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Report on best practices benchmarking and framework design

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1. Methodology

This report on best practices benchmarking and framework design sets a solid foundation for the development of the Guide for Volunteers and Community Leaders, to equip volunteers and community leaders with the knowledge and tools they need to support refugees' mental well-being, so they can help create a more resilient and empowered refugee community.

The main goals of this report are:

- To present a collection of evidence-based information on effective approaches and strategies for promoting mental well-being among refugees across the EU.
- To showcase proven practices and tools that have demonstrated success in supporting refugee mental health.
- To establish a framework that will guide the development of the subsequent Guide for Volunteers and Community Leaders.

Overall, the partnership collected and analysed 12 best practices from various EU member-states – 2 from Portugal, 2 from Austria, 2 from Bulgaria, 4 from Germany – and 2 from outside the partnership.

Based on the collected materials, this report will present a suggested design for a comprehensive framework for the Guide. This framework will serve as:

- A set of recommendations for content inclusion in the Guide.
- A checklist to ensure all crucial aspects are addressed.
- A validation tool for the preliminary topics identified for the Guide.



2. Best practices

This section presents a curated collection of best practices from various EU member-states and beyond. These practices represent effective approaches, strategies, and proven tools that have demonstrated success in supporting refugee mental health, encompassing a diverse range of intervention types, including one-to-one support systems, non-formal education programmes focusing on health and well-being, psychosocial group sessions for experience sharing, intensive casework methodologies, and crisis intervention strategies, among others.

By showcasing these successful initiatives, this report aims to provide a comprehensive overview and benchmarking analysis of the most effective and innovative approaches currently employed across the EU. These best practices serve as valuable references and potential models for adaptation in different contexts, ultimately contributing to enhancing mental health support for refugee communities.

In the following pages, a detailed description of each best practice, including their implementation strategies, outcomes, and potential for scalability, will be presented. This collection not only highlights the diversity of approaches but also underscores the shared commitment across the EU to support and empower refugee populations through targeted mental health interventions.

Best practice #1

Title	Mental Health Kit for Migrants: Multilingual resource for refugees' mental well-being
Country	Portugal
Implementing organisation	Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses (Portuguese Psychologists' Association) in collaboration with JRS Portugal - Serviço Jesuíta aos Refugiados (JRS Portugal – Jesuit Refugee Service)
Website or link to the practice	www.ordemdospsicologos.pt/pt/noticia/5040 [only available in Portuguese]
Summary description	The Mental Health Kit for Migrants is a comprehensive mental health resource kit for migrants and refugees, translated into 10 languages, providing essential information and tools to support mental well-being in diverse migrant communities in Portugal.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose of the Mental Health Kit for Migrants is to address language barriers and provide accessible mental health information to diverse migrant populations. It aims to empower migrants with knowledge about mental health, coping strategies, and available resources, thereby promoting their overall well-being and integration.

Implementation methodology	The Mental Health Kit for Migrants was developed through collaboration between psychology professionals and refugee support organisations in Portugal. It was then translated into multiple languages – Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Urdu, English, French, Hindi, Somali, Ukrainian and Portuguese – to ensure wide accessibility. The digital format of the Kit based on interactive infographics allows for easy understanding, distribution and updates, as interested parties can freely download it.
Key activities and resources	The Mental Health Kit for Migrants translates into the creation of mental health content by psychology professionals through a set of interconnected interactive infographics, which were translated into 10 languages. They provide information about anxiety, traumatic situations, depression and grief, and self-care, and where migrants can find support in Portugal. The Kit was published and distributed in a digital format. Professional expertise, translation services, digital publishing platforms, collaboration between organisations can be considered as the main resources for the Kits development.
Impact and effectiveness	The Mental Health Kit for Migrants is expected to improve mental health awareness and access to resources for migrants in Portugal. Its multilingual nature ensures that crucial information reaches diverse communities, potentially leading to better mental health outcomes and increased help-seeking behaviour.
Attractiveness	The Mental Health Kit for Migrants addresses a critical need for accessible mental health information and overcomes language barriers with translations in 10 languages. Its digital format ensures easy access and distribution among the migrant community in Portugal. Additionally, collaboration between professional and refugee support organisations enhances credibility and relevance for this topic, that demonstrates cultural sensitivity and inclusivity.
Transferability potential	This best practice can be easily adapted by other countries or organisations by translating the content into relevant languages. The digital format allows for easy sharing and updating. Volunteers and Community Leaders can use this as a template to create similar resources tailored to their specific contexts or to distribute the existing Kit in their communities.
Lessons learned	▪ Collaboration between professional bodies and grassroots organisations can create more effective resources for promoting refugees' well-being. ▪ Addressing language barriers is crucial for providing mental health support to diverse migrant population. ▪ Freely accessible digital resources can significantly increase the reach and accessibility of mental health information. ▪ Providing culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate materials is key to engaging migrant communities. ▪ Regular updates and expansions of such resources are important to address evolving needs, particularly refugees' well-being.

