



# DRC and integration of refugees in Denmark

AMIS, University of Copenhagen

**DRC** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL

# Agenda

10:00-12:00

About DRC

Reception and integration of refugees in Denmark

Ukrainians – 4 years after



# About DRC

# Danish Refugee Council (Dansk Flygtningehjælp)

- Founded in 1956 – Hungarian refugees
- Largest Danish NGO with programs in 34 countries – emergency aid, protection, reconstruction etc.
- 6,000 employees
- In Denmark:
  - > Counselling of asylum applicants
  - > Integration activities
  - > Advocacy



# DRC Integration



- A dignified life as a vision for integration activities: Support and enable refugees and migrants to be part of a community and to enjoy equal rights and opportunities in Denmark
- Language proficiency, employment, participation in civil society, and an inclusive society are pivotal for the quality of life, empowerment and future possibilities of refugees and migrants
- Meeting the individual with a focus on resources
- <https://pro.drc.ngo/where-we-work/europe/denmark/>

**Employment  
services**

**Children &  
Family services**

**Volunteering**

**Projects**

**Knowledge &  
Development**

Apr. 100 employees and 4,500 volunteers

Knowledge Center for  
Vulnerable Refugees

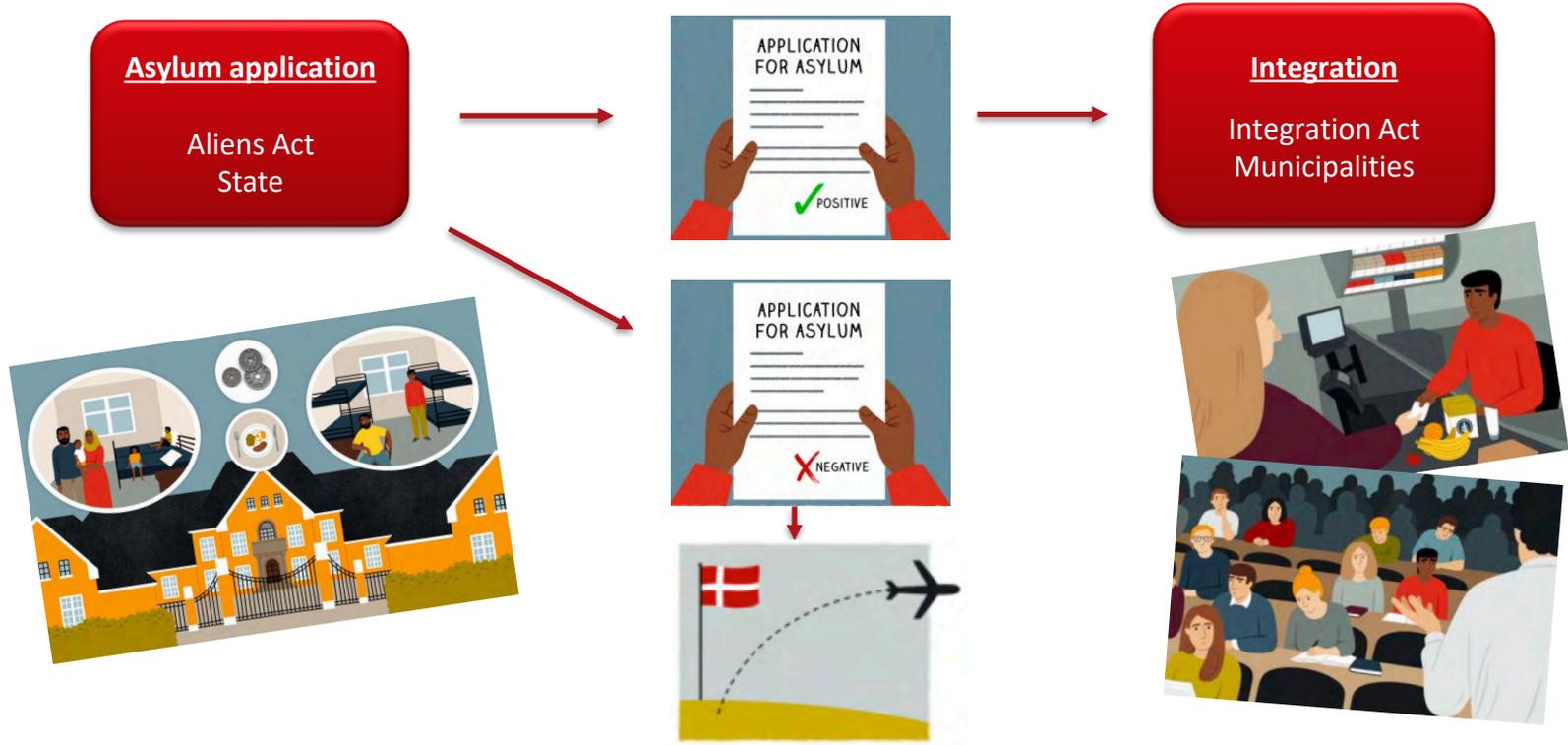


**Any questions or reflections?**



# Integration of refugees in Denmark

# Asylum and integration

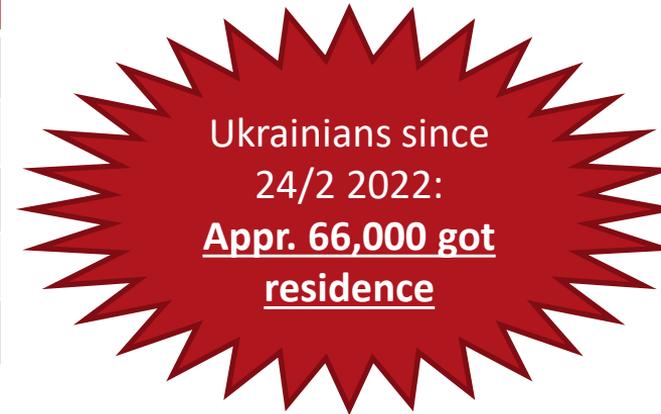


