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Bridges of Hope

A Volunteer's Guide
to Empowering Young Refugees

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Introduction

Purpose of the Guide

This guide has been created to support volunteers working with young refugees, especially those fleeing the war in Ukraine. Its main purpose is to equip volunteers with practical tools, methods, and knowledge that can help them **build trust**, **communicate effectively** and **provide meaningful support** during the adaptation and integration process.

Traget Group

The primary target group includes:

- **Young people 16–30 years old;**
- Volunteers active in NGOs, schools, youth centers, or local initiatives in Romania and Poland;
- Individuals engaged in peer-to-peer education and integration activities;
- Volunteers motivated by solidarity, empathy, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Project Context

Bridge to New Beginnings for Ukrainian Refugees is a transnational Erasmus+ initiative that brings together ***Asociatia Se Poate from Romania and Klaster for Social Innovation from Poland*** with a shared goal: to empower young volunteers to play an active role in supporting the integration and well-being of Ukrainian refugee youth.

At its core, the project recognizes that young people have the potential not only to be beneficiaries of support but also key agents of change. By equipping them with the right tools and guidance, they can become bridges between communities—fostering dialogue, inclusion, and healing.

To this end, the project delivers three major outputs:

- **A multilingual volunteer guide** that provides practical information and culturally sensitive strategies

Project Context

- **A set of 30 interactive workshop scenarios** that cover a wide range of topics
- **A peer-learning toolkit** that encourages inclusive, participatory education

Ultimately, Bridge to New Beginnings for Ukrainian Refugees **fosters community resilience by cultivating a network** of informed, compassionate, and proactive volunteers. It aims to **ensure that every young refugee feels seen, supported, and included**, while also enabling local youth to grow into leaders of solidarity and intercultural understanding.



Refugee Crisis

Since **February 2022**, the outbreak of **war in Ukraine** has triggered one of **the largest humanitarian crises in Europe** in recent decades. Millions of people—especially women, children, and young people—have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. Neighboring countries such as Romania, Poland, and others across the European Union have become temporary or permanent hosts for those displaced by the conflict.

This crisis has sparked an **extraordinary response from civil society**. **NGOs**, local authorities, and thousands of volunteers have stepped in to offer critical support—from shelter, food, and psychological counseling to educational services and integration activities.

Young refugees, in particular, face **unique vulnerabilities: disrupted education, the loss of friendships and routine, emotional trauma, and the challenge of adjusting to a completely new environment**. At the same time, they also carry resilience, courage, and a strong desire to rebuild their lives.

Establishing First Contact

How to Make a Positive First Impression

1. Show Genuine Warmth and Openness
2. Communicate Clearly and Respectfully
3. Be Attentive and Listen Actively
4. Create a Comfortable Environment
5. Demonstrate Empathy and Non-Judgment
6. Encourage Future Communication



Key Strategies for Overcoming Language Barriers

1. Use Simple and Clear Language
2. Use Nonverbal Communication
3. Encourage the Use of Interpreters or Translation Apps
4. Practice Patience and Flexibility

Key Strategies for Overcoming Cultural Barriers

1. Learn About the Refugee's Culture
2. Respect Different Ways of Communicating
3. Avoid Stereotyping
4. Be Mindful of Sensitive Topics
5. Create a Culturally Inclusive Space

Identifying the Needs & Challenges of Young Refugees

Observing Behaviors and Interpreting Signals

Young refugees often express their needs nonverbally. Look for signs like withdrawal, mood swings, or physical discomfort, which might indicate emotional distress, unmet basic needs, or trauma. Pay attention to their engagement levels in activities — low participation can signal insecurity or exclusion.

