



# Labour market integration of immigrants with focus on Ukrainian refugees

## A Policy Learning Platform peer review

*Kristiansand, Norway,*

*26-27 November 2024*

### Final Report

#### **1. Brief presentation of the beneficiary and its motivation to host a peer review**

*Kristiansand municipality is a key actor of labour market integration of refugees that settle within its borders, jointly with the local office of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) and the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi).*

*The municipality considers that current rates of labour market participation of refugees, and of more specifically of Ukrainian refugees, are too low. This assessment is shared by NAV. These local actors would like to get inputs on how to design and implement impactful, cost-efficient strategies and measures in this field. This should lead to an increase in the proportion of refugees, and more specifically Ukrainian refugees, that are either employed or self-employed.*

#### **2. Specification of the policy challenge encountered**

Kristiansand municipality, in collaboration with Kongsgård Skolesenter (KSS), employers, NAV and IMDi, faces significant challenges in effectively integrating Ukrainian refugees into the local labour market. Despite various efforts, labour market participation among Ukrainian refugees remains lower than desired, often due to underutilization of their skills and qualifications.

The project is a critical opportunity for Kristiansand municipality to gather insights and recommendations from other European regions that have successfully integrated refugees, particularly Ukrainian ones, into their labour markets.

According to studies previously conducted by the Kristiansand municipality, all factors affecting refugee employment levels are categorized into three levels: macro, intermediate, and individual. These factors also have both internal and external dimensions in relation to the commune's ability to influence them. The plan was to focus during the peer review on several key challenges that Kristiansand municipality faces regarding labour market integration for Ukrainian refugees and has the ability to influence:

#### **Guiding questions**

Language training and support adapted to migrants and refugees with diverse profiles

How can Kristiansand municipality enhance its language training programs to better serve Ukrainian refugees? What best practices from other regions can be adapted to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs? How can language training be integrated with vocational training to provide a more holistic approach to refugee education?

Supporting Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment among immigrants.



What successful models have other regions used to support refugee entrepreneurship, particularly for Ukrainian refugees? How can Kristiansand municipality provide targeted support to aspiring refugee entrepreneurs, including access to training, mentorship, and financial resources?

Strategies to make immigrants employable and effectively integrated on the labour market in the shortest time possible.

How can Kristiansand municipality improve Ukrainian refugees' access to local employment networks? What initiatives have proven effective elsewhere in helping refugees connect with potential employers and industry contacts?

### **3. Participants**

*List of participants in the peer review:*

#### **Members of the beneficiary organization**

- Rune Håverstad, Head of Integration Unit, Kristiansand municipality
- Pål Bjørkkjær, Head of the Introduction Department at the Integration Unit, Kristiansand municipality
- Ingelill Pedersen, project leader, labour market integration young people,
- Robert Roy Hoffmann, Integration unit, municipality of Kristiansand
- An-Magritt Aftret, Team leader, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
- Rune Nordbø, advisor recruitment (immigrants/refugees) NAV
- Ludmila Sleire, advisor, team working with Ukrainian refugees, NAV
- Kirsti Damsgaard, coordinator market team, NAV
- Marianne Riskjell, KSS- School – integration programme
- Hildegunn Klippen, KSS-School- integration programme
- Øyvind Laderud, International coordinator and innovation adviser, Kristiansand municipality

#### **Stakeholders:**

Organisation: Municipality of Kristiansand

- Kjell A Kristiansen, HR Director,

Organisation: Agder County Council

- Tore Engelsen (earlier IMDI, immigration directorate)
- Kari Line Seierstad Johnsen,

Organisation: NAV, Norwegian Labour and welfare Administration,

Jon Arne Karstensen, head of unit/section, NAV Kristiansand

#### **Peers**

Veronika Rulli, European-Ukrainian Hub, Copenhagen, Denmark

Michaela Gil & João Mota, Migration Centre, Fundão, Portugal

Yuliya Bogoyavlenska, Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Zhytomyr region, Ukraine & Czechia