# Asylum applicants and refugees i Denmark

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Asylum appl.</b>	21,316	6,266	3,500	3,559	2,716	1,515	2,099	4,597	2,482	2,333	1,959
<b>Residence permits</b>	10,849	7,494	2,750	1,652	1,777	601	1,357	1,400	1,343	859	875

	Residence permits	To and incl. 2024
1	Syria	22,000
2	Bosnia-Herzeg.	21,000
3	Iraq	19,000
4	Iran	16,000
5	Stateless	15,000
6	Somalia	14,000
7	Afghanistan	13,000

Asylum appl.	2025
Eritrea	247
Afghanistan	192
Syria	150
Stateless	119
Türkiye	100



# Trends in policy

- Many legal changes in recent years
- Some years with fewer asylum applicants (and refugees)
- Focus on temporary stay and return
- More difficult to obtain permanent residence and citizenship
- Focus on employment – early measures, women
- Restricted access to certain welfare benefits
- Refugees via UN resettlement programme
- Refugees evacuated from Afghanistan
- Displaced Ukrainians



# Residence permits (Aliens Act)

- §7.1 Convention status
- §7.2 Protection status
- §7.3 Temporary protection status
- Special laws (evacuated Afghans, displaced Ukrainians)
- Temporary residence permits
- Can apply for permanent residence permit after 8 years

# The Danish Integration Act

- Quota system dispersing refugees to all municipalities
- Introduction programme for refugees – up to 5 years
- Responsibility of municipalities – individual plans



