
Mentees' Reflection Workshops Report

I. General Information

Country and Institution: POLAND, MSK

Title of the event: Mentees' Reflection Workshop

Date of the event: 14.06.2024

Location of the event: MSK headquarters (ul. Krzemienicka 2a, Łódź)

II. Participants

Number of participants: 10

Country of origin: Ukraina

For how long they have been in the country: from 5 months up to 2 years

What is their official status (Asylum seekers, refugees, undocumented etc): refugees

Age range (here you can use an average age of the group): 22 – 45

Gender: 3 women, 7 men

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III. Summary of the exchanges during the event

Summarize the main points from the workshop including interesting findings or anything that is worth mentioning for report.

This workshop was part of the "Friends We Share Connection Programme," aimed at connecting new asylum seekers and successfully integrated refugees to foster cooperation, peer learning, and exchange of experiences. The workshop included a series of dynamic, participatory activities to understand the social realities and concerns of refugees and promote agency, empowerment, and resilience.

Main points of workshop:

1. **Introduction to 'Friends we Share' Project:**
 - The workshop began with a concise overview of the 'Friends we Share' project.
2. **Icebreaking Games:**
 - **Name Circle:** Participants introduced themselves and shared something they enjoy, which helped in breaking the ice and initiating interactions.
 - **Fears/Expectations and Contributions:** By discussing fears, expectations, and contributions, participants started to articulate their concerns and hopes, setting a foundation for deeper discussions later on.
 - **"Who like":** Ukrainian integrational game. The goal of the game is to find a seat when the condition is called out, leaving one person standing in the middle without a seat.
3. **Exploring Needs and Challenges:**
 - **Needs Mapping:** Through this activity, participants identified the specific challenges and needs they face as new migrants from Ukraine. This exercise likely highlighted common issues such as language barriers, legal uncertainties, and cultural adjustment.

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- **Strengths Mapping:** Participants also mapped out their strengths, which not only boosted confidence but also facilitated peer support and mentorship opportunities.
- 4. **Identifying Interests and Goals:**
 - **"Passion Mapping":** This creative exercise encouraged participants to explore their passions and interests, potentially uncovering talents and skills that could aid in integration and personal fulfillment.
- 5. **Conclusion:**
 - **"Reflection Circle":** Participants reflected on their experiences throughout the workshop, likely expressing insights gained and personal growth observed.
 - **Closing Remarks:** The facilitator thanked participants for their active involvement and highlighted the upcoming Connection Cafes as opportunities to further connect with Mentors and continue their integration journey.
- 6. **Key Participants:**
 - Notably, there were 10 new migrants from Ukraine who participated in the workshop. Their presence underscores the relevance and impact of the 'Friends we Share' project in supporting recent arrivals and facilitating their integration into European society.

These points provide a comprehensive overview of the workshop's activities, emphasizing both the structured approach to addressing migrants' needs and the fostering of meaningful connections among participants.

New asylum seekers in Poland face a variety of challenges that can significantly impact their integration and well-being. These challenges that we were talk about during workshops span across legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions:

1. **Legal and Administrative Hurdles:**
 - **Complex Asylum Procedures:** Navigating the asylum application process in Poland can be daunting. Applicants must provide extensive documentation and attend multiple interviews, often conducted in Polish, which can be challenging for those with limited language skills.
 - **Lengthy Waiting Times:** The asylum process in Poland can be protracted, with applicants waiting months or even years for a decision. During this period, they may face uncertainty about their status, living arrangements, and access to essential services.