Taavet Tomberg, Estonian Refugee Council, Estonia

Oleksandra Lastovetska, Medborgarskolan Syd study association, Skåne region, Sweden

Eva Reekers, Project and programme manager, Municipality of Rotterdam, the Netherlands



*Interreg Europe team*

Erik Gløersen, Thematic Expert on More Social Europe, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

Mart Veliste, Thematic Expert on More Social Europe, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

Antoine Duquesnoy, Thematic Manager, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

Ilaria Ramaglioni, Policy officer, Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat

#### **4. Policy recommendations**

##### **Time horizons:**

Long term is 1-2 years

Medium term is 6 months to 1 year.

Short term is first 6 months

##### **Introduction the actions.**

A Long-Term plan for the work with refugees is necessary due to many reasons. The peer review was very useful because it allowed all stakeholders to discuss what's working and not working so well. In a bureaucracy changes do not take place quickly.

Develop a long-term plan that facilitates collaboration and supports integration.

Build a dedicated and strong and resilient refugee service unit.

Strengthen the One City for All initiative to encompass the refugee and asylum chain.

Below we have included comments on a few topics and some of the recommend actions from the peer review.

#### **4.1 Governance**

##### **Action 1**

###### **Short-term**

###### **Improved stakeholder coordination**

Kristiansand municipality will implement and organise joint meetings every 3rd month between NAV (Norwegian Welfare Centre), Agder county (Agder regional authority) beside Municipality of Kristiansand

##### **Action 2**

###### **Short term**

###### **Regular meetings with Ukrainian association in Kristiansand**

Kristiansand municipality will start setting up regular meetings with Ukrainian association in the city-region.

##### **Action 3**

###### **Medium-term**

###### **Organise an early stage Welcome programme**



Kristiansand municipality would like to develop a short welcome programme lasting 4 weeks that will start immediately after housing and the refugee is settled. This can make the transition to the introductory program easier.

The program will include early mapping and clarifications of expectations.

#### **4.3 Targeted actions for Ukrainian teenage refugees**

##### **Action 4**

###### **Long- term**

###### **Collaborative strategic action on school enrolment of Ukrainian teenage refugees**

Young Ukrainian refugees is a subgroup with long term challenges and implications. The challenges for this group are more complex and have long-term implications.

This calls for a more strategic approach and as such should be discussed in the context of the general efforts and projects on youth and inclusion.

The enrolment of students is only once a year in August, so many youth that arrive in the fall will have to wait until August the year after before a possible enrolment in a study programme.

Some also follow study programmes in Ukraine in parallel.

Kristiansand commune will initiate discussions with the relevant stakeholders including Agder county, NAV, and relevant departments in the municipality working with youth, school etc.

#### **4.4 Health and support for refugees**

There is a municipal health and centre in the city hosted by municipality targeted at the refugees, including the Ukrainian.

##### **Action 5**

###### **Short term**

###### **Improved access to psychiatric care**

The team will be strengthened with a psychiatric nurse as from early 2025. This can be increased if necessary.

#### **4.5 Labour market integration**

**Different actions to make immigrants employable and effectively integrated on the labour market in the shortest time possible.**

##### **Action 6**

###### **Medium term**

###### **Collect feedback from introductory programme beneficiaries**

Kristiansand municipality will participate in a national survey for all participants in the introductory programme. Their feedback is important and will be an important element in continuous



improvement of the program. The survey is being conducted now and being analysed this winter/spring of 2025.

#### **Action 7**

##### **Medium term- long term**

##### **Trainee programme in the public sector**

Encourage public sector to employ trainees from Ukrainian community. Today's structure of the trainee programme is not sufficiently attractive for public sector. Must be redesigned in the course of 2025. Current hiring of staff has been put on hold by Municipality.

#### **Action 8**

##### **Medium term**

##### **Entrepreneurship and self-employment**

Initiate discussions with the entrepreneurial centre, Agder county, DRIV Agder and others as a long term support initiative

Assess and learn from resources like Uaccelerate. <https://uaccelerate.dkiv.dk/nor-no>

Collaborate with Agder county and other relevant institutions and suppliers. Strengthen internal expertise further.

