



HELPING TOGETHER

Comprehensive Support for At-Risk Families with Children from Ukraine in the Chrudim Region



The abstract of this case study describes the practice of the project Helping Together – Comprehensive Support for At-Risk Families with Children from Ukraine in the Chrudim Region

Project Implementer

The project was implemented by Amalthea z. s., a non-governmental non-profit organization operating in the Pardubice region. It provides social, educational, and therapeutic services to families with children and ensures the implementation of social and legal child protection. The organization has long been committed to preventing the placement of children outside their biological families while also supporting foster families.

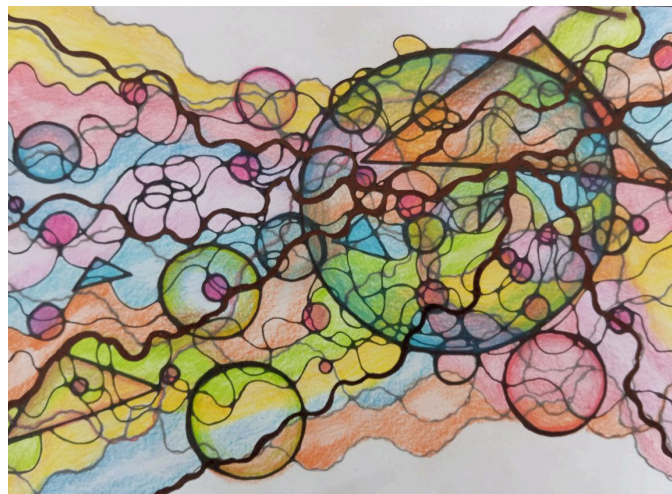
Amalthea offers services for families and children (such as the Amálka preschool center, mediation, joint meetings with children, a multidisciplinary early intervention team, family conferences, and a community center), as well as foster care services, therapeutic services, and emogym.

Target Groups

The project focused on two target groups. The first group consisted of **Ukrainian refugees – families with children**, primarily mothers with minors. These individuals faced difficult situations due to forced displacement and a decline in their living standards. The second target group included **providers and commissioners of social services, family and child support services, and other social inclusion services**. These included representatives of municipalities, social service providers, the labor office, preschools and primary schools, and other family support services.

Collaborating organizations and subjects

During the implementation of the project, Amalthea collaborated with **multiple entities**, including the Municipal Office of Chrudim – particularly the Department of Social Affairs, local schools and preschools in the ORP Chrudim area, the Center for the Integration of Foreigners in Pardubice, and others.



Project Objectives

The main objective of the project was to **enhance the planning and coordination of support for Ukrainian refugee** families with children in the Chrudim region and to **provide specific solutions** for at-risk families and children, ensuring they received swift and adequate **support for their adaptation**.

Project Activities

The project included three key activities, which were carried out in parallel throughout the implementation period.

Local Coordination

This activity involved **networking various stakeholders, identifying relevant issues, organizing meetings, and proposing strategies in different areas**, all under the guidance of a case manager – coordinator. The platforms were primarily attended by representatives from the City of Chrudim (crisis management, social affairs department, education department), municipal representatives, social service providers, preschool and primary school directors, and labor office representatives.



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Establishment and Operation of the Ukraine Community Center

This activity focused on operating a community center as a space for meetings, sharing experiences, providing counseling, and organizing activities for refugees. The community center was open twice a week and **offered various services**, including psychological counseling, education-related counseling, leisure activities for families, parents, and children, as well as special events and celebrations for families multiple times a year. Additionally, there were organized day camps, excursions across the Czech Republic, neurography courses (a relaxation-therapeutic program), and yoga classes.

Establishment of Services for At-Risk Families with Children

The implementation of this activity included: **Identifying and supporting at-risk families with children through direct work**, parental competency support, education counseling, and child support; providing **psychological counseling and therapy for children and adults**; running a **support group for school-aged children**, including informal Czech language lessons; supporting the **development of preschool children** at risk of academic failure, primarily through the **Amálka Preschool Center**; offering direct support to parents in the field, **enhancing parental competencies**, and assisting with school selection.

Project Benefits for the Target Groups

A key impact of the project was the **coordinated approach to supporting Ukrainian refugees**. This included integrating various types of assistance, such as social and legal counseling, at a single location.

Effective coordination among different stakeholders enabled the early identification of families at risk due to reduced parental competencies, allowing for timely, tailored interventions.

Another significant benefit was the **support for the mental well-being** of Ukrainian refugees. For many clients, psychological improvement took months and required a combination of multiple activities provided by Amalthea, such as yoga, individual and group therapy, and neurography sessions. Amalthea was perceived as a safe and supportive environment where people could meet, share experiences, and offer mutual support.

Improved parental mental health also led to **enhanced parenting skills**, which in turn helped children adapt more successfully.

Additionally, the project contributed **to improving the social and economic self-sufficiency of refugees**. Individualized support helped clients navigate social benefits, secure housing, and find employment, leading to greater stability and independence.

"This is a great help because I often struggle to communicate with doctors or at the office. When I can use their service, I feel very relieved. Their approach is kind, and talking to them makes me feel good." (project participant)

Finally, the project played a role in **bridging the gap between the Ukrainian community and Czech society**. Community events held in public spaces, such as parks, were attended by both Czech and Ukrainian residents. Additionally, the integration of Ukrainian staff into the Department of Social Affairs facilitated better intercultural understanding and collaboration.



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An unexpected outcome was **the strong interest in the teen program**. Teenagers regularly met at the community center for activities, fostering friendships, sharing experiences, and supporting one another in adapting to their new environment. They also engaged in tutoring sessions, improving their academic performance, and some even formed friendships outside the center.

"This really helped me because I could finally meet people my age and make friends. It got me out of my daily routine of just school and home, school and home. Now at least on Saturdays, I have something to look forward to." (project participant – teenager)

Lessons Learnt from the Project

A strongly felt need is to ensure that **an intercultural worker from the Ukrainian community remains a permanent part of the municipal office**. This significantly improved the efficiency of addressing the situations of at-risk Ukrainian families with children.

Best practices while working with the target group

- **Communication about cultural differences** (especially among office staff, fostering a better understanding between the Czech majority and the Ukrainian community).
- **Use of social media for spreading the information** (Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook were effective in reaching the Ukrainian community).
- **Creating short, concise videos in Ukrainian** (addressing relevant topics, ideally posted on social media).

- **Offering neurography courses** (as this method combining coaching, drawing, and psychology is highly popular among Ukrainians).
- **Facilitating teen group meetings to provide informal peer support** (groups for teenagers where they can meet, share experiences and support each other).
- **Focusing services on at-risk families with children** (addressing parental mental health, which directly impacts parenting competencies).

Barriers and Challenges

- **Increased demand for Amalthea's facilities** – More clients and activities led to higher material consumption, greater wear and tear on equipment, and increased noise levels, requiring better coordination of center activities.
- **Funding challenges** – Delays in grant disbursements created a mismatch between project costs and financial support. The organization resolved this by taking a loan, which was repaid once the grant funds arrived.
- **Lack of follow-up funding** – The sustainability of the project remains uncertain due to the absence of subsequent funding opportunities. *„The project is ending, but the problems are not. In fact, they are increasing.”*

Amalthea