Best practice #2



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Title	“Construir a Paz” (Building Peace): Comprehensive psychological support for Ukrainian refugees in Portugal
Country	Portugal
Implementing organisation	Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses (Portuguese Psychologists' Association)
Website or link to the practice	www.ordemdospsicologos.pt/pt/p/psicologia-construir-a-paz [only available in Portuguese]
Summary description	“Construir a Paz” is a multi-faceted initiative providing psychological assistance, training, resources, and support for Ukrainian refugees in Portugal and the psychologists working with them, including multilingual helplines, professional forums, continuous training for psychologists, and translated materials for promoting health literacy among the refugee population.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose of “Construir a Paz” is to address the mental health needs of Ukrainian refugees in Portugal and equip Portuguese psychologists with the necessary tools and knowledge to provide effective support during the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine. This initiative aims to create a comprehensive support system that not only provides immediate psychological assistance to refugees but also builds long-term capacity within the Portuguese mental health community to handle refugee-specific issues. Furthermore, it seeks to raise awareness about the psychological impact of war and displacement, fostering a more empathetic and informed society that can better integrate and support refugees.
Implementation methodology	The “Construir a Paz” initiative uses a comprehensive approach, combining direct psychological support, professional development, resource creation and translation, and community engagement to address various aspects of refugee mental health support. It employs a multi-channel strategy, using both traditional methods like helplines and modern digital platforms for resource dissemination and professional networking. The implementation also emphasizes cultural sensitivity and language accessibility, ensuring that resources and support are available in the languages most relevant to the target population. Additionally, the initiative adopts a collaborative model, partnering with various organisations and leveraging the expertise of Ukrainian-speaking professionals to enhance the effectiveness and reach of its services.
Key activities and resources	The “Construir a Paz” initiative provides a 24/7 psychological counseling helpline in English and Portuguese, a daily Ukrainian-language psychological assistance hotline, continuous training courses for psychologists, an online forum for psychologists working with refugees, a database of Ukrainian-speaking psychologists,

	translated resources on mental health and trauma, and media engagement through regular columns.
Impact and effectiveness	The wide range of services and resources of the “Construir a Paz” initiative is expected to improve access to mental health support for Ukrainian refugees and enhance the capacity of Portuguese psychologists to address refugee mental health needs effectively.
Attractiveness	The “Construir a Paz” initiative is a comprehensive approach addressing multiple aspects of refugee mental health that provides multilingual support overcoming language barriers. It has a combination of direct support and professional development and makes use of various media and formats for information dissemination. Additionally, it provides a fast response to an emerging crisis situation.
Transferability potential	This multi-faceted approach can be adapted by other countries or organisations facing similar refugee crises. The model of combining direct support, professional development, and resource creation can be replicated in various contexts, with adjustments for local languages and specific needs.
Lessons learned	▪ By providing multilingual helplines and translated resources, we are helping to address language barriers in mental health support, especially in crisis situations. ▪ The focus on ongoing training for psychologists highlights the need for mental health professionals to continuously update their skills and knowledge, particularly when dealing with unique crisis situations. ▪ By offering both immediate psychological assistance (through helplines) and developing long-term resources (like translated materials), we are building a foundation for ongoing support and self-help. ▪ Collaboration, involving various organisations and professionals, allows for the pooling of resources, expertise, and networks, leading to a more comprehensive, effective, and coordinated response. ▪ A multi-channel (online forums, helplines, media columns) approach ensures that information and support reach different segments of the population through their preferred mediums.

Best practice #3

Title	Mind-Spring: preventive intervention for and by refugees
Country	The Netherlands

Implementing organisation	Dutch Council for Refugees and Pharos
Website or link to the practice	https://shorturl.at/oLXbD https://arq.org/projecten/mind-spring [only available in Dutch]
Summary description	Mind-Spring is a preventive group intervention offering psychoeducation and parenting support for refugees. It aims to improve mental health and psychosocial skills through culturally sensitive programmes for adults, children, teenagers, and parents, led by trainers with refugee backgrounds alongside mental health professionals.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose of Mind-Spring is to prevent or mitigate mental health problems among refugees by providing early-stage psychoeducation, developing coping strategies, and offering information about the Dutch healthcare system. It aims to improve well-being, life satisfaction, resilience, and sense of coherence among refugees, ultimately contributing to better integration into Dutch society.
Implementation methodology	The intervention is implemented through four distinct programmes: 1) Mind-Spring for adults, 2) Mind-Spring Junior for children (8-12 years), 3) Mind-Spring 13+ for teenagers (13-18 years), and 4) Parenting support. Each programme consists of 8 sessions of 2 hours each, conducted in groups of 10-15 participants who speak the same language. Sessions are led by a trainer with a refugee background and a co-trainer from professional mental health care.
Key activities and resources	The Mind-Spring programme offers comprehensive support to refugees through various key activities and resources. Activities include psychoeducation on mental health topics, information about the Dutch healthcare system, development of coping mechanisms, and building self-confidence. The programme also provides parenting support for refugee families. Essential resources include trained facilitators with refugee backgrounds, mental health professionals, and multilingual training materials for different age groups. This combination of activities and resources ensures culturally sensitive and effective support for refugees of all ages, addressing their mental health needs and facilitating integration into Dutch society.
Impact and effectiveness	Mind-Spring has been shown to contribute to improved well-being, life satisfaction, resilience, and sense of coherence among participants. It has been recognized by the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) as a theoretically well-founded intervention. A 2022 evaluation demonstrated its positive contribution to the integration process of refugees in Dutch society.
Attractiveness	Mind-Spring is an attractive and effective programme for refugee mental health support due to its culturally sensitive approach, combining peer support with professional guidance. It offers

