



Waterford
Volunteer Centre
Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Port Láirge

December 2023

UKRAINE RESPONSE REPORT



Introduction

As the number of Ukrainians seeking refuge from the war in Ireland increases, so does the need to respond to the needs of refugees from Ukraine. According to the latest data, Ireland has granted temporary protection to 79,335 Ukrainians (Irish Times, 2023), so Waterford Volunteer Centre continued to respond to the needs of Ukrainians, supporting the position of Ukrainian outreach worker, which was taken up by Anna Kachanivska.

Her role includes raising awareness of volunteering and finding suitable volunteering opportunities for those new to the county.



As a large number of people have to retrain, look for work or study to get a better job, they face the challenge of gaining experience that will make them think positively about Ukrainians as employees. In this case, volunteering is the best way to gain experience, as volunteering is open to everyone. Volunteering also addresses the needs of pensioners, giving them the opportunity to do what they love and stay socially active. Her role includes raising awareness of volunteering and finding suitable volunteering opportunities for those new to the county.



Introduction

In an effort to understand the attitudes of Ukrainians towards volunteering, Anna conducted a small survey of Ukrainians living in Waterford to gain an understanding of general information about Ukrainians' knowledge of volunteering and the role of volunteering in Ukrainian life.



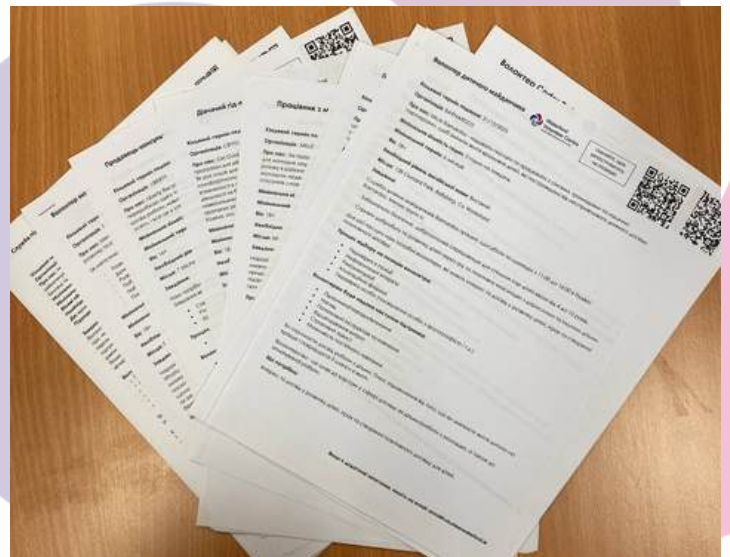
Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that Ukrainians have a positive attitude towards volunteering and would mostly like to participate in it. The majority of respondents are interested in working with the community to develop themselves as individuals and improve their communication skills, including improving their English, organisational skills, and learning about other cultures. In addition, it was important for them to feel that they were useful. It would be useful to further explore the constraints that prevent them from engaging in volunteering and whether they see ways to address these constraints.

Spreading the word



Since the outreach worker's position is to spread the word about volunteering, active work on information and recruitment began. Brochures were translated, email newsletters were sent out, and individual translated volunteer opportunities were created with a QR code for registration. Volunteer opportunities were selected based on the general interests of Ukrainians, as well as the required level of English, as this is the main barrier to volunteering. This method of dissemination worked well at group information meetings, where people have the opportunity to sit down to read and discuss with others, and a direct link makes them sign up for a position immediately.

We also went to the rest centres where Ukrainians temporarily reside to inform them and to the local Red Cross meeting, using a prepared presentation and information booklets. Newly arrived Ukrainians are often unaware of volunteering opportunities and how to find them, so these visits had a positive impact on awareness and the recognition of the Volunteer Centre as an organisation. This message demonstrates the organization's understanding of its impact and responsibility to people and the planet. Importantly, it also builds the audience's trust and confidence in the organization.



One million stars



In 2023, Waterford joined the **One Million Stars project**. This project is an expression of solidarity with victims of domestic violence. Each woven star is a signature against any kind of violence. This idea is very close to Ukrainians, as they were forced to migrate because of the violence against the entire nation.

Ukrainians were interested in this action and actively involved in it from the very first days.