Common Issues Faced by Young Migrants

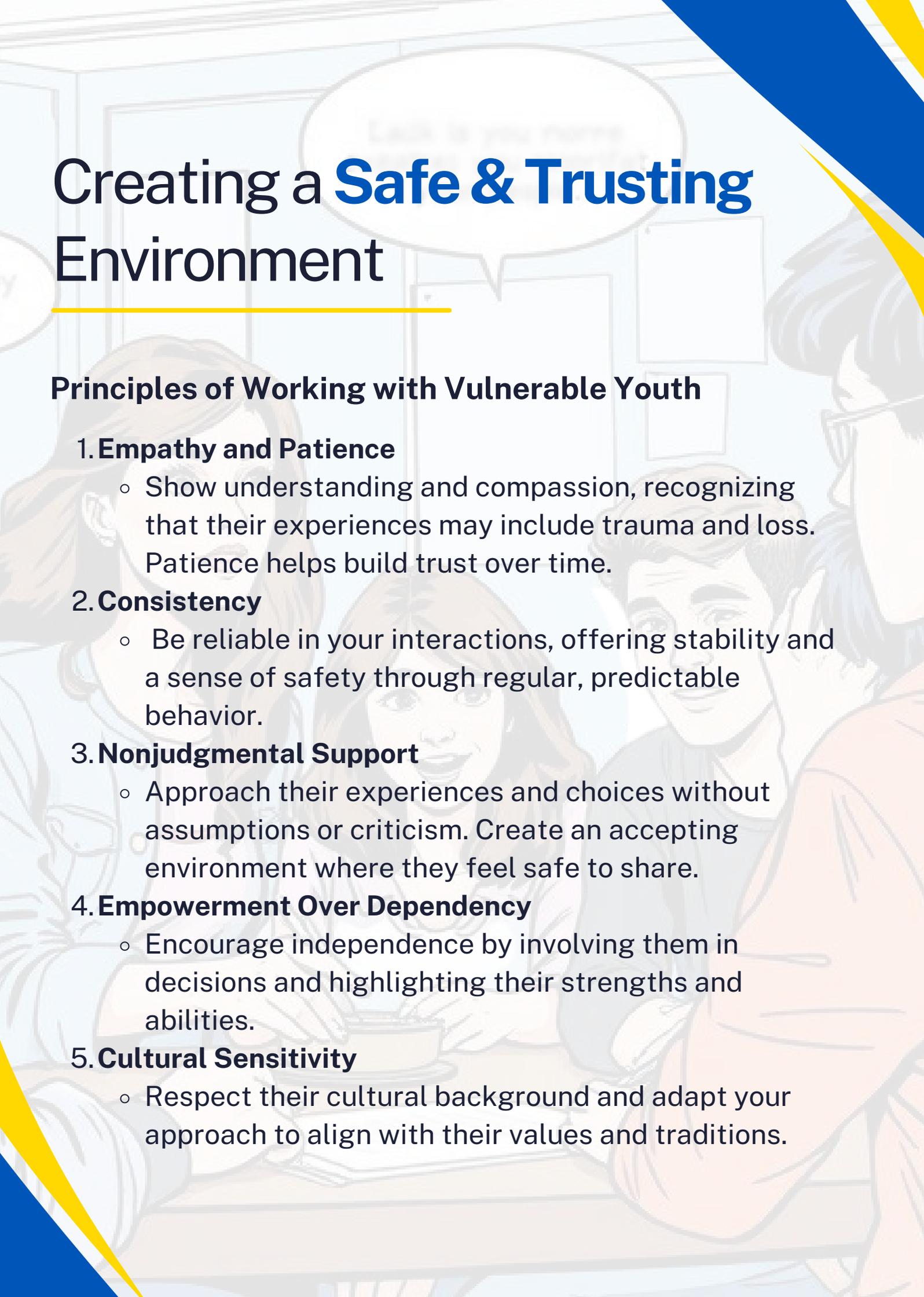
1. **Disrupted Education:** Gaps in learning or difficulty adapting to new systems.
2. **Social Isolation:** Loneliness due to language or cultural barriers.
3. **Emotional Distress:** Anxiety, grief, or trauma from displacement.
4. **Cultural Adjustment:** Feeling out of place in a new environment.
5. **Uncertainty About the Future:** Stress over legal, educational, or career prospects.