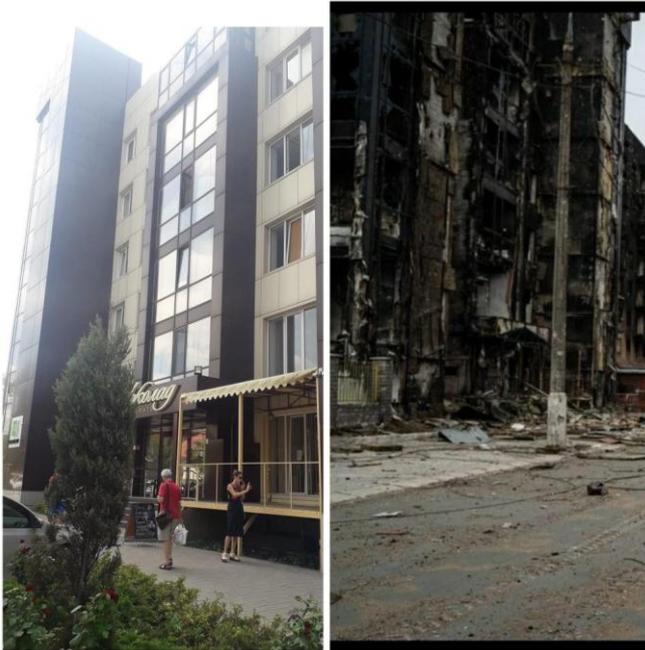
## Entitlements:

- Affordable housing
- Free Danish language tuition (up to five years)
- Help finding employment
- Unemployment benefit (low)
- Health care, mental and social care (trauma rehabilitation etc.)

## Obligations:

- Attend language training and pass test
- Actively participate in employment promoting schemes

# All refugees are shaken



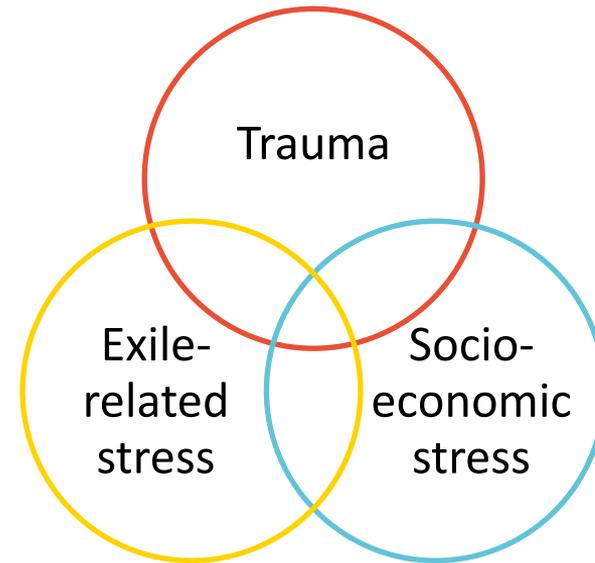
- Extreme conditions and events
- Losses
- Fundamentally changed situation
- Cultural differences
- Minority
- Client

# Focus on mental health and wellbeing

## Trauma

- 25-45 % of refugees have trauma-related symptoms (DK estimate)
- 13-25 % of refugees in high-income countries have PTSD
- 43 % of Syrian refugees affected by PTSD
- Employment rate in Denmark for refugees being treated for PTSD is below 10 %
- Refugees receiving treatment for PTSD (in DK) have, on average, lived in DK 14½ years
- Measures to identify trauma are in need of improvement
- Trauma-informed approaches

## Holistic approach



# Conditions in exile are crucial

## Risk factors:

- Uncertainty about asylum and stay
- Separation from family
- Lack of network
- Low socio-economic status i exile
- Loss of status
- Language barriers
- Perceived discrimination

## Protective factors:

- Family reunification
- Social network
- Employment (or education)
- Language proficiency
- Permanent housing
- Access to health services
- Coping strategies

*Source: Preserving and Improving the Mental Health of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Umar Ikram and Karien Stronks for the Health Council of the Netherlands, 2016*



