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SIRM

Poland for beginners and advanced.

Connecting cultures and generations through shared activities.

Bartosz Swider

Project Coordinator ROPS in Rzeszow

b.swider@rops.rzeszow.pl

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"Poland for Beginners and Advanced" project brings together two groups of people: seniors with migrants and refugees. Both groups rarely come into contact with each other, but have much to offer.



Project was run by two organizations:



The Polish Migration Forum Foundation -has been working since 2007 to integrate foreigners in Poland, respect their rights and build intercultural dialogue. The Foundation provides free legal, integration, vocational, psychological counseling for migrants and refugees. It supports children with migrant experience in Polish schools and conducts intercultural education for children and young people (workshops, urban games). It trains teachers, psychologists and civil servants. Provide support to about 5,000 people a year, 60% of whom are migrants, mainly in the Mazovia region.

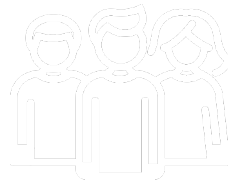


Association of Creative Initiatives „e” - has more than 10 years of experience in carrying out activities for the elderly. Since 2008 it has been implementing the "Seniors in Action" program. It has launched more than 300 local projects co-created by 60+ leaders and intergenerational couples. It cooperates with the Universities for Seniors (US) community, organizes workshops for US leaders and listeners, supports the integration of seniors at the regional level, helps to establish senior volunteer groups at the US.

About the project:

- **Duration:** 01.01.2021 – 30.04.2022
- **Total budget:** 75000,00 EURO
- **Location:** Warsaw, Poland
- The project was funded by grant under the **Active Citizens Fund** from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, through the EEA Grants.

Iceland 
Liechtenstein **Active**
Norway **citizens fund**



Why the project – the challenges and opportunities:

- Changes in age structure of migrants

The increase in number of senior refugees in Poland (over 16,000 people aged 60-79 received a residence permit in Poland in 2019 alone, whereas 20% of refugees arriving in Poland are over 65 years of age (UNHCR data from March 2022))

- Lack of support at an advanced stage of integration

Organizations working for migrants mainly offer intervention support (legal, psychological, etc.), securing foreigners at an early stage of integration. The offer for foreigners lack activities that would strengthen their role in local communities and promote volunteering for their own groups and self-advocacy.

- The intersecting needs of migrants and seniors

Foreigners, including the elderly, have a need to create bonds in a new environment. At the same time, senior citizens in Poland lack an offer that would engage them in social life and connect them with other groups, also differentiated by age. Practice shows that seniors are great volunteers: persistent, creative, and responsible.

Why the project – the challenges and opportunities:

- Attitudes of seniors towards foreigners

Seniors are much more open-minded and more likely to integrate with foreigners. According to research against accepting refugees was 62% - the age under 35, while 48% and 52% - the age 60+.

- Support networks and volunteering

There are no proposals to involve refugees as volunteers in the activities of NGO's, cultural institutions, etc. The offer for foreigners is concentrated in „bubbles“ related to organizations working for them, but their potential and skills are rarely used in initiatives for the community.

The purpose of the project:



To improve the situation of people with migrant backgrounds by involving them in society, and to involve seniors in competence-based volunteering that would bring about visible change and satisfaction.

How:

The knowledge of the Polish language –

basic barrier to overcome, to live, to work, or to learn. It is easier to find a job, deal with official matters, go to the doctor or a school interview, and above all, feel that you are at least a little more at home here.



How:

Recruitment and training for volunteers

Association of Creative Initiatives „ę” looked for open-minded seniors, curious about the world and people, willing to act for the benefit of others. At least minimal use of instant messaging was needed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (online activities).