	comprehensive programmes for adults, youth, and families, focusing on both prevention and early intervention. The programme has proven effectiveness in improving well-being and integration, and demonstrates adaptability to different refugee groups. These features collectively contribute to Mind-Spring's success in addressing the complex mental health needs of diverse refugee populations.
Transferability potential	The Mind-Spring model shows great potential for adaptation to various international contexts. To successfully transfer this programme, several key strategies can be employed. These include training local refugees as facilitators, forming partnerships with local mental health institutions, and translating programme materials into relevant languages. Additionally, it is crucial to adapt the content to reflect local healthcare systems and cultural contexts. Implementing the programme's four-part structure would ensure comprehensive coverage of diverse needs. By following these steps, the Mind-Spring model can be effectively implemented in different countries while maintaining its core principles and adapting to local circumstances.
Lessons learned	- Combining peer support specialists with refugee backgrounds with professional mental health guidance is highly effective for improving refugee's mental well-being. - Addressing mental health early can prevent more serious issues, as early intervention can stop, lower, or delay possible negative mental health outcomes. - Culturally sensitive approaches increase engagement and effectiveness and involving trainers who share participants' language and background creates a more comfortable and relatable environment for refugees. - Comprehensive family support, including parenting guidance, is crucial for refugees' well-being, as mental health support for refugees must consider the entire family unit. - Focusing on strengths, coping strategies, and positive identity empowers participants, which are crucial for refugees dealing with the challenges of their new environment.

Best practice #4

Title	Comprehensive mental health resources for refugees and asylum seekers
Country	United Kingdom (UK)
Implementing organisation	Mental Health Foundation

Website or link to the practice	https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/programmes/refugees/resources
Summary description	A multi-faceted approach to supporting refugee and asylum seekers' mental health through educational resources, personal stories, podcasts, and translated mental health advice. This comprehensive initiative combines practical information about life in the UK with emotional support and coping strategies, tailored specifically for the refugee experience.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose of these mental health resources is to provide accessible, culturally sensitive mental health support and information for refugees and asylum seekers, addressing their unique challenges and experiences. The initiative aims to empower refugees by offering resources that promote mental well-being, resilience, and successful integration into their new communities. Additionally, it seeks to raise awareness about the specific mental health needs of refugees and asylum seekers among both the general public and healthcare professionals, fostering a more supportive and understanding environment.
Implementation methodology	The Mental Health Foundation uses a variety of media (films, podcasts, written guides, short stories, and statistical reports, links for further support) and languages (English, Pashto, Ukrainian, Dari and Arabic) to reach a diverse audience. It also emphasizes peer-led content creation and sharing of personal experiences.
Key activities and resources	This initiative offers a diverse range of resources including educational films on mental well-being, short stories from refugees and asylum seekers, podcast series on asylum life in Scotland and stories of hope, and mental health advice in multiple languages. Additionally, it provides links to other support organisations, creating a comprehensive network of resources for refugees and asylum seekers to access information and assistance.
Impact and effectiveness	The Mental Health Foundation's approach demonstrates potential for significant impact through its diverse, multi-lingual resources and peer-led content, enhancing accessibility and relatability for a broad refugee audience and effectively increasing mental health awareness, improving coping strategies, and overcoming cultural barriers to mental health support among refugees and asylum seekers.
Attractiveness	This initiative's attractiveness lies in its multi-lingual resources available in Pashto, Ukrainian, Dari, and Arabic, coupled with a variety of media formats including films, podcasts, and written guides to cater to different preferences and learning styles. It further enhances its appeal through peer-led content creation, a focus on practical aspects of asylum life such as education and employment, and an emphasis on hope and positive experiences, making the resources both relatable and empowering for refugees and asylum seekers.

Transferability potential	This innovative practice could be adapted in various contexts by creating similar multi-lingual resources in other countries and implementing peer-led content creation within different refugee communities. Additionally, the approach can be tailored to local needs by adapting podcast topics to reflect specific asylum processes and challenges in each region, and by partnering with local organisations to provide region-specific information and support.
Lessons learned	▪ Providing information in multiple languages is crucial for accessibility, as multilingual resources also help preserve cultural identity and promote a sense of inclusion in the host country. ▪ Peer-led content creation enhances relevance and relatability, empowering refugees by validating their experiences and knowledge, potentially boosting their self-esteem and sense of purpose. ▪ Addressing practical aspects of asylum life alongside mental health is important, an integrated approach that helps refugees build resilience by equipping them with both practical and emotional tools. ▪ Using diverse media formats helps reach a wider audience, allowing for repetition of key information across different mediums. ▪ Sharing stories of hope can be a powerful tool for supporting mental well-being, as sharing one's story can be therapeutic for the storyteller.

Best practice #5

Title	Supporting Vulnerable Third-Country Nationals in Return Procedures
Country	Bulgaria
Implementing organisation	Center for Legal Aid – Voice in Bulgaria & Mission Wings Foundation
Website or link to the practice	https://centerforlegalaid.com/en/supporting-vulnerable-third-country-national
Summary description	The project supports vulnerable individuals facing return procedures by offering case management, legal assistance, and communication support. This comprehensive approach helps reduce stress and anxiety, contributing to the overall mental well-being of refugees.
Main purpose and objectives	The project addresses the needs of vulnerable third-country nationals who no longer meet legal residence requirements. It aims to ensure their rights and dignity are protected during return procedures by providing tailored legal and social support. By