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- **Legal Assistance:** Many asylum seekers struggle to access legal aid, which is crucial for understanding their rights, preparing asylum applications, and appealing decisions.
2. **Access to Basic Services:**
- **Healthcare:** While asylum seekers in Poland are entitled to emergency healthcare, accessing routine medical services can be problematic due to administrative barriers or lack of awareness about available services.
 - **Education:** Children of asylum seekers often face challenges in accessing education due to language barriers, lack of documentation, or unfamiliarity with the Polish education system.
 - **Housing:** Securing stable and adequate housing is a significant challenge. Asylum seekers may initially be accommodated in reception centers, which can be overcrowded and have limited facilities. Finding affordable housing outside these centers can be difficult due to discrimination or reluctance from landlords.
3. **Social Integration:**
- **Language Barrier:** Polish language proficiency is crucial for integration, yet many asylum seekers struggle to access language classes or practice opportunities. This can hinder their ability to communicate effectively, find employment, or engage in daily interactions.
 - **Social Exclusion:** Negative attitudes towards migrants can lead to social isolation and discrimination. Asylum seekers may face prejudice in employment, education, and social settings, impacting their sense of belonging and well-being.
4. **Employment and Financial Stability:**
- **Informal Employment:** Due to legal restrictions, some asylum seekers may resort to informal or undocumented work, which exposes them to exploitation, low wages, and unsafe working conditions.
5. **Psychological and Emotional Well-being:**
- **Trauma and Stress:** Many asylum seekers have experienced trauma, persecution, or displacement in their home countries. The uncertainty of the asylum process and living conditions in Poland can exacerbate mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

- **Access to Mental Health Services:** There is a significant gap in mental health support for asylum seekers. Limited availability of culturally sensitive services and stigma surrounding mental health care can prevent individuals from seeking help.
- 6. **Legal Protection:**
 - **Access to Information:** Many asylum seekers lack accurate information about their rights and entitlements under Polish and international law. This can lead to exploitation and hinder their ability to navigate the asylum process effectively.

After workshop we can say that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving legal protections, enhancing access to essential services, promoting social integration, combating discrimination, and providing adequate support for mental health and well-being. Efforts from government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities are essential to ensure that asylum seekers in Poland receive the support and opportunities they need to rebuild their lives with dignity and security.

IV. Workshop development

1. Did you include all the activities from the Agenda? If not, which ones did you excluded and why?

During the workshop aimed at integrating new asylum seekers from Ukraine into Polish society, several challenges emerged from the participants' perspective. These issues, though managed effectively, influenced the dynamics and outcomes of the sessions:

1. **Language Barriers:** Participants faced initial struggles understanding instructions and fully engaging in activities conducted primarily in Polish. This hindered their ability to participate actively in discussions and activities. More than one translator should be available.
2. **Cultural Differences:** Varied cultural norms and communication styles sometimes led to misunderstandings between facilitators and participants. Certain icebreaking activities and discussion topics did not always resonate culturally with participants from Ukraine. That's why we use Ukrainian integrational games also.

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3. **Emotional Responses:** Discussions about fears, challenges, and past traumatic experiences related to their migration journey elicited strong emotional responses.
4. **Unequal Participation:** Some participants were more assertive and vocal, while others were reserved or hesitant to speak up. Efforts were made to encourage equitable participation and ensure every voice was heard.
5. **Managing Expectations:** Participants had varied expectations regarding the workshop outcomes and the support they would receive. Clear communication about objectives and activities helped align expectations and maintain engagement.
6. **Building Trust:** Establishing trust among participants, many of whom had experienced trauma and displacement, was a gradual process. Ensuring confidentiality and creating a safe space for open expression were prioritized throughout the sessions.

In conclusion, while challenges arose during the workshop, proactive facilitation, cultural sensitivity, and effective communication strategies enabled the team to address these issues promptly. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, the workshop successfully promoted integration and facilitated meaningful interactions among participants. Future workshops can build upon these learnings to further enhance the support provided to asylum seekers transitioning into Polish society.

2. Did you, as an organizer, faced any issues? If yes, what kind of problems did you face during the workshop?

1. **Language and Communication:** Communicating effectively with participants who had varying levels of proficiency in Polish presented ongoing challenges. For next time we need more than one translator.
2. **Emotional Support:** Addressing emotional responses from participants who shared personal challenges or traumatic experiences necessitated a supportive and empathetic approach. Providing appropriate resources and referrals to support services was crucial in these instances.

V. Evaluation of the participants' satisfaction

Please report the feedback on the participants' satisfaction with the workshop – include images or data provided in the feedback form.