Two blocks of training was offered by PFM experts:

Intercultural workshops - what is culture and what are cultural differences, possible reasons for the decision to leave their country, psychological processes at different stages of adaptation to new conditions and difficulties associated with the situation of changing the place of residence

Language workshops on teaching and learning Polish to adults - the specifics of learning Polish and ways to make it more effective, as well as the principles of building relationships in a conversational pair, ideas for conversation topics along with materials and e-books for learning Polish

**WHY DID
I APPLY**

I have time and skills that are useful to refugees/migrants staying in Poland.

Because of the novelty of my previous volunteer activity.

The desire to be needed, to prove yourself in a new role.

I like new challenges, new acquaintances, new topics. I [...] have been looking for projects other than just those related to the environment. Ecology is also about sustainable human relationships, regardless of background, gender, race, culture or religion.

I was simply interested in the opportunity to meet and get to know kind people with interesting content to share in a natural way.

How:

Recruitment of migrant participants

The migrants were reached out by:

- network of contacts with other NGO's
- schools attended by many people with a migrant background,
- social media

Information was available in four languages (Polish, English, Russian, and Ukrainian).

Requirements:

- knowledge of the Polish language on a communicative level,
- to have access to the Internet and a computer or a phone with a camera.

WHY DID I APPLY

For the Polish language.

I had problems with speaking and between the pandemic and having kids at home all the time, there was no other way to make local contacts.

At that moment, I had this need.



RULES FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. Tasks performed in the project are voluntary work and are free of charge.
2. The volunteer signs a volunteer contract for a specified period of time.
3. Volunteer's task is to conduct conversations in Polish on a three month cycle. After three months you can (if there is a need or desire) continue conversations with the same or another person.
4. Before starting the project activities, the volunteer will take part in workshops on intercultural issues and language learning.
5. You can resign from volunteering at any time. Inform the coordinator if you want to end the volunteering period as soon as possible.
6. Conversations should last at least one hour per week. The exact duration of the meeting can be adjusted according to the needs of the participants.
7. Conversations take place online via a communication platform of the participant's choice.
8. The volunteer will keep in touch with the coordinator and follow up after each conversation meeting by sending a text message confirming that the meeting took place.
9. The volunteer will not enter into financial relationships with their conversation partner (no lending money or buying things).
10. The volunteer does not provide other services (if the partner reports needs to the volunteer that go beyond the project activity, the volunteer immediately passes this information to the coordinator - the volunteer is not alone with the problem).
11. The volunteer maintains discretion regarding the personal affairs of the conversation partner and contacts the coordinator if a problem is perceived.
12. If the volunteer has to cancel or reschedule the conversation for any reason, he or she should contact his or her partner as soon as possible.
13. The purpose of the meetings is conversation, not Polish lessons. We do not give grades, we try to establish a dialog. We will not ask for feedback on your progress, but rather monitor how your communication is going.
14. If you have any concerns or problems, please reach out to the coordinator.



RULES FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Participation in the project is free of charge.
2. The project includes three months of participation in conversations. After three months, there will be an evaluation. If there is a need or desire, conversations can be continued in the next cycle (until the end of the project).
3. You may withdraw from the project at any time. If you decide to withdraw, please inform the coordinator as soon as possible.
4. Conversations should last at least one hour a week. The exact duration of the conversation can be adjusted as needed by the participants.
5. Conversations take place online via a communication platform of the participant's choice.
6. If a participant has to or wants to cancel/postpone the conversation, he or she should contact their partner as soon as possible.
7. The participant will not enter into any financial relationships with their conversation partner (no borrowing money or buying things).
8. If you have any concerns or problems, please reach out to the coordinator.

How:

Matching tandem partners:

- preparation of conversation rules for both volunteers and migrants;
- signing Volunteering Agreements with volunteers, and Declarations of Participation in the project with people with migrant backgrounds;
- individual talks with migrants to check the language level, their preferences and needs;
- filling in a short survey about interests, experience, availability, and preferred video communication platform (especially important for seniors);
- based on the information from the questionnaires, individual pairs were selected.