	addressing the legal aspects, the project indirectly contributes to reducing psychological stress for individuals undergoing complex return processes.
Implementation methodology	A team of case managers and legal professionals worked with individuals to create personalized support plans, providing guidance and legal representation. The team considered the mental health implications of each case and referred individuals to mental health services when necessary. The project also collaborated with government and community organizations to improve the treatment of vulnerable persons in return procedures, which resulted in a more supportive environment.
Key activities and resources	Activities included case management meetings, legal representation in court, and coordination with state authorities for alternative detention measures. Resources needed included legal expertise, trained case managers, collaboration with local authorities and NGOs, and access to mental health referral services.
Impact and effectiveness	The project had a 47.5% success rate in completing cases where alternatives to detention were applied, improving the overall treatment and outcomes for vulnerable individuals. By reducing the legal uncertainty and stress associated with return procedures, the project contributed to better psychological well-being for participants.
Attractiveness	The project's innovative approach to using alternatives to detention and its collaboration with various stakeholders make it a model for humane and effective management of return procedures. It successfully integrates a holistic approach, acknowledging the psychological and legal needs of vulnerable individuals.
Transferability potential	This practice can be adopted in other countries to support vulnerable groups in similar contexts, ensuring compliance with international human rights standards while addressing the mental health needs of individuals facing return procedures.
Lessons learned	▪ Multidisciplinary collaboration is crucial for achieving effective outcomes in both legal and mental health support. ▪ Flexibility in Approach: everyone's situation is unique, and flexibility in approach — both legal and social — is necessary to tailor support services to their specific circumstances and needs. ▪ Legal representation is key in protecting the rights of vulnerable people, which also reduces the psychological burden of uncertainty. ▪ Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: regular monitoring and evaluation of each case is necessary to adapt strategies and interventions, ensuring they remain relevant and effective over time. This approach helps identify mental health concerns early and addresses them promptly.

Best practice #6

Title	Bulgaria as Part of the Network for Accessible Information
Country	Bulgaria
Implementing organisation	Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR) Bulgaria
Website or link to the practice	https://farbg.eu/bg/projects/blgariya-kato-chast-ot-mezhdunarodna-mrezha-za-dostpna-informaciya
Summary description	The project provides accessible legal and psychological information to refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria, using a multi-channel approach, including the Migrantlife.bg platform and a multilingual hotline.
Main purpose and objectives	The project's main objective is to ensure that refugees have reliable and accessible information about their rights, healthcare services, and mental health resources, facilitating their adaptation and well-being in Bulgaria.
Implementation methodology	The project utilizes an online platform, Migrantlife.bg, a multilingual hotline, and on-ground outreach to provide information and support in various languages. It also collaborates with local communities to ensure effective communication and assistance.
Key activities and resources	Key activities include: ▪ Development and maintenance of Migrantlife.bg information portal. ▪ Operation of a multilingual support hotline. ▪ On-ground outreach and distribution of informational materials. Resources needed included: ▪ Multilingual translation services. ▪ Collaboration with local professionals (legal, mental health ect.). ▪ Technical resources for developing the information portal.
Impact and effectiveness	The project effectively enhanced access to information and mental health support for over 500 refugees. As a result, there was an increase in the utilization of mental health services and improved awareness of legal rights among the target population.
Attractiveness	The innovative use of technology and a holistic approach combining legal, social, and psychological support make this project a model for similar initiatives. It has created a sustainable network for providing ongoing support to refugee communities.
Transferability potential	This practice can be adapted in other contexts by adjusting the language and content to the needs of different refugee groups. Volunteers and community leaders can use the approach to develop similar platforms and workshops tailored to the mental health and informational needs of refugees in other countries.

Lessons learned	▪ Effective Communication: clear and culturally sensitive communication is essential when developing information materials for refugees. ▪ Collaborative Approach: Involving diverse stakeholders such as NGOs, government bodies, and refugee communities ensures the success and sustainability of the project. ▪ Adaptability: the needs of refugees can change rapidly, so flexibility in content and services is crucial. ▪ Community engagement: Engaging community leaders in the development and dissemination of information enhances trust and participation among refugees.
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Best practice #7

Title	Refugee Peer Support and Psychoeducation Programme
Country	Germany
Implementing organisation	Flüchtlingshelferkreis München (Refugee Helper Circle Munich)
Website or link to the practice	www.fluechtlingshilfe-muenchen.de
Summary description	The programme is a preventive mental health and psychoeducation initiative. The programme empowers refugees by providing peer-led mental health support and psychoeducation on topics such as trauma, coping mechanisms, and integration challenges. It combines the lived experience of refugee peer facilitators with the expertise of mental health professionals, ensuring that support is culturally sensitive and relatable. The initiative is focused on building resilience, emotional well-being, and self-confidence among refugee participants to ease their integration.
Main purpose and objectives	The main objective of the programme is to provide early-stage psychoeducation and mental health support for refugees, with a focus on prevention and empowerment. By involving peer facilitators who have refugee backgrounds, the programme creates a more relatable and comfortable environment. The key goals are to prevent the development of serious mental health problems, improve refugees' coping strategies, and facilitate their psychosocial well-being, which in turn supports better integration outcomes. The