Identifying the Needs & Challenges of Young Refugees

Key Questions for Identifying Needs

Open-ended, compassionate questions can uncover challenges while building trust. Consider asking:

- “What has been the hardest part of adjusting here?”
- “What do you miss most about home?”
- “Are there things you wish you could do or learn here?”
- “Who or what makes you feel supported in this new place?”
- “What do you need to feel more comfortable or safe?”
- “Is there anything you’d like to share about your experience that you haven’t had a chance to yet?”
- “How do you usually cope when you’re feeling stressed or upset?”
- “What’s one thing that could make your day better right now?”



Creating a **Safe & Trusting** Environment

Principles of Working with Vulnerable Youth

1. Empathy and Patience

- Show understanding and compassion, recognizing that their experiences may include trauma and loss. Patience helps build trust over time.

2. Consistency

- Be reliable in your interactions, offering stability and a sense of safety through regular, predictable behavior.

3. Nonjudgmental Support

- Approach their experiences and choices without assumptions or criticism. Create an accepting environment where they feel safe to share.

4. Empowerment Over Dependency

- Encourage independence by involving them in decisions and highlighting their strengths and abilities.

5. Cultural Sensitivity

- Respect their cultural background and adapt your approach to align with their values and traditions.

Creating a **Safe & Trusting** Environment

Principles of Working with Vulnerable Youth

6. Trauma Awareness

- Recognize that behaviors may stem from past trauma. Use calm communication and avoid potentially triggering situations.

7. Active Listening

- Listen attentively, reflect on what they share, and validate their feelings to make them feel truly heard.

8. Hope and Positivity

- Reinforce optimism by focusing on their potential and opportunities for growth, offering reassurance about their future.

These principles can help create an environment where young refugees feel respected, supported, and empowered to move forward.



Creating a **Safe & Trusting** Environment

Ways to Build Trust-Based Relationships

1. **Be Genuine**

- Authenticity is **key**. Be honest about what you can provide and show sincere interest in their well-being.

2. **Show Respect**

- Use their preferred names, respect their culture, and honor their boundaries. Small gestures, like remembering personal details, show you care.

3. **Follow Through**

- Keep promises, no matter how small. Reliability builds trust over time.

4. **Create Safe Spaces**

- Provide physical and emotional environments where they feel secure. This could mean setting up private, quiet areas for conversations.

5. **Celebrate Strengths**

- Acknowledge their resilience and successes, no matter how minor. This boosts confidence and trust.

Creating a **Safe & Trusting** Environment

Confidentiality and Respect for Personal Dignity

1. Maintain Privacy

- Never share personal stories or details without explicit consent. Confidentiality is fundamental to trust.

2. Ask Permission

- Always seek consent before discussing sensitive topics or sharing information with others.

3. Treat Them as Equals

- Avoid condescending language or actions. Show respect for their autonomy and ability to make decisions.

4. Uphold Dignity

- Even in moments of vulnerability, emphasize their inherent value and rights. For example, focus on their strengths rather than their struggles.

Creating a safe and trusting environment is about building a foundation of respect, care, and mutual understanding. This helps young refugees feel secure and supported as they navigate their new lives.

Educational Techniques & Methods for Integration

Peer-to-Peer Education

1. Fostering Connection Through Shared Experiences

- Peer-to-peer education is effective because young refugees relate to one another through similar experiences. This common ground builds trust and helps them feel understood, reducing isolation.

2. Creating Safe Spaces for Dialogue

- Creating non-judgmental spaces for peers to share challenges and solutions encourages openness. It allows them to express their struggles without fear of being judged, fostering a supportive environment.

3. Learning Through Teaching

- Teaching others reinforces refugees' own learning. When they mentor, they build confidence and self-esteem while gaining a sense of empowerment in their new environment.

