



THE REFUGEE MISSION OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF HUNGARY

SECTOR

Integration of refugees

COUNTRY

Hungary

LEAD ORGANISATION

[The Refugee Mission of the Reformed Church of Hungary](#), member of [Eurodiaconia](#), a European network of 47 churches and Christian NGOs providing social and health care services and advocating social justice

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DESCRIPTION

The main goal of the Refugee Mission of the Reformed Church of Hungary is to offer an integrated approach to fulfil the diverse needs of refugees, enabling them to feel at home in their host country and start a new life. People of any age or gender are welcomed by the Mission, reflecting the diversity among refugees fleeing to Hungary.

The main nationalities are Afghani, Syrian Pakistani, Iranian, Iraqi, Palestinian, Somalian and Nigerian. These people have very diverse skills levels, ranging from basic to higher education, and trauma or addiction are just two of the possible additional problems that contribute to making this population highly disadvantaged.

The Mission focuses, firstly, on providing housing services for groups of young refugees, either through the direct provision of apartments or through rent subsidies. Its activities, however, go well beyond housing. The Mission provides a series of different services aimed at the complete integration of refugees in Hungarian society. Language courses are organised, and the Mission also acts as a facilitator between refugees and the public employment authority.

The expected outcome is to offer a solid, comprehensive and long-term basis for the successful integration of refugees. Refugees therefore continue to be monitored for a year after they become involved with the project, which ensures that their integration is sustainable. Integration is considered successful when families, or single refugees,

are able to fend for themselves and their home after one year.

Because all of the services provided by the Mission act as substitutes to state-provided services that are not accessible to refugees, direct coordination with reception centres is very important. However, communication with public authorities is also essential and the staff of the Mission participates in round table meetings in the Hungarian Ministry of Home Affairs, together with other non-governmental organisations, and they have the possibility to raise their issues.

The project is funded mainly by European grants in the framework of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), and by private funding and funds of the Hungarian Church.

A SOCIAL INVESTMENT APPROACH

Through social investment in education and skills development, the Mission actively promotes the inclusion of refugees in the long-term. This is of course challenging, as they present a huge range of diverse needs, which often require a personalised approach. Nevertheless, the project tries its best to provide tailor-made support to each refugee, especially in the area of employment, where people are integrated in job fields related to their previous work experience and skills when possible. The main goal is to transmit the message that, in spite of trends of islamophobia and xenophobia in Hungary, refugees can improve their lives in their host country.

This is a long-term motivation for succeeding in their efforts, and it is often associated with family reunification.

With regards to children, the Mission prevents social exclusion and a lack of integration via partnerships with schools in Budapest that accept to take refugees among their pupils. The Mission sends teachers to these schools to complement and support them in this effort.

The Mission also tries to directly integrate refugees in the labour market, having contact with public employment services and local employers who are open to hiring them. Moreover, from 2010 onwards, the Mission itself has been able to hire refugees among its workers as social advisors, translators and co-workers. Having staff that experienced the same difficult transition in their life allows the organisation to interact better with service users. It facilitates the development of community life.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The full integration of refugees in Hungarian society is of course the main achievement of this project. Its rapid development can attest to its success. The project was launched as a small programme addressed to people leaving a reception centre in Budapest, which serves the vast majority of refugees arriving in Hungary. It has dramatically increased in size since then. Starting with only two families in 2007, it has now provided support to about 260 people.

There are also tangible examples of how the Mission has concretely helped refugees to improve the provision of services and foster inter-cultural dialogue. One case regards the project of a Hungarian-Somali dictionary, which was written by a large group of Somali minors learning Hungarian. As this project promotes their abilities, it also simplifies the work of language teachers by creating a tool that did not exist before. Another example is the creation and circulation of intercultural calendars to facilitate dialogue between refugees and local students in schools that were at first reluctant to cooperate with the Mission.

LOOKING FORWARD

The social impact of the Mission critically depends on its public perception. The political environment in Hungary constitutes a very challenging scenario; indeed, it is not very supportive of refugees' integration and the project risks closure every year. In this context, it is essential for the Mission to advocate on a daily basis for the reception and integration of refugees and to underline the benefits they bring to society.

The Mission has already, on a small scale, contributed to the evolution of public perception. This example could therefore be transferred to other Central European countries with less experience in refugees' integration, but should in any case be adapted to local circumstances.