	programme also aims to provide refugees with information about the German healthcare system and social services.
Implementation methodology	The programme is delivered in small group settings where refugees are matched with peer facilitators who have undergone similar experiences and mental health professionals. It is structured in a series of psychoeducation sessions, each focusing on a different aspect of mental health, coping strategies, and social integration. The peer facilitators, who share the participants' language and cultural background, lead discussions and activities, while the mental health professionals provide additional guidance and expertise. The programme targets adult refugees and asylum seekers aged 18-50. The groups include men and women from diverse backgrounds. The initiative also includes family-based support sessions.
Key activities and resources	The programme offers a combination of psychoeducational sessions and peer support, to help refugees understand their mental health and adapt to life in Germany. ▪ Refugees attend workshops on trauma, resilience, coping mechanisms, and navigating the German healthcare system. ▪ Refugees with lived experience are trained as peer facilitators to guide the sessions, sharing their insights ▪ These sessions provide guidance on parenting and child development, addressing the mental health needs of refugee families as a unit. ▪ Multilingual materials and resources are provided to ensure the content is accessible to all participants. ▪ Peer facilitators help connect participants to local services and mental health resources, such as counselling and therapy.
Impact and effectiveness	The programme has had a profound impact on the mental health and well-being of refugee participants. Refugees who engage with the programme report improved coping strategies, greater resilience, and an enhanced ability to navigate life in Germany. The use of peer facilitators fosters trust and creating a supportive learning environment. The family-based support model also ensures that the entire family unit is addressed, improving both individual and collective well-being. The programme has helped reduce the stigma around mental health in refugee communities and has contributed to better integration outcomes.
Attractiveness	The programme combines professional mental health care with peer-led, culturally sensitive guidance. This dual approach ensures that refugees feel understood and supported by someone who shares their background, while also benefiting from professional mental health expertise. The focus on early-stage psychoeducation and family support makes it particularly effective at preventing long-term mental health problems.

Transferability potential	This model can be easily transferred to other regions or countries with refugee populations. The key to successful replication is the involvement of peer facilitators from refugee backgrounds, combined with the support of mental health professionals. Training local refugees as facilitators, forming partnerships with mental health organisations, and ensuring culturally sensitive materials are available.
Lessons learned	- Combining peer support with professional mental health care is effective in creating a supportive, relatable. Peer facilitators with a similar background foster trust and engagement. - Early psychoeducation can prevent the development of more serious mental health issues by equipping refugees with coping strategies and resilience skills at an early stage. - Culturally sensitive approaches increase the effectiveness of the programme by ensuring that refugees feel respected and understood, which improves participation and outcomes. - Family support is crucial for addressing the mental health needs of the entire family unit. - Focusing on strengths, coping strategies, and resilience empowers refugees to take control of their mental well-being and better navigate their new environment.

Best practice #8

Title	Handbook Germany - Mental Health and Well-being Resources for Refugees and Migrants
Country	Germany
Implementing organisation	Neue Deutsche Medienmacher e.V. (New German Media Professionals) in collaboration with several NGOs, including Diakonie, Caritas, and the Robert Bosch Foundation
Website or link to the practice	https://handbookgermany.de/en
Summary description	Handbook Germany is a digital platform that provides comprehensive resources on mental health and well-being for refugees and migrants. It offers multilingual information on topics such as coping with trauma, anxiety, depression, and self-care. The platform aims to guide migrants through the mental health care system in Germany, helping them understand available support services. Content is available in multiple languages, including Arabic, Farsi, English, French, Turkish, and Russian.

Main purpose and objectives	The main goal of Handbook Germany is to break down barriers to accessing mental health information for refugees and migrants by offering resources in their native languages. The platform provides accessible information about Germany's healthcare system, mental health services, and strategies to manage stress and trauma. It aims to empower migrants by offering the tools needed to navigate mental health challenges and seek appropriate help.
Implementation methodology	The platform was developed through collaboration between media professionals, mental health experts, and refugee support organisations. The website is regularly updated to reflect new developments in German healthcare services, and the content is translated into several languages to ensure inclusivity. Interactive tools, articles, and videos make the resources easily understandable and accessible to a diverse migrant audience.
Key activities and resources	The key activities of the project include the creation of educational content focused on mental health, trauma, and self-care. This content is developed by mental health professionals and made accessible through interactive videos, articles, and FAQs available in multiple languages. Resources such as online directories and contacts for support services, along with information on how to navigate the healthcare system, are key components of the platform. The digital nature of the project allows for the use of multimedia tools and regular updates to the platform.
Impact and effectiveness	The platform has significantly improved access to mental health information for refugees and migrants, particularly those with limited German language skills. By providing crucial information in their native languages, the initiative has increased mental health awareness and the use of available support services. It has also helped reduce stigma around mental health in migrant communities and encouraged proactive help-seeking behaviour.
Attractiveness	This initiative addresses a major gap in mental health services for refugees and migrants by providing information in multiple languages. Its digital, easily accessible format ensures that migrants can access the resources they need anytime, anywhere. Collaboration between established NGOs and healthcare professionals enhances the credibility and impact of the initiative, demonstrating a culturally sensitive approach that resonates with its target audience.
Transferability potential	This model can be easily adapted for use in other countries with migrant populations. Its digital format allows for quick translation and localisation of content, making it a valuable tool for organisations looking to provide mental health support to diverse migrant communities. Community leaders and volunteers could adopt this model to create similar platforms tailored to their local contexts.
Lessons learned	Collaborating with media professionals and mental health experts creates accessible, high-quality resources that address both practical and psychological needs.

	▪ Addressing language barriers through multilingual platforms significantly improves access to mental health information for diverse migrant populations. ▪ Digital platforms allow for widespread distribution and regular updates, ensuring the continued relevance of the resources. ▪ Providing culturally sensitive and easily understandable materials is essential for engaging refugees and migrants with complex topics such as mental health. ▪ Partnerships between mental health organisations and refugee support services enhance the credibility and reach of mental health resources.
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Best practice #9

Title	Refugees Welcome - Housing Integration Programme
Country	Germany
Implementing organisation	Refugees Welcome Germany
Website or link to the practice	www.refugees-welcome.net
Summary description	This initiative connects refugees with local German residents willing to share their homes, fostering cultural integration through personal relationships. The programme helps move refugees from overcrowded shelters to private homes, promoting social integration.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose is to provide refugees with dignified housing and facilitate cultural integration through shared living arrangements. The initiative seeks to solve the challenges of social isolation, inadequate living conditions, and limited local support networks for refugees.
Implementation methodology	The programme follows a structured process that includes identifying suitable hosts, matching them with refugees, and providing ongoing support to both parties. Volunteers play a central role in the implementation, from conducting interviews and assessments to offering guidance on legal matters and conflict resolution. The programme offers continuous engagement and mentoring to ensure that both refugees and hosts benefit from the living arrangement and that challenges are promptly addressed. The program primarily targets adult refugees, asylum seekers, and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection who are either living in overcrowded shelters or struggling to find housing. The programme also seeks to engage German citizens or long-term residents who are willing to open their homes to refugees and provide a supportive environment.