4. Promoting Active Engagement

- Peer education promotes active participation. Both mentors and mentees engage in collaborative learning, strengthening bonds and helping them adapt through problem-solving and shared activities.

Educational Techniques & Methods for Integration

Peer-to-Peer Education

5. Mentorship Beyond Academics

- Peers can also help each other navigate practical challenges, like accessing local services, which builds independence and resourcefulness.

6. Cultural Exchange

- Refugees can share their cultures and languages, fostering mutual respect and promoting inclusivity by highlighting both differences and similarities.

7. Long-Term Relationships

- Peer education helps establish lasting connections that support integration, offering ongoing emotional and practical support even after the program ends.

Through peer-to-peer education, young refugees gain the skills, confidence, and support they need to thrive in their new environments, while also strengthening their own communities.

Educational Techniques & Methods for Integration

Non-Formal Activities and Educational Games

1. Interactive Learning

- Use games, storytelling, or role-playing to teach language, social skills, or cultural concepts in an engaging way.
- **Example:** *Organize a scavenger hunt where participants learn new vocabulary or cultural facts.*

2. Creative Expression

- Art, music, or drama activities allow participants to share their stories and emotions, building self-confidence and resilience.

3. Team Challenges

- Group-based games and activities promote cooperation, problem-solving, and inclusion.

4. Flexible Formats

- Adapt activities to match the participants' age, interests, and skill levels to ensure accessibility and enjoyment.



Educational Techniques & Methods for Integration

Techniques to Facilitate Participation and Inclusion

1. Simplify Communication

- Use clear, simple language and visual aids to ensure everyone understands instructions and feels included.

2. Small Group Settings

- Divide participants into smaller groups to create a more intimate and supportive learning environment.

3. Cultural Inclusivity

- Incorporate elements of their cultural heritage into activities to validate their identities and promote mutual respect.

4. Encourage Feedback

- Regularly ask participants for input on activities to ensure they feel heard and engaged.

5. Recognize Achievements

- Celebrate both individual and group successes to boost morale and encourage continued participation.

By using these educational methods, you can create an inclusive environment where young refugees feel motivated, supported, and empowered to integrate into their new communities.

Cultural Integration and Promotion of European Values

Diversity, Tolerance, Human Rights

1. Celebrating Diversity

- Europe thrives on diversity. Encourage young refugees to embrace differences, not just in culture, but in language, religion, and lifestyle. Celebrating diversity helps foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued.

2. Promoting Tolerance

- Tolerance goes beyond accepting differences – it involves actively respecting and valuing other people's beliefs and practices. Teach young refugees to not just coexist, but to learn from others' experiences and viewpoints.

3. Human Rights Awareness

- Human rights are a core value in Europe. Help young people understand their rights, from access to education and healthcare to freedom of expression. Knowledge of their rights empowers them to advocate for themselves and others.

Cultural Integration and Promotion of European Values

How to Discuss European Values with Young People

1. Use Relatable Examples

- Frame European values with examples relevant to their lives. Discuss how European values of equality, freedom, and democracy can apply to their personal experiences, especially as they navigate their new lives.

2. Interactive Discussions

- Engage young people in discussions about what these values mean to them. Ask open-ended questions like, “*What does fairness mean to you?*” or “*How can we show respect for everyone in our community?*” These conversations allow them to reflect on values and understand how they fit into the larger European framework.

3. Incorporate Stories and Media

- Use stories, films, or real-life examples from European history or current events to illustrate the importance of values like justice, respect, and solidarity. This can make abstract concepts more tangible and relatable.

Cultural Integration and Promotion of European Values

Examples of Good Practices

1. Cultural Celebrations and Events

- Organize events where young refugees can showcase their culture, while also learning about local customs. These exchanges promote mutual respect and foster integration in a fun, engaging way.

2. Collaborative Projects

- Encourage joint activities between young refugees and local youth, such as community service or group art projects. Working together promotes inclusion, helps break down stereotypes, and builds a sense of belonging.