**Any questions or reflections?**



# Displaced Ukrainians

4 years after the full-scale invasion

# Displaced Ukrainians in Denmark

- Appr. 44,000 residing in DK – most women and minors
- Still many coming:
  - > 13,700 granted residence in 2025
  - > Many young men
- **Temporary residence** via special law until March 2027
- Covered by Integration Act with largely the **same rights and obligations as other refugees**



# 2022 -> 2025

Ukrainians will be in Denmark  
for short period

Low motivation for  
'integration' (except job)

Great engagement from all in  
DK reg. reception and  
integration



Prolonged stay in Denmark –  
need durable solutions

Increased motivation for  
'integration', also exile related  
problems and need for  
psychosocial support

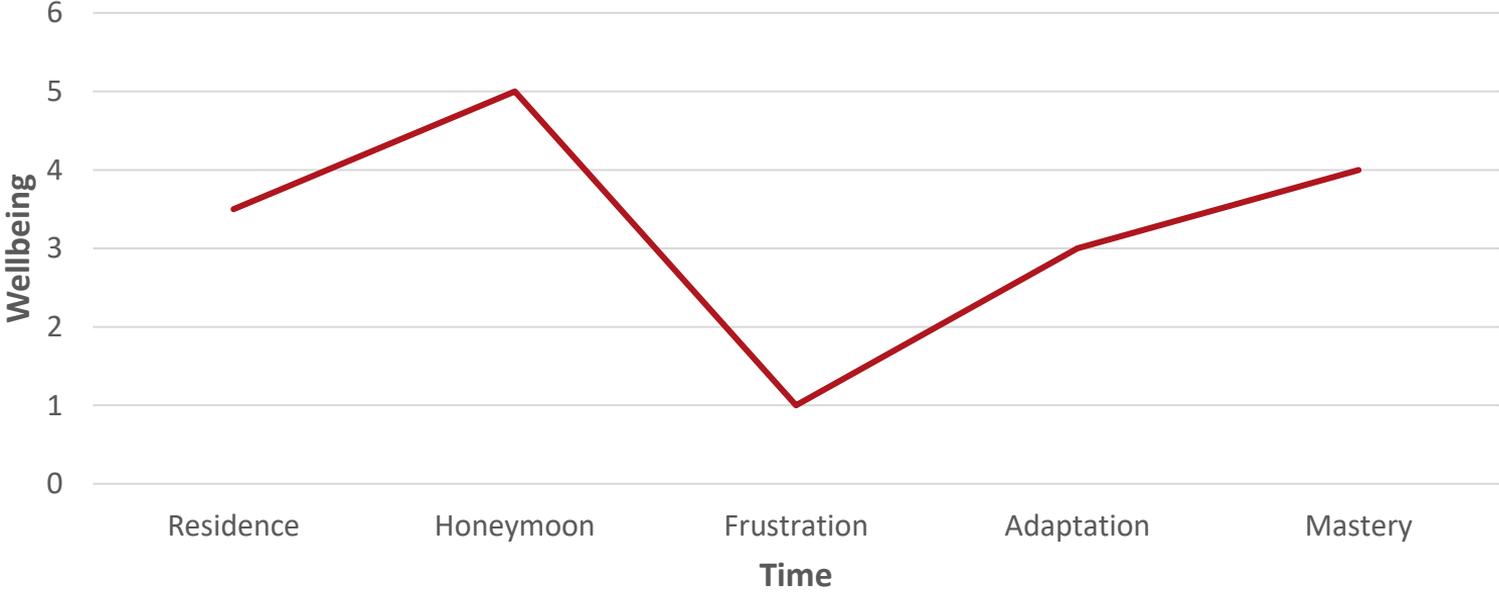
Fading engagement

# What do we know about wellbeing?

## DARECO Study from Uni Cph

- 1 of 4 report symptoms equivalent to PTSD
  - 3 of 4 want to stay in DK
  - Worry about family in Ukraine
  - Concern about access to health services
  - Concern about right to stay
  - 13.3 % often unwanted alone (population in DK: 6.3 %)
  - High level of trust in Danish authorities
- 57 % in employment (other refugees after 3 years dk: 39 %)
  - 30 % on (low) unemployment benefit
  - Temporary shared housing
  - Bigger differences than expected
    - > E.g. daycare, schools, labour market, health services
  - Elderly having a hard time
  - Currently focus on young people