How:

Conversation meetings:

- the first meeting of each tandem was attended by a representative from one of the organizations;
- the pairs met for an hour once a week on the communication platform at individually determined times;
- regular contact with participants was maintained to provide support and assistance;
- the pairs met online, but at times when pandemic conditions allowed, some were able to meet at a coffee shop, take a walk and visit gallery or a museum;
- the acquaintances made during the conversations often grew into closer, friendship-based relationships.



Summing up:

What happened in the project

- Involvement of 14 seniors (people 60+) and 83 people with experience of migration – (planned to be 30 people) – 31 refugees as volunteers, 24 refugees used conversations and 28 refugees who benefited from the support network.
- A series of texts were issued “Through the eyes of a Migrant” written by people with experience of migration available on Facebook profile of the Polish Migration Forum Foundation and on the project website.
- Organization of trainings:
 - for seniors: Cross-cultural (6h) and language (8,5h);
 - for refugees Cross-cultural (9h) and language (8,5h)
- Creation of support network: assistance in the offices, texts translations, finding apartment, finding a job, setting up a company, doctors assistance etc.
- Preparation of the document: „Poland for beginners and advanced. How to connect cultures and generations through shared activities” in Polish and English

Poland for beginners and advanced – pass it on

Polska dla
początkujących
i zaawansowanych
– **PODAJ DALEJ!** 

- Second edition of the project: „Poland for beginners and advanced – pass it on” is an educational project that aims to support organisations and local government institutions wishing to connect senior volunteers with refugees/migrants through conversations in Polish;
- Cooperation of The Polish Migration Forum Foundation with Association of Creative Initiatives „ę”;
- Project duration 2022 – 2024;
- 11 institutions and organizations involved from all over Poland;
- So far 121 pairs senior-refugee has been created.
- Preparation of the handbook for other institutions and organizations: „Poland for beginners and advanced how to organize conversations of seniors with migrants or refugees”, which deals with such topics as: Organization of seniors-refugees/migrants conversations – step by step; Work in a cross-cultural environment; How to plan and conduct conversations with learners of Polish as a foreign language - a guide for non-professionals;
- Organization of the meetings such as national meeting „Conversations Without Borders - how to start a senior-migrant conversation club”

WHAT PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT HAS GIVEN ME

I expanded my circle of friends, met people from other cultural circles, and found out tangibly how good my conditions are here and now.

Nice new people, nice meetings, nice conversations, and all without any pomp and stiff formality. In addition, there is the possibility of finding out about the life and culture of people from other countries as well as sharing various tidbits about Poland in return.

Developing social skills like intergenerational and intercultural integration. A sense of usefulness, personal growth, and mutual acceptance.

The opportunity to see the other side of the people I came to live with.

Getting to know the person, their way of thinking, their attitude towards the world and various events.

A sense of time well spent.

It's a win-win for the participants. I help my student to learn the language and understand our culture, and on the other hand I get to know the heritage of his country and better understand his problems related to emigrating to Poland.

Getting to know new positive foreigners/migrants, super project coordinators and other volunteers. Building a good relationship with a young Turkish student despite a 40+ year age difference. Mutual learning about cultural, social and religious similarities and differences between Poland and Turkey.

I have learned that what seems linguistically obvious to us, Poles, causes a lot of trouble to people of other nationalities. Helping others makes me feel that I am still needed, despite my gray hair.

Concerns about my unfamiliarity with the methodology of teaching Polish as a foreign language turned out to be premature. The training that was provided, the prompting of conversation topics and advice on how to proceed has given me confidence and I now know I can do it.

Learning about the culture, customs, and history of another country.

Satisfaction that I could help someone.

The conviction that I can still be useful.

I started talking and overcame speaking barriers.

I feel the satisfaction of having fulfilled my assigned duty. I met a lot of interesting people.

Knowledge of the Polish language and Poland.



Thank you!

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