Engage resource persons from the resettled refugees' own cultural backgrounds to provide realistic guidance. Recognize that building entrepreneurship may take longer than the duration of the introduction programme. Explore possibilities for regional efforts. Include Agder county, Driv Agder, Innovation Norway, Kristiansand municipality, and others in a resource group. Explore possibilities for funding (among others from IMDI). Include experts and successful startups from Ukrainian community. Explore coworking space- possibilities for refugees.

#### **Action**

Gather relevant stakeholders and discuss a programme targeting interested Ukrainians.

Draw inspiration from the [Ivaekst](#) initiative in Denmark.

#### **4.6 Profile Kristiansand as a city eager to integrate migrant and refugees in its labour market and economic development**

#### **Action 9**

##### **Medium term**

##### **Draw inspiration from other cities and regions**

Learn more from **Fundão Embracing Place. How to welcome refugees and communicate that we want them to stay, provide education and find jobs.**



## 5. Possible calendar of implementation

### Timeline for Refugee Integration and Support Plan

#### Ongoing Actions:

- **Monthly:** Review and adjust plans based on feedback and changing needs.
- **Quarterly:** Report progress to stakeholders and make necessary adjustments.

#### Short-Term (First 6 months):

1. **Stakeholder Coordination:**
  - **Month 4:** Reintroduce coordination meetings.
  - **Month 6:** Second meeting.
  - **Month 9:** Third meeting.
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2. **Regular Meetings with Ukrainian Association in Kristiansand:**
  - **Month 1:** Start setting up regular meetings with the Ukrainian association in the city-region.
  - **Month 3:** Conduct the first meeting.
  - **Month 8:** Conduct the second meeting.
3. **Health and Support for Refugees:**
  - **Month 1:** Strengthen the municipal health centre team with a psychiatric nurse.

#### Medium-Term (6 months to 1 year):

1. **Organise an early stage Welcome programme:**
  - **Month 4-7:** Plan the program
  - **Month 8 :** Start the program
2. **Survey for Introductory Program on behalf of IMDI:**
  - **Month 10:** conduct the survey.
  - **Month 11-12:** Regular use and feedback incorporation.
3. **Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment:**
  - **Month 9:** Initiate discussions with Driv Agder.
4. **Draw inspiration from other cities and regions**
  - **Month: 8-12** Initiate meetings with other cities in Norway and abroad

#### Long-Term (1-2 years):

1. **Trainee Program:**
  - **Month 12:** Begin redesigning the trainee program.
  - **Month 16:** Implement the redesigned program.
- 2 **Support for Ukrainian Teenagers:**
  - **Month 8:** Initiate discussions with stakeholders.
  - **Month 9-12:** Develop plan.
  - **Month 13-24:** Implement and monitor the plan.



## **6. Conclusions**

*The peer review held in Kristiansand on 26–27 November 2024 brought together employees and stakeholders engaged in supporting the inclusion of refugees and migrants into the labour market. Drawing on insights from their home regions, the peers shared a wide range of perspectives and experiences. The discussions were skillfully facilitated by process leaders from the Interreg Europe PLP team, ensuring that all voices were heard and valued.*

*Their contributions sparked meaningful dialogue with managers from NAV and Kristiansand Municipality responsible for refugee integration. Many of the ideas and proposed actions were incorporated into the implementation calendar outlined above, while others have been set aside for future consideration.*

*Looking ahead, Kristiansand will benefit from developing a long-term strategic plan that addresses more complex and challenging issues. A key objective is to establish a dedicated, strong, resilient, and sustainable refugee service unit that can effectively coordinate efforts across sectors. This will help ensure more efficient inclusion of refugees and migrants into employment and educational pathways.*

*Warm thanks once again to the Interreg Europe PLP team for their valuable support and facilitation.*

*Kristiansand, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025.*