to reach on one's own.

The exercise closes with a commitment round, in which each organisation says out loud one activity it will stop, one it will scale, one it will redesign, and one uncertainty it accepts. In our experience, commitments made in front of peers are more likely to be followed up, particularly if they are revisited at the start of the next session.

Exercise 5: Evolution Swimlanes

Around 30 minutes. Materials: a grid and coloured dots, on paper or on an online board.
The exercise maps where each organisation's work sits at the moment and where it aims to be, across a number of themes. Each organisation places two dots per theme: one for the current position and one for the target. If a programme sits between two stages, the dot can be placed on the line.

We used four stages:

Stage 1
Emergency and reactive, where the organisation substitutes for the state.

Stage 2
Programmatic and siloed, where support is tailored but isolated.

Stage 3
Ecosystem coordination, based on formal partnerships.

Stage 4
Systemic and institutional, where root causes are addressed.

Theme	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Language and cultural orientation	Ad-hoc evening language classes	Tailored vocational language courses and civic orientation	Partnerships with trade schools for dual-track training	Language training negotiated with employers as a paid benefit
Employment and use of skills	"First available job" matching into low-wage survival roles	CV workshops and diploma translation	Formal employer networks and alternative skills catalogues	Incubators linking newcomer entrepreneurship to mainstream business ecosystems
Housing	Emergency shelters and host-family matching	Caseworkers negotiating with private landlords case by case	Landlord guarantee funds backed by organisations	Displaced people formally included in city-level social housing
Mental health and psychosocial support	Psychological first aid and acute counselling	In-house psychologists providing individual therapy	Community-led peer support and structured staff supervision	Specialised trauma care absorbed into national public health
Advocacy and system navigation	Caseworkers addressing identical administrative problems case by case	A helpline resolving issues remotely and aggregating them	Aggregated frontline data used for advocacy	Longitudinal evidence used to change local rules and procedures
Organisational role	Isolated delivery of basic aid on behalf of the state	Specialised provider competing for short-term grants	Capacity builder, supporting and training local networks	Working within shared public and private integration structures
Monitoring and learning	Counting outputs, such as attendees or items distributed	Post-intervention surveys and isolated project reporting	Consistent tracking of one or two indicators, with baseline and endline	Theory of change, with benchmarking against sector standards

A large distance between the current position and the target in one theme, and none in another, says a good deal about where a strategy is actually pointing. Where several organisations cluster in Stage 1 on the same theme, this usually describes the system they work in rather than a shortcoming of any one of them.

Tools we used

To facilitate the mutual learning sessions, we used a range of freely accessible digital tools that supported collaboration and active participation. As most of the sessions were conducted online, it was important to select platforms that were easy to access, intuitive to use, and suitable for participants with varying levels of digital experience.
Tools such as Miro and Slido proved particularly effective. Miro was used for collaborative brainstorming, mapping ideas, and group exercises, allowing participants to work together in real time on a shared virtual whiteboard. Slido supported interactive engagement through live polls, word clouds, quizzes, and Q&A sessions, making it easier to gather feedback and encourage participation during online meetings.

The Golden Rules

In the final session, participants were asked a single question: if you had to give one piece of advice to another organisation building an inclusion programme, what would it be? Rules were drafted individually, then discussed and voted on.

It is worth insisting on specificity. "Communicate better" is not a rule; "hold a fifteen-minute weekly call with the municipal contact person" is. A useful test is whether someone could check tomorrow whether you had followed it.

Below are the rules our Consortium agreed on. They are offered as a starting point, and the exercise itself matters more than our answers.

For organisations designing and delivering services

1. Nothing about them, without them. Before a design is fixed, run at least two focus group discussions or a dozen interviews with the people who will use the service, and record how their input changed the design.

2. Design around people's calendars, not around the workplan. Take care responsibilities and shift work into account. If attendance drops, it is usually the format that needs to change rather than the participant.

3. Close the loop. If you collect feedback, tell participants what changed as a result. Feedback that is collected and never answered tends to cost more trust than not asking at all.

4. Start with one or two indicators, and track them consistently. Consistency is more useful than complexity, and it is easier to begin with data you already collect.

5. Protect time for reflection. A recurring session to look at your own data and decide something may feel like a luxury during a surge. It is usually what prevents the surge from lasting three years.

6. Map before you knock. Complete the stakeholder map, and write down the objective and the expected result, before the first contact.

7. Write down what did not work. Mistakes locate the real gaps, often faster than successes do. It helps to document the reasoning behind a decision, and not only the decision itself, because the next project will need it.

For donors and international organisations

8. Fund the testing, not only the delivery. Piloting genuinely new approaches takes time and resources before it produces numbers. A grant that funds only the delivery of a proven model is unlikely to produce an innovative one.

9. Fund within local mandates. Local organisations are usually not humanitarian agencies, and humanitarian response is often one part of longer-term development and community work. Funding that does not take this into account tends to buy short-term outputs at the cost of the structures that outlast the project.

How to document the sessions?

Whatever is used in the room, it is worth getting it out of the room:

- record attendance for every session;
- export online collaboration boards as static files, such as PDF or images. Links break, and this material may be needed for years;
- prepare a short report per session in a consistent format: date, participants, exercises run, outputs, and decisions taken;
- carry the commitments from the previous session into the agenda of the next one;
- collect an anonymous evaluation after each session.

What did we learn about running them?

Participants valued the sessions most for something we had not planned for: the opportunity to speak honestly about everyday work. One described the workshop as **"an honest conversation about our everyday work and the challenges that come with it"**, another as **"a therapy session for our organisation — an opportunity to take a look at our DNA".** This kind of safety is what makes it possible for anyone to say what is not working, which is in turn what makes learning possible.

Based on the feedback we received, we would change the following:

- **Allow more time.**
  Every session ran tight. For an in-person workshop, half a day more would help;

- **Send preparation guidance earlier.**
  Not materials to read, but two or three questions to think about in advance;

- **Pay attention to the room**.
  A quiet, dedicated space does more for the quality of an in-person session than the design of any single exercise;

- **Keep the sessions close enough** together to maintain momentum, and far enough apart that people have had a chance to try something in between.

Summary

The inclusion of displaced persons requires participatory design and flexible OSS models, where people can access multiple forms of support and where their experiences, priorities and feedback are placed at the centre of service design. It also requires approaches to scaling and testing that are shaped by real needs, changing contexts and the practical knowledge gathered through everyday support.

This demands a high level of adaptability from OSS staff, who not only provide services, but also monitor changing situations, identify gaps and propose solutions. In this sense, OSS models such as those run by Emic and RED Nova can function as innovation hubs, where new approaches are developed and piloted. The practices and tools proposed in this toolbox aim to structure these efforts, support knowledge and data collection, and strengthen informed decision-making and advocacy. They stem from our experience and have proved useful in shifting and uncertain contexts.

Within the IARI project, we had opportunities to exchange knowledge, reflect on the strategy and ways of working, and prepare for the future. Thus, we hope that the tools and exercises presented here might be useful for you and your organisation. If you have any questions, or if you would like to share feedback on the tools and practices introduced here, please contact us at: ***social.inclusion@pah.org.pl***.

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