1. Relevance of Workshop Content:

- Summary: The majority of participants (6 out of 10) found the workshop content very relevant to their needs and interests, indicating strong alignment between the workshop objectives and participant expectations. Participants appreciated the practical focus on integration challenges and cultural adaptation.

2. Most Valuable Aspects of Workshop Content:

- Summary: Participants highlighted discussions on challenges and needs mapping, activities focusing on strengths and goal setting, and the practical advice shared during cultural integration sessions as the most valuable aspects of the workshop content. They noted that these sessions provided actionable insights and strategies for navigating their new environment effectively.

Workshop Activities:

3. Variety and Effectiveness of Activities:

- Summary: The activities were rated positively, with a majority rating of "Excellent" (5 participants) and "Good" (5 participants), indicating a well-received variety of engaging and effective workshop exercises. Participants appreciated the interactive nature of the activities, which facilitated learning and interaction among participants.

4. Most Engaging or Helpful Activities:

- Summary: Participants found icebreaking games particularly engaging and helpful in exploring their challenges, needs, interests, and goals. These activities not only encouraged participation but also fostered a sense of community and mutual support among participants.

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Facilitator:

5. Facilitator's Ability:

- Summary: The facilitator received high praise, with the majority rating of "Excellent" (6 participants) and "Good" (4 participants), reflecting effective guidance and creation of a supportive environment conducive to open discussions. Participants noted the facilitator's ability to listen attentively, provide insightful guidance, and maintain a respectful atmosphere throughout the workshop.

6. Feedback or Suggestions for the Facilitator:

- Summary: Participants appreciated the facilitator's empathy and ability to encourage participation. Suggestions included allocating more time for in-depth discussions and incorporating additional interactive elements. Some participants also suggested incorporating more personal anecdotes or success stories from integrated refugees to inspire and motivate newcomers.

Group Dynamics:

7. Level of Participation and Engagement:

- Summary: Most participants (8 out of 10) reported high levels of participation and engagement within their group, indicating a positive group dynamic that facilitated meaningful interactions. Participants appreciated the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences and collaborate on finding solutions to common challenges.

8. Comfort Sharing Experiences:

- Summary: Participants generally felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives within the group, highlighting a supportive atmosphere that encouraged openness. This comfort level contributed to the workshop's effectiveness in addressing personal concerns and fostering connections among participants.

Logistics:

Organization and Logistics of Workshop:

- Summary: Ratings for organization and logistics were predominantly positive, with "Good" (6 participants) and "Excellent" (4 participants), suggesting effective management of workshop timing, materials, and venue. Participants noted the smooth flow of activities and appreciated the provision of necessary materials and refreshments.

10. Suggestions for Improving Logistics:

- Summary: Suggestions included clearer instructions at the start of activities and ensuring all materials are readily accessible to enhance the overall workshop experience. Some participants also suggested incorporating more breaks to allow for informal networking and further discussions among participants.

Overall Experience:

11. Overall Rating of Experience:

- Summary: The majority rated their overall experience as "Good" (8 participants) and "Excellent" (2 participants), indicating overall satisfaction with the workshop's impact and content. Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn practical skills and connect with mentors and peers in a supportive environment.

12. Enjoyed Most / Could Be Improved:

- Summary: Participants enjoyed the interactive nature of the workshop and meeting others who shared similar experiences. Suggestions for improvement included more practical integration tips tailored to different stages of the asylum process and more frequent follow-up sessions to reinforce learning and community building.

13. Additional Comments:

- Summary: Additional feedback highlighted the positive impact on confidence and understanding of integration processes. Participants appreciated the personalized attention from facilitators and mentors and suggested expanding the workshop series to cover more specific topics like job readiness and legal rights. Some participants also emphasized the importance of ongoing support and networking opportunities beyond the workshop sessions to sustain their integration journey effectively.

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This comprehensive feedback provides valuable insights into participant satisfaction and areas for potential enhancement in future workshops aimed at supporting asylum seekers in Poland. The feedback underscores the importance of tailored content, effective facilitation, and supportive environments in fostering successful integration experiences.

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