3. Workshops on Rights and Responsibilities

- Hold workshops that educate young people about their legal rights and the responsibilities that come with living in a new society. This empowers them to participate actively in their communities while understanding their role in upholding European values.

By focusing on diversity, tolerance, and human rights, and using engaging methods to discuss European values, we can help young refugees not only integrate but become active, informed citizens.

Cultural Integration and Promotion of European Values

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Workshop Frameworks

Introduction to the **30 scenarios**

The workshop scenarios presented in this booklet have been created as part of the Bridge to New Beginnings for Ukrainian Refugees project. They are designed to support young volunteers working with refugee youth, especially those who have fled the war in Ukraine and are now facing the challenges of integration and adaptation in a new country.

These scenarios aim to foster peer-to-peer education, emotional connection, and active participation. They provide practical tools for creating inclusive, empowering, and culturally sensitive workshop environments that respond to the real needs of young people with migration experience.

Each scenario draws on key themes such as democratic participation, language skills, social and civic competences, environmental awareness, digital literacy, and European values like equality and tolerance. They are meant to inspire, guide, and support volunteers in building meaningful relationships and offering effective educational activities.

We invite you to use, adapt, and share these scenarios in your own work with youth. Let them become bridges — connecting people, experiences, and hopes for a better future.

Workshop Templates

1. Adaptation and Integration into a **New Environment**

1.1. Coping with change and cultural shock

This session helps participants recognize the stages of cultural adjustment and normalize emotional responses to change. Through storytelling and open reflection, they explore real-life coping strategies such as mindfulness, routine-building, and connecting with others who've undergone similar experiences.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Flipchart, markers, handouts with adaptation phases | **Methods:** storytelling, open discussion, reflection groups

1.2. Building a support network

Participants will map their existing personal and digital networks and explore concrete ways to expand them by connecting with NGOs, schools, or community events, as well as individuals. The session includes exercises in approaching new people and identifying safe, supportive spaces (i.e. networking exercises).

Time: 60 min | **Resources:** Paper, pens, network mapping template | **Methods:** brainstorming, pair work, visual mapping

Workshop Templates

1. Adaptation and Integration into a **New Environment**

1.3. Your first 100 days in a new country

Participants get introduced to the most useful information they need to know for the first 100 days in their new country. Those will concern: *where to find language classes, how to open bank accounts, what documents do they require for their stay in the new country, as well as where and how to procure those, how to enrol in classes/formal education.*

On the other end, participants will co-create a 100-day roadmap that includes administrative tasks, self-care strategies, and social activities, helping them feel less overwhelmed and more empowered. Each group shares personal insights and hacks for thriving in the first critical months.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Worksheets, local guides, post-its |

Methods: informational sessions, co-creation, group work, practical tasks



Workshop Templates

1. Adaptation and Integration into a **New Environment**

1.4. Your first 100 days in a new country

This hands-on workshop walks participants through how to access key services such as healthcare, education, and employment, using mock scenarios and system maps. Participants role-play real-life visits to offices and practice asking questions.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Info sheets, case study scripts |
Methods: simulation, role-play, problem-solving



Workshop Templates

2. **Language** Competences

2.1. English - the global language

This workshop introduces high-frequency English phrases related to running errands, shopping, transport, and emergencies, while exploring free digital tools for language learning like Duolingo and Quizlet. Participants practice in pairs, and simulate simple real-life dialogues.

Time: 60 min | **Resources:** Flashcards, apps, printouts | **Methods:** language games, digital exploration, dialogue

2.2. Introduction to the new language setting

A mock class where participants learn phrases for everyday use such as greetings, asking for help, or ordering food. The focus is on pronunciation, active listening, and confidence-building through interactive repetition and games.

Participants practice with native speakers that volunteer to help out with the workshop, in order to better their pronunciation and deepen their understanding of the new language, to prepare them for real-life interactions.

