

One-Stop Agency Approach for Supporting Ukrainian War Refugees in Riga

<u>Organisation(s):</u>	Riga City Council Welfare Department Riga Social Service	
<u>Country:</u>	LATVIA	
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<u>Theme:</u> Choose at least one option	<input type="checkbox"/> Ageing & Care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asylum & Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Young People <input type="checkbox"/> Support for Children & Families <input type="checkbox"/> Community Care <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated Care & Support <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Production <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Intelligence <input type="checkbox"/> Digitalisation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Labour Market Inclusion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce and Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Social Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> EU Funding <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Service's Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Person-Centred Care <input type="checkbox"/> Research & Use of Evidence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Management & Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:
<u>Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights:</u> Check the 20 principles here .	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Education, training, life-long learning <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Gender equality <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Equal opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Active support to employment <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Secure and adaptable employment <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Fair Wages <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Transparent employment conditions <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Social dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Work-life balance <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Healthy, safe work environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Childcare and child support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12. Social protection <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Unemployment benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Minimum income <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Old age income and pensions <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Health care <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Long-term care <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Housing and assistance to homeless <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20. Access to essential services
<u>Current status of the practice:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Concept and Design Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Testing or pilot phase <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that has terminated <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Established and ongoing practice <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Up and Transformation Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	
<u>Summary:</u> Please summarise the practice in maximum 3 sentences. This	The <i>Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Civilians</i> was established by the Riga State City Municipality and opened on 7 March 2022 , just ten days after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Centre was created as part of the municipality's emergency response, bringing together local and national authorities, as well as non-governmental organisations and volunteers, under one roof to provide coordinated response. The	

<p><i>will be the disclaimer of your project on our website.</i></p>	<p>Centre operates as a <i>One-Stop Agency</i>, combining services from state institutions, municipal departments, NGOs, and volunteers in one place. Together, they provided support for housing and other basic needs, assistance with documentation and legal procedures, psychological counselling, as well as access to healthcare, education, employment, and other essential services.</p>
<p><u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.</i></p>	<p>Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, thousands of Ukrainian civilians sought refuge in Riga. Municipal and state institutions faced challenges such as a lack of centralized information, limited coordination, and insufficient resources to meet the sudden demand for support. Although a special Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians was adopted on 4 March 2022 to define the basic principles and responsibilities for providing aid, the legal regulations and procedures were frequently amended during the first months of the crisis, requiring constant adaptation by institutions. Within this rapidly changing legal and institutional environment, the Riga State City Municipality established the <i>One-Stop Agency</i> approach to coordinate multi-level support, reduce administrative barriers, and respond efficiently to urgent needs such as housing, healthcare, education, and social protection.</p> <p>In the Latvian context, it is important to highlight that municipalities had no prior experience in providing support to persons under international protection.</p>
<p><u>Objectives:</u> <i>Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure comprehensive, accessible, and timely support for Ukrainian civilians in one location. 2. To prevent uncoordinated actions that could cause stress for both refugees and staff, while delivering assistance in a way that maximized accessibility, effectiveness, and minimized bureaucratic obstacles. 3. To establish an effective and high-quality information flow between national, municipal, and non-governmental stakeholders, ensuring coordinated decision-making and timely responses to emerging needs.
<p><u>Activities:</u> <i>Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 300 words).</i></p>	<p>The Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Civilians opened on 7 March 2022 at the Riga Congress Centre, following the decision of the City Council and activation of the Civil Protection Commission. The Centre operates as a One-Stop Agency, combining services from state institutions, municipal departments, and NGOs under a single roof. In providing support, certain actions were carried out before the establishment of the centre, such as the creation of a 24/7 information hotline.</p> <p>State institutions such as the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the State Employment Agency, the National Health Service, and the State Fire and Rescue Service provide legal status, employment, health, and accommodation services.</p> <p>Municipal services – including the Welfare Department, Riga Social Service, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, and the municipal transport company “Rīgas Satiksme” – offer consultations, benefits, registration for schools and kindergartens, and electronic ticket issuance.</p> <p>Non-governmental and volunteer organisations (e.g., Latvian Red Cross, I Want to Help Refugees, Skalbes, Scouts and Guides, IOM) provide psychological support, Latvian and English language courses, mentoring, inclusion activities, workshops, and material aid. A network of 138 social workers (in 2022) worked directly with refugees, visiting accommodation sites, assessing needs, organising support, and ensuring coordination with partners.</p> <p>To establish a one-stop agency, the operational framework included regular management meetings, staff training, the introduction of a numbering system for better queue coordination, selection of social workers capable of working under high-stress conditions, engagement of volunteers, and the provision of additional compensation for social workers by the state.</p>

	<p>The centre continues to operate. Its address has been changed several times due to a decreasing flow of refugees. Similarly, the number of institutions providing support within the centre has also decreased.</p>
<p>Outcomes: Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this.</p>	<p>Between 2022 and 2024, the number of social benefit recipients among Ukrainian refugees decreased from 17,161 to 6,251, while the number of users of social services increased from 53 to 139, indicating a shift from emergency aid to integration support. The cooperation between the municipality, state institutions, and NGOs has become more structured and efficient. Social workers have gained crisis management experience and resilience. This model has reduced bureaucracy and stress for refugees by centralising services, while also providing valuable experience on how to ensure effective cooperation between national and municipal levels. It has allowed for more efficient use of available resources and clarified the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for social workers to effectively support refugees. Implementing such a model has enabled a greater number of Ukrainian civilians to be reached than would have been possible without a centralized approach, which in turn positively impacts their integration process.</p>
<p>Funding Source</p>	<p>EU Funds: ESF+ <input type="checkbox"/> INTERREG <input type="checkbox"/> ERDF <input type="checkbox"/> ERASMUS <input type="checkbox"/> RRF <input type="checkbox"/> other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National Government Funds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Government Funds</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Government Funds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private Sponsorship / Public-Private Partnership</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Financial contribution of People using Services</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other, please define: donations</p>
<p>Links to supporting documents: e.g. website or report of the practice</p>	<p>No separate evaluation report has been prepared on the centre's operations; only information on the services provided by the centre is available on its website. Atbalsts Ukrainai Rīgas valstspilsētas pašvaldība</p> <p>The study "Ukrainian Refugees in Latvia: Available Data, Experiences, and Public Attitudes" available only in Latvian, it includes an assessment of municipalities' experience in providing support to Ukrainian civilians. Providus research final 0509-1.pdf</p>
<p>Comments and tips i.e. for people willing to use your Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure flexibility of procedures and clear division of responsibilities. • Investing in staff training and psychosocial support increases institutional resilience in crisis situations. • A single-entry point for refugees simplifies access to essential services and improves communication across sectors.