Key activities and resources	It offers a variety of activities: ▪ Volunteers conduct interviews with both refugees and prospective hosts to assess compatibility, living preferences, and expectations. ▪ After a match, the program offers check-ins with both the refugee and host to ensure the arrangement is working smoothly. Volunteers provide conflict resolution services, legal advice, and emotional support as needed. ▪ The initiative organises events where hosts, refugees, and other community members can meet and share experiences. ▪ Hosts are encouraged to participate in peer support groups where they can exchange advice, share challenges, and discuss their experiences with other hosts. ▪ Volunteers provide guidance on legal matters e.g. shared housing, including rental agreements, access to housing benefits, and residency requirements.
Impact and effectiveness	The initiative has significantly impacted the lives of refugees and host families. Refugees who participate in the program benefit from improved living conditions, stronger social ties, and better language skills. Many refugees report feeling more connected to their communities and gaining practical knowledge of German culture and society. Hosts also report positive experiences, noting that the programme deepened their understanding of the refugee experience and challenged negative stereotypes. The programme's success is reflected in the growing number of host families and refugees involved.
Attractiveness	The initiative is attractive because of its grassroots, community-driven model that empowers citizens to actively participate in refugee integration. It is cost-effective and relies on existing resources (people's homes), creating immediate social impact.
Transferability potential	This best practice can be replicated in other countries by local community groups and NGOs. Its decentralised, volunteer-driven structure makes it easy to adapt to different legal and cultural contexts.
Lessons learned	▪ Personal relationships are key to successful integration. The connection between refugees and hosts builds trust, understanding, and fosters cultural exchange, enhancing the integration process. ▪ Ongoing support for both refugees and hosts is crucial. Regular check-ins and conflict resolution services ensure that any challenges are addressed early, maintaining stable and supportive living arrangements. ▪ Clear communication of expectations from the outset reduces potential conflicts. By setting clear guidelines, both refugees and hosts have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities, making the experience smoother for all parties. ▪ Peer support networks for hosts are invaluable, providing emotional and practical support. These networks allow hosts to

	share advice, challenges, and best practices, contributing to a stronger and more resilient hosting community. ▪ A volunteer-driven programme thrives on trust and community involvement, which helps to ensure its sustainability.
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Best practice #10

Title	Social Mentorship for Refugee Integration
Country	Germany
Implementing organisation	Start with a Friend e.V.
Website or link to the practice	www.start-with-a-friend.de
Summary description	This is a mentorship programme aimed at supporting the social integration of refugees by pairing them with local German volunteers who act as mentors and friends. The programme focuses on building meaningful, long-term personal relationships to help refugees navigate their new environment, access local resources, and build social networks. The initiative has been implemented in various cities across Germany, creating supportive and welcoming communities for refugees.
Main purpose and objectives	Its objective is to support the social integration of refugees into German society by fostering one-on-one personal relationships with locals. The initiative aims to reduce social isolation, enhance cultural exchange, and empower refugees by providing practical assistance and emotional support. Through these friendships, refugees gain access to local resources, improve their language skills, and integrate more effectively.
Implementation methodology	The programme works by matching refugees with local volunteers who commit to mentoring and supporting the refugees for a set period. Volunteers undergo a training programme to ensure they are prepared to support refugees in practical and emotional ways. The mentorship involves regular meetings where the pair engage in activities such as language practice, navigating bureaucratic processes, or participating in cultural and social events. Volunteers also help refugees access local services and resources, such as finding housing or employment opportunities. The target group for this program includes adult refugees and asylum seekers aged 18-50 who are in the early stages of their integration

Key activities and resources	The programme organises a range of activities to strengthen the bonds between refugees and their mentors and to provide integration support. ▪ Refugees are paired with a volunteer based on shared interests and needs. ▪ The programme organises regular events, such as community dinners, sports activities, and cultural outings, to promote interaction and cultural exchange. ▪ Volunteers undergo a structured training programme that covers topics like cross-cultural communication, active listening, and providing emotional support. ▪ Both refugees and mentors receive ongoing guidance from programme coordinators to address any challenges and to ensure the relationship is beneficial for both parties. ▪ The initiative connects refugees to local services, such as language courses, employment services, and housing resources, with the help of their mentors.
Impact and effectiveness	The programme has demonstrated significant positive outcomes for both refugees and mentors. Refugees report feeling more connected to their local communities, more confident navigating German systems, and more motivated to pursue education and employment opportunities. Mentors gain a deeper understanding of refugee experiences and contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming society.
Attractiveness	The initiative is highly attractive due to its personal approach to integration. By focusing on one-on-one relationships, the programme builds trust, empathy, and mutual understanding between refugees and locals. The mentorship model also provides practical, individualised support, which can be tailored to the specific needs of each refugee, making the program adaptable and effective.
Transferability potential	The mentorship model used is transferable and can be easily replicated in other countries or regions facing similar integration challenges. The core elements — volunteer-based mentorship, training, and community engagement — can be adapted to different cultural and social contexts. Local organisations in other countries could use this model to foster social integration and create welcoming communities for refugees.
Lessons learned	▪ Establishing personal relationships based on trust and mutual respect is crucial for overcoming cultural barriers and fostering a sense of belonging. ▪ It is essential to prepare volunteers through structured training programs to equip them with the necessary skills and cultural awareness to support refugees effectively. ▪ Coordinators should provide ongoing support and guidance to ensure that the mentorship relationships remain productive and mutually beneficial. ▪ Organising social events that facilitate cultural exchange can help break down stereotypes and promote a more inclusive community.