# Process of adaptation



# Panel-sessions with Ukrainian refugees

- 3 panels w/ 9 participants in each
  - > 2 with adults, 1 with youth
  - > 2024
- Done in Ukrainian with interpretation to Danish
- Focus on exile, future, and needs



# Overall impressions from panels

## Future – stay or go?

- The pendulum swings away from Ukraine
- Great need for stability and to envision a future
- Temporary stay and uncertainty is troubling
- Desire to stay in Denmark
- To be recognized and seen as a human being (not just a refugee)

- A great desire to be able to make roots, to establish and envision a future.
- Currently, it is difficult to see meaning and future both in Denmark (due to temporariness) and in Ukraine (due to chaos, uncertainty, and lack of belief in positive changes).

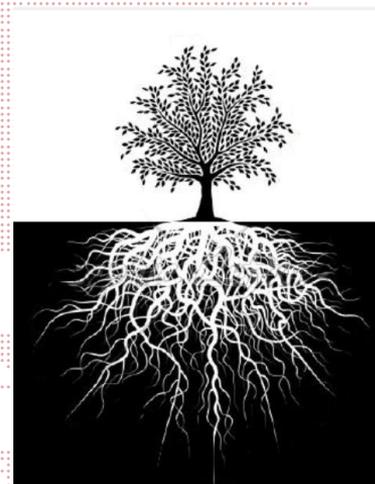
# Quotes from the adults

There is stability in Denmark compared to what was and is in Ukraine. When I arrived in Denmark, for example, I saw it said '1998' on the banknote. For me, it was a sign that there hasn't been massive inflation like in Ukraine, and that there is more stability in Denmark.

We prefer the education system in Denmark. Here in Denmark, it seems like they care about the children in the schools.

# Adult-panels

- Uncertainties make it difficult to plan
- Need for stability – how and where to get it?
- Geography (having Russia as a neighbor is never safe)
- Children's safety, well-being, and future is crucial
- Living conditions in Ukraine vs. Denmark
- The longing for Ukraine mainly concerns close ones, home
- Elderly participants find it hard to see future prospects
- Language and employment are important
- To be recognized, to contribute, to have a role
- Experiences of being looked down upon
- Desire for a path to permanent residency



# Quotes from the youngsters

I was supposed to become a doctor, that was the plan, but it has changed now. My parents wanted me to become a doctor, but now I have realized that I want something else. Perhaps to be a psychologist.

We feel some pressure. But for me, I think that I am only obligated to my parents, not my country. My country should give me something, for me to have a duty to defend it.

My parents have returned, and I am alone here. I want to stay; I do not see my future in Ukraine. I am from Kharkiv. It will be very difficult to find work there, and all buildings are destroyed; all educational institutions are destroyed.

# Youth-panel

- Desire to stay in Denmark
- Lost faith in Ukraine for the next many years
- Where can one develop, educate oneself, pursue dreams, travel?
- Following online education because parents insist
- Important to learn the language
- Experience more freedom (and less insecurity) in Denmark
- Experience – and appreciate – involvement in school
- Danish youths can be challenging – slang and language, desire for planning
- Do not want to be lumped together as refugees



# Ukrainians in Danish schools

- Big differences between Ukraine and Denmark
- Slower progression
- Improved motivation, variations reg. wellbeing
- Lack of support when illbeing
- Challenges with transition from reception- to ordinary classes
- Collaboration with parents, trust takes time
- *New study: many upper school pupils experience illbeing and loneliness*



“The combination of insufficient Danish language skills, high educational ambitions, and a Danish school system that differs significantly from the Ukrainian one challenges young Ukrainians' transition from primary school to secondary education.”