Time: 60 min | **Resources:** Audio recordings, flashcards, handouts | **Methods:** repetition drills, games, role-play

Workshop Templates

2. **Language** Competences

2.3. Know before you go – crucial terms in bureaucracy

Participants learn vocabulary and phrases needed at government offices, with a special focus on terms used in residency, health services, and education forms. Scenarios are practiced in pairs with role-playing simulations.

Participants practice with native speakers that volunteer to help out with the workshop, in order to better their pronunciation and deepen their understanding of the new language, to prepare them for real-life interactions.

Time: 75 min | **Resources:** Sample forms, vocabulary lists | **Methods:** simulation, glossary building, role-play



Workshop Templates

3. Meet the **European Values**

3.1. Exploring diversity: global mindset & cultivating empathy

Participants reflect on their own cultural norms and biases through empathy walks and real-world case studies. They learn to recognize and appreciate different perspectives and values.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Cultural case studies, cards |
Methods: empathy exercises, group reflection, open discussion, case study analysis

3.2. Combating stereotypes and prejudices

The session includes stereotype-busting games, educational videos, testimonials, and critical group discussions. Participants explore the roots of prejudice and how to respond constructively.

Time: 75 min | **Resources:** Projector, stereotype cards |
Methods: group games, discussion, video analysis

Workshop Templates

3. Meet the **European Values**

3.3. Building inclusive communities

Teams design an awareness campaign, inclusive event, or space improvement project based on their vision of a welcoming community. The session ends with presentations and feedback.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Posters, art supplies, community map | **Methods:** co-creation, team design, presentations

3.4. Understanding equality vs equity

Participants analyse images and stories that illustrate systemic inequality, and role-play various starting points in life. They work in groups to find fair solutions in hypothetical cases. They are also taught about the key differences between equality and equity.

Time: 60 min | **Resources:** Diagrams, role cards | **Methods:** visual facilitation, small group work, plenary feedback

Workshop Templates

3. Meet the **European Values**

3.5. How to work in diverse teams

Through role-play and conflict simulations, participants learn active listening, assertive communication, and how to mediate cultural misunderstandings.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Conflict scenarios, worksheets | **Methods:** role-play, simulation, coaching

3.6. Diversity through art

Participants create visual or performance art based on their identity and values, then curate a pop-up gallery or performance that invites dialogue on diversity.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Art supplies, music, speakers, microphone, paper | **Methods:** art expression, sharing circle, gallery walk



Workshop Templates

4. **Social Development** and **Democratic** Life

4.1. **Media literacy & critical thinking**

Using real and fake news examples, participants learn how to assess credibility, spot misinformation, and become more critical consumers of media. The session includes a small group "fact-check challenge".

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** News samples, internet access | **Methods:** analysis, team tasks, discussion

4.2. **Efficient communication & debating skills**

Participants learn how to construct logical arguments, speak persuasively, and respectfully disagree. A debate round helps them apply theory in practice, while receiving peer feedback.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Debate topic cards, argument template | **Methods:** debate, peer feedback, discussion

4.3. **Civic participation scale/levels**

Participants learn about different forms of civic engagement — from voting and petitions to community organizing — through group work, research, and presentations. They reflect on their own potential as changemakers.

Time: 75 min | **Resources:** Game board, tokens | **Methods:** gamification, guided group work, group research, group presentations

Workshop Templates

4. **Social** Development and **Democratic** Life

4.4. Understanding the EU

An interactive session where participants explore the role and structure of EU institutions through watching videos, and open discussions (30 minutes), and via a simplified simulation of the decision-making process (90 minutes). It explains how decisions are made and how they impact young people's daily lives, emphasizing their rights as future citizens.

Time: 120 min | **Resources:** Printed EU map, videos | **Methods:** open discussion, video support, simulation

4.5. Rights and responsibilities of EU citizens

This session uses real-life scenarios and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights to help participants understand what they can expect from society – and what's expected of them. Discussion highlights how to act if rights are violated. In the end, participants partake in a debate mock session on topics regarding human rights preservation, and consequences for their violation.