Best practice #11

Title	Empowering Refugees through Mental Wellbeing Support
Country	Austria
Implementing organisation	AFIYA
Website or link to the practice	https://www.afya.at
Summary description	AFIYA provides comprehensive mental health support to refugees through one-on-one counselling, group therapy sessions, and community-building activities.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose of AFIYA is to enhance the mental wellbeing of refugees by addressing trauma, stress, and other psychological challenges they face. The project aims to create a supportive environment where refugees can share their experiences and receive professional help.
Implementation methodology	FIYA uses a holistic approach that combines individual counselling, group therapy, and community activities. The methods include cognitive-behavioural therapy, mindfulness practices, and peer support groups.
Key activities and resources	▪ Type of intervention: individual and group therapy sessions, community-building activities. ▪ Main activities: weekly therapy sessions, monthly community events, and ongoing peer support groups. ▪ Resources needed: trained therapists, community volunteers, therapy spaces, funding for activities and materials.
Impact and effectiveness	The programme has significantly improved the mental wellbeing of participants, reducing symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression. It has also fostered a sense of community and belonging among refugees.
Attractiveness	The innovative combination of professional therapy and community support makes this practice highly effective and motivating for participants. The program's adaptability to individual needs is also a key strength.
Transferability potential	This best practice can be adapted by other organisations by training volunteers and community leaders in basic counselling skills and organizing regular support groups and community activities.
Lessons learned	▪ The importance of a holistic approach that includes both professional and peer support. ▪ Regular community activities help build trust and a sense of belonging.

	▪ Training volunteers in basic mental health support can significantly enhance the programme's reach and effectiveness. ▪ Flexibility in the programme allows it to meet the diverse needs of refugees. ▪ Continuous evaluation and feedback from participants are crucial for the programme's success.
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Best practice #12

Title	Integrationshaus: Comprehensive Support for Refugee Wellbeing
Country	Austria
Implementing organisation	Integrationshaus Wien
Website or link to the practice	https://www.integrationshaus.at/de
Summary description	Integrationshaus provides a wide range of services to support the mental wellbeing of refugees, including non-formal education, intensive casework, and crisis intervention.
Main purpose and objectives	The main purpose of Integrationshaus is to facilitate the integration and mental wellbeing of refugees by providing tailored support services that address their unique challenges and needs.
Implementation methodology	The approach includes non-formal education on health and wellbeing, intensive casework, and crisis intervention. The methods are designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of refugees.
Key activities and resources	▪ Type of intervention: educational workshops, individual case management, crisis support. ▪ Main activities: regular workshops on health and wellbeing, ongoing case management, immediate crisis intervention services. ▪ Resources needed: educators, caseworkers, crisis intervention specialists, volunteers, funding for workshops and support services.
Impact and effectiveness	The programme has successfully improved the mental health and overall wellbeing of refugees, helping them to integrate more effectively into society. Participants report feeling more supported and better equipped to handle their challenges.
Attractiveness	The comprehensive nature of the support services, combined with the involvement of volunteers and community leaders, makes this practice highly attractive. Its adaptability to different needs and situations is also a key feature.



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Transferability potential	This best practice can be replicated by other organisations by training volunteers and community leaders in case management and crisis intervention, and by organising regular educational workshops.
Lessons learned	▪ Comprehensive support services are essential for addressing the complex needs of refugees. ▪ Involving volunteers and community leaders enhances the programme's reach and effectiveness. ▪ Flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs are crucial for success. ▪ Regular training and support for volunteers and staff are necessary to maintain high-quality services. ▪ Continuous monitoring and evaluation help to improve the program and address any emerging challenges.



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3. Framework

This framework provides a comprehensive structure for the Guide for Volunteers and Community Leaders based. It includes:

- A set of recommendations for content inclusion, expanding on the preliminary topics and adding additional relevant considerations.
- A checklist to ensure all crucial aspects are addressed, covering a wide range of important points for supporting refugee mental well-being.
- A validation tool for the preliminary topics, breaking down each topic into specific elements to ensure comprehensive coverage based on the set of recommendations.

This framework can serve as a solid foundation for developing the Guide, ensuring that all key aspects of supporting refugee mental well-being are covered in a structured and thorough manner. It also allows for easy tracking of progress and validation of content as the Guide is developed.

3.1. Recommendations for content inclusion

The following recommendations outline key content areas that can be considered in the Guide for Volunteers and Community Leaders supporting refugee mental well-being.

These recommendations are based on comprehensive research and the best practices identified across various EU countries and beyond. They aim to provide a holistic approach to understanding and addressing the mental health needs of refugee communities while equipping volunteers and community leaders with essential knowledge and skills.

The content should be presented in an accessible, engaging manner, with practical examples and case studies to illustrate key points.