**FOLKESKOLEN.DK**  
/DSA



De store børn er helt klart dem, vi føler, vi taber. Det er dem, der trives allerårligst. Der er grænsesøgende adfærd [...] Der er en stor overvægt med de tunge sociale sager i udskolingen. De små børn trives ok. Men de store børn er meget udfordrede” fortæller en afdelingsleder i rapporten. Foto: Getty/Bodnarchuk

**Ny analyse: Ukrainske elever har behov for varige løsninger**

Der er brug for langsigtede løsninger for de 14.107 ukrainske børn, som bor i Danmark under særloven, lyder det i en nye analyse. Børn går for længe med mistrivsel, og der mangler lærere med DSA-kompetencer.

“There is a need for long-term solutions [...]. Children are experiencing illbeing for too long, and there is a shortage of teachers with competences in *Danish as a second language*.”

**Kommunen. DK** LOGIN MENU



Kombinationen af udfordringsfulde danskundervisninger, høje uddannelsesmæssige ambitioner og et dansk skolesystem, der afskærer sig væsentligt fra det ukrainske, udfordrer de unge ukraineres overgang fra grundskole til ungdomsuddannelse.  
Foto: Janus Engel/Wozu Studio

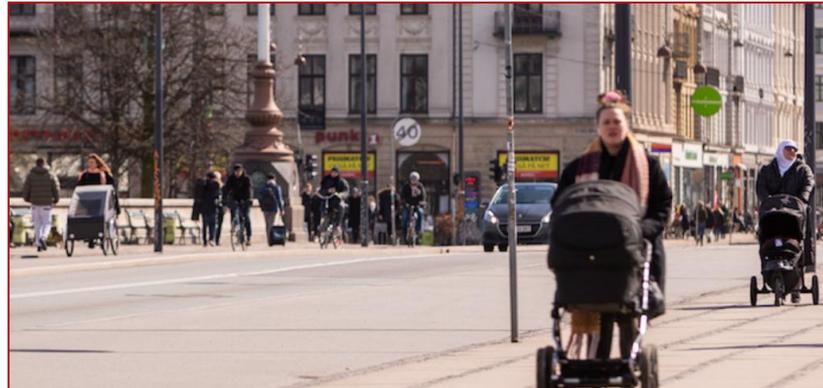
**Urealistiske forventninger kan begrænse fremtidsmulighederne for unge ukrainere**

Fagprofessionelle frygter, at unge ukrainere bliver tabt i overgangen fra folkeskole til uddannelse. De lærer for lidt dansk og holder sig for sig selv.

BØRN & UNGE  
INTEGRATION  
4. jun. 2024

# DRC Integration's activities in DK

- Various **hotlines** (for volunteers, professionals, Ukrainians)
- Courses and **training** (e.g. pedagogues, teachers)
- Translated info-**material** to Ukrainian
- **Website** about life in Denmark (in Ukrainian and other languages):  
<https://velkommentildanmark.dk/>
- Scaling up **volunteer network**
- Psycho-social group programs (**MindSpring**), learning cafés for children, groups for seniors
- Professional **psycho-social support**
- **Mentoring and employment programmes**



## ЖИЗНЬ В ДАНИИ

На этом сайте вы, как новоприбывший украинец, можете прочитать и посмотреть фильмы о датском обществе и о жизни в Дании в целом. Здесь вы сможете, среди прочего, получить больше информации о детях, уходе за детьми и школе, медицинском обслуживании и работе в Дании.

Выберите тему ниже и узнайте больше.

Добро пожаловать в Данию.

# Reflection and dialogue

1. Immediate thoughts or reflections?
2. What has been new to me?
3. Which additional questions do I have?



Thank you!

[mads.drud-jensen@drc.ngo](mailto:mads.drud-jensen@drc.ngo)