

Dr. Kateryna Zakharchuk - C2DH

Integration through Participation: Newcomers' Activism in a New Country (newcomers / refugee - who has been forced to flee their country because of war)

Newcomers' participation in cultural, sporting, artistic, volunteer activities, and professional associations affects their integration process in a new country. Based on the testimonies of Ukrainians who have lived their first two years in Luxembourg after the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, we will explore how these activities help overcome barriers, promote social connections, and improve overall well-being.

Newcomers' integration is essential for building cohesive societies, and an intersectional approach is vital for understanding the refugee experience. Refugees' participation in local cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions plays a significant role in their integration. Cultural centers and public organizations, such as Lukraine Asbl - Ukrainian Community in Luxembourg UA, Commune de Strassen, and La Maison ukrainienne de Strassen, support these efforts. Refugees often testify that cultural activities help them find a community and feel part of a new society.

Artistic initiatives also play a critical role in the integration process. Art projects involving refugees, such as art exhibitions (like "Unveiled Ukraine" in Brussels by Ukrainian photographer Kateryna Mostova), theater productions, and musical concerts, provide a platform for expression and healing. The therapeutic effect of art is particularly important for those who have survived the trauma of war. Many refugees share how creativity has helped them express their emotions and experiences.

Volunteer initiatives in Sports events - vital aspect of integration. Sports programs in yoga, dancing -open to refugees contribute to their physical health, socialization, and stress reduction. Personal stories often highlight how participating in sports has helped refugees make friends and improve their psychological state.

Volunteer initiatives are equally important. Refugees' involvement in organizing business forums (the Luxembourg-Ukraine Business Forum: "RAPID RECOVERY OF UKRAINE" which took place on Tuesday 21 May 2024 at the Chamber of Commerce, Luxembourg) fosters professional integration and network development. Participation in volunteer initiatives aimed at collecting humanitarian aid and supporting their homeland is a powerful way for refugees to maintain a connection with their country. Successful volunteer projects illustrate how volunteering can help refugees find support, make new friends, and strengthen ties with the local population. As from dance teacher to manager of Strassen's Ukraine house.

Professional associations, such as the Luxembourg Ukrainian Researcher Network (LURN), provide refugees with a platform to support and develop their professional skills. These associations offer numerous advantages, including support, networking opportunities,

exchange of experience, and professional growth. Success stories of professional associations created by refugees demonstrate their impact on integration and professional development in a new country.

Despite these positive outcomes, refugees face significant challenges and barriers, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. Addressing these obstacles requires comprehensive strategies and recommendations to improve access to these activities.

In conclusion, the participation of refugees in cultural, artistic, sports, volunteer activities, and professional associations is a crucial element of their integration into a new society. These activities not only promote social connections and improve well-being but also help refugees overcome psychological and social barriers. Presenting these testimonies and examples will help better understand the importance of an intersectional approach in developing refugee support and integration programs.