Time: 120 min | **Resources:** Charter of Fundamental Rights, scenario cards | **Methods:** scenario-based learning, open discussions, mock debates

Workshop Templates

5. Professional Qualifications and Activity

5.1. The Job Market 101

Participants are introduced to local job-seeking platforms, the process of identifying their career interests, and how to read job postings critically. The session includes guided online research and sharing of findings.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Job platforms, sample ads |

Methods: online research, peer coaching

5.2. How to write a CV and a cover letter

This hands-on workshop walks participants through structure, tone, and personalization of CVs and cover letters. Using templates, they write and peer-review documents tailored to a real job ad.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Laptops, CV templates | **Methods:** workshop, feedback circles, editing

Workshop Templates

5. Professional Qualifications and Activity

5.3. Preparing for a job interview

Mock interview simulations help participants build confidence, practice answering typical questions, and understand employer expectations. It also covers non-verbal communication and stress management.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Interview guides, mock setup |

Methods: role-play, peer feedback, rehearsal

5.4. Entrepreneurship and self-employment

Participants explore how to turn personal interests into business ideas, examine market needs, and discover resources like startup grants. The session uses idea pitching and business model templates.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Market analysis toolkit,

worksheets | **Methods:** idea generation, case studies

Workshop Templates

5. Professional Qualifications and Activity

5.5. Volunteering as a career booster

This session highlights how volunteering enhances transferable skills and provides practical experience, while also showing participants what kind of volunteering experiences to seek out for this purpose. Participants reflect on past experiences and learn how to frame them in CVs and interviews.

Time: 60 min | **Resources:** Volunteer stories, CV samples |

Methods: storytelling, mapping, discussion, brainstorming



Workshop Templates

6. IT/Digital Competences

6.1. Digital literacy basics

Participants learn essential internet skills such as identifying reliable websites, using search engines efficiently, and understanding how digital information spreads. Includes mini-tasks and search challenges.

Time: 75 min | **Resources:** Web interface, browser | **Methods:** demo, exercises, Q&A

6.2. Multimedia workshop – Canva & CapCut

A creative session where participants design a social media post and edit a short video using Canva and CapCut. They learn layout principles, video and audio cuts, and exporting formats.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Computers, software access | **Methods:** tutorial, peer learning, applied tasks

Workshop Templates

6. IT/Digital Competences

6.3. Digital me: digital identity & security

This workshop explores online privacy, responsible sharing, and managing one's digital footprint. Participants assess personal habits and co-create a "safe behavior checklist".

Time: 75 min | **Resources:** Slides, quiz, real cases | **Methods:** analysis, reflection, mini-lecture

6.4. Beneficial and ethical use of AI

Participants explore how to use AI responsibly in school, job-seeking, and communication. Includes hands-on time with ChatGPT or similar tools and an ethics discussion.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** AI platforms, prompts | **Methods:** demo, discussion, co-creation

6.5. Microsoft basics

A beginner-friendly tutorial on Word, Excel, and PowerPoint with tasks like formatting text, inserting tables, and creating slides. Ends with a mini project presentation.

Time: 90 min | **Resources:** Laptops, MS Office | **Methods:** hands-on, group challenge, task cards

Workshop Templates

7. Ecological Competences

7.1. Climate change made simple

Through animations and interactive charts, participants understand causes and effects of climate change and its impact on everyday life. They also discuss global vs. local responsibility.

Time: 60 min | **Resources:** Videos, visuals, experiment kits | **Methods:** visual learning, analogy, discussion

7.2. Small-scale habits for sustainability

Participants learn eco-habits like reducing plastic use, saving energy, and sustainable shopping. They develop personal action plans and commit to a 7-day eco-challenge.

Time: 75 min | **Resources:** Habit tracker, posters | **Methods:** group brainstorm, action planning, pledge wall



Thank You

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The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the content, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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New Beginnings Start With Us