Overview: introduction and purpose	Clear explanation of the Guide's objectives, target audience, and the importance of mental well-being support for refugees.
Understanding refugee experiences	Insights into the challenges faced by refugees, including pre-migration trauma, displacement stress, and post-migration difficulties.
Cultural competence	Reference to the importance of cultural sensitivity and provide strategies for developing cultural competence when working with diverse refugees.
Trauma-informed approaches	Introduction to the concept of trauma-informed care and its application in supporting refugee mental well-being.

Communication skills	Focus on effective communication techniques, including active listening, empathy, and non-verbal communication in cross-cultural contexts.
Mental health first	Provide basic mental health first aid training, including recognising signs of distress and appropriate initial responses.
Community resources	A comprehensive list of local and national resources available for refugee mental health support.
Self-care for volunteers	Emphasize the importance of self-care and provide strategies for volunteers to maintain their own mental well-being.
Ethical considerations	Address ethical issues such as confidentiality, boundaries, and cultural sensitivity in mental health support.
Practical tools and techniques	Offer a range of practical tools and techniques that volunteers can use to support refugee mental well-being in various settings.

3.2 Checklist for partners when developing the Guide

When developing the Guide for Volunteers and Community Leaders, partners should consider the following key aspects:

- **Clarity and relevance:** clearly define the Guide's purpose and target audience, ensure content is directly relevant to volunteers and community leaders, and use culturally sensitive language throughout the Guide.
- **Comprehensive engagement framework:** provide a thorough overview of engagement principles with refugees, include strategies for building trust and rapport, emphasize empowerment and strength-based approaches, and address ethical considerations and confidentiality guidelines.
- **Trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach:** offer a detailed explanation of trauma-informed care, include diverse cultural perspectives on mental well-being, provide guidance on recognizing signs of trauma and stress, and address common misconceptions and stigma around mental health.
- **Practical skills and tools:** outline practical communication strategies for supporting mental well-being, include concrete tools and techniques for mental health support, provide clear instructions on when and how to refer to professional help, and incorporate practical exercises for stress reduction and grounding.
- **Resources and ongoing support:** include information on local resources and referral pathways, provide self-care guidance for volunteers and community leaders, incorporate real-world case studies and best practices, and offer resources for ongoing learning and development.

3.3 Proposed preliminary topics

This validation tool is designed to ensure comprehensive coverage of essential topics in the Guide for Volunteers and Community Leaders. It breaks down each preliminary topic into specific elements, providing a detailed checklist for content development and review based on the recommendations for content inclusion under subsection 3.1.

Each of the following topics contains a series of checkpoints that address crucial aspects of the topic. By using this tool, Guide developers can ensure that all important elements are included. Therefore, this validation tool serves as a roadmap for content creation, highlighting key areas to cover, it serves as a quality assurance mechanism, ensuring no critical information is overlooked, it promotes consistency across different sections of the guide, and it helps identify gaps in content that may require further research or expert input.

By systematically addressing each point in this tool, the resulting Guide is expected to be comprehensive, practical, and tailored to the needs of volunteers and community leaders working with refugees, contributing to a more effective support for refugee mental well-being.

To whom is this Guide	▪ Target audience is clearly defined and specific. ▪ Relevance of volunteers and community leaders is explicitly explained. ▪ Specific roles and responsibilities are outlined in detail. ▪ Different levels of experience (e.g., new volunteers vs. experienced leaders) are addressed. ▪ Guide's applicability to various settings (e.g., refugee camps, community centres) is clarified.
Principles for engagement with refugees	▪ Cultural sensitivity and respect are comprehensively covered. ▪ Trust-building strategies are practical and context-specific. ▪ Ethical considerations are thoroughly addressed, including confidentiality. ▪ Empowerment approaches are emphasized and exemplified. ▪ Power dynamics in refugee-volunteer relationships are discussed. ▪ Importance of refugee autonomy and agency is highlighted.

Trauma-informed basics when engaging with refugee communities	▪ Overview of trauma and its impact is clear and comprehensive. ▪ Principles of trauma-informed care are explained in depth. ▪ Guidance on avoiding re-traumatisation is practical and specific. ▪ Strategies for recognising trauma signs are detailed and contextual. ▪ Different types of traumas (e.g., complex trauma, intergenerational trauma) are addressed. ▪ Cultural variations in trauma expression and healing are explored.
Cultural concepts of mental well-being	▪ Diverse cultural perspectives on mental health are explored in depth. ▪ Common misconceptions and stigma are addressed with sensitivity. ▪ Guidance on culturally appropriate communication is practical and specific. ▪ Intersection of culture, religion, and mental health is discussed. ▪ Cultural strengths and resilience factors are highlighted. ▪ Strategies for cultural humility and ongoing learning are provided.
Supporting mental well-being conversations	▪ Active listening skills are covered with practical exercises. ▪ Non-judgmental communication techniques are explained with examples. ▪ Guidance on appropriate questioning is context-specific and sensitive. ▪ Strategies for providing emotional support are diverse and adaptable. ▪ Information on professional referrals is clear and includes local resources. ▪ Boundaries in supportive relationships are clearly defined. ▪ Crisis intervention basics are included.
Looking after yourself and peers	▪ Self-care strategies are diverse and adaptable to different needs. ▪ Burnout recognition and prevention strategies are comprehensive. ▪ Information on peer support networks is practical and actionable. ▪ Importance of supervision and professional support is emphasized. ▪ Strategies for maintaining work-life balance are included. ▪ Techniques for processing secondary trauma are provided. ▪ Resources for ongoing mental health support for volunteers are listed.