The trip to Carlow was a decision to unite the entire starworm community and show them an example of what it could look like. And it turned out to be a great experience, as Carlow College is indeed decorated with stars, and there is a separate exhibition dedicated to stars. At the entrance to the college, there is a map of Ukraine made of stars as a reminder that this project is against all forms of violence, including military conflicts in the world.

About 20 Ukrainian volunteers are actively involved in this project, striving to make as many stars as possible



With Hope

The next position represents the unity, support and self-organisation of Ukrainians in a cause they love. Since last year, Team Hope has been capturing the hearts of Ukrainians with their cause and idea. The Team Hope Christmas Shoe Box Appeal also involved about 20 volunteers, 7 of whom came to the centre several times a week. Ukrainians say that it is a great opportunity to do a good deed without speaking English. It was also noted that it was a great opportunity to start communicating with others and find people with similar interests, as well as to have a great time in a Christmas atmosphere with Christmas songs in the background, knowing that a great thing is happening with your hands.



We also organised a meeting with Team Hope representatives at the Volunteer Centre, where we had the opportunity to bring together volunteers who had already been involved in this project, as well as those who wanted to join. It's great to be able to unite people for one cause, and also a process where others have the opportunity to share their emotions and experiences. This is a community that has already been created and is developing and attracting others to join it. The volunteers completed all the boxes in two months and sent them to Eastern Europe and Africa.



Art and craft classes

The following project was created with the aim of improving the emotional state and communication of Ukrainians with each other. Creativity is always a great way to express yourself, find emotional stability and connect with others when needed. Therefore, it was decided to hold art and craft classes with the help of volunteer Olena Koviagina, who used to teach art to children at school in Ukraine. These classes were held at the Waterford volunteer centre every Tuesday for two hours. Olena is very eager to share her experience and skills, so it was great to give her this opportunity, both on an individual level and at the level of the Ukrainian community. We currently have 18 people interested in attending the weekly art classes.



Art and craft classes

There are already many drawings, crafts and manifestations of personal creativity. Olena tries to give us as versatile and interesting material as possible, so that we can draw not only with bones and paints, but go beyond our own barriers. Olena took on the responsibility of organising an annual event to create Christmas cards for nursing homes. In one workshop, we managed to make 58 cards that went to those who are waiting for them.

It is also a great opportunity to share the latest news and experiences of staying in Ireland. It is here that people find answers to questions about life in Ireland.

It is also the place where the Olena has already been giving her time to this cause for 6 months, and she wants to give even more and to even more people.



Easter eggs



A master class was held by volunteer Nataliia Toporovska to teach people how to make a Ukrainian Easter decoration called a "pysanka"



Africa Day

Based on the survey mentioned above, one of the main interests of Ukrainians in volunteering is participation in events in any form. Because it is always exciting, and there is an opportunity to see how large-scale events are organised from the inside.



Getting to know other cultures and nationalities is an essential thing when you become a migrant. That's why Ukrainians are interested in volunteering, where they need help in organising an event that enlightens another culture. This is the best way to meet others and expand your barriers. The role of the volunteers at this event was to keep order, help visitors, control access to the mobile zoo and conduct activities for children. The volunteers were impressed by the event and received a lot of positive emotions

Connecting with volunteer centres

For more than six months now, all the staff of volunteer centres working with Ukrainians have been united for a common goal - to support, share experiences, give advice and improve their work. We share cultural differences, peculiarities of mentality, the difference between volunteering in Ukraine and Ireland, and which methods are more effective in our work. This is a great boost, especially for new employees who are not yet familiar with the peculiarities of the Ukrainian mentality.

We are looking for maximum cooperation, as well as the creation of joint projects that will help keep the volunteer centres together. We are planning a personal meeting, so we hope that next year will be productive for cooperation and implementation of great ideas.



Stories of migrants



Also, based on the International Volunteer Day, we wanted to thank those volunteers who give their valuable time to volunteer and help others. To bring everyone together so that active volunteers could share their experiences and tell their volunteering journey from the very beginning to the moment they met.



Based on the emotions and experiences of our volunteers, it was decided to create a booklet that would contain the stories of migrants who became volunteers and how volunteering influenced their new lives. The stories were impressive, touching and inspiring. We hope that these stories will be read by as many people as possible and perhaps find their way to adapt to a new country through volunteering.



Numbers



**61 volunteers
(141 in total)**

**193 applications
for volunteering**

**1154 hours
of volunteering**