



County Wicklow Partnership



CWP SICAP'S RESPONSE TO THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CRISIS



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“The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020”

County Wicklow Partnership SICAP Case Study 2022

LDC Name

County Wicklow Partnership Lot 15-2

Title

CWP SICAP's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

Theme

Goal 2 Action 11 'Personal Development and Lifelong Learning Supports for Ukrainian Refugees' with a focus on indicator 'G2:1: Promoting personal development and wellbeing' with the target outcome of 'G2:2: Providing Life Long Learning opportunities'.

Target Group

New Communities

Overview of Case Study

County Wicklow Partnerships 2022 Case Study is a showcase of how CWP SICAP Programme is supporting Ukrainian refugees to avail of guidance and advice on day to day essential services as well as accessing Lifelong Learning courses and integrating into Irish society and culture.

The Case Study submission comprises of a written case study focused on the experiences of five Ukrainian refugees since the war started up to present day and the SICAP supports they are receiving, as well as the profiling of three SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers providing SICAP supports to Ukrainian refugees.

This Case Study aims to:

- Highlight the extensive work being undertaken for Ukrainian refugees by SICAP in Lot 15-2
- Showcase the effect those supports are having on the day to day life of Ukrainian refugees
- Promote the benefit of SICAP to individuals, partner organisations and funders.



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CWP SICAP'S RESPONSE TO THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

February 24th ... the day the world changed, as we know it. Russia invaded Ukraine and life for all Ukrainians became a life of fear of what will happen, terror at what was happening and uncertainty for what their life will now be.

News programmes around the world reported on the gravity of the situation.

SKY News – *“War in Europe as Putin begins military movements in Ukraine”*

CNN – *“Mother and kids take shelter in subway station: ‘We try to be brave’”*

RTE News – *“Moscow mounts mass assault by land, sea and air”*

Countries around the world stepped up to offer refugee status to millions of Ukrainians, mostly women and children, looking to flee. Ireland was one of those countries.

Prior to the war, the population of Ukrainian nationals living in Ireland was 1,785 with 28 residing in County Wicklow¹. As of 25th September 2022, there were 54,771 Ukrainian nationals with a PPS number in Ireland under the temporary protection directive. It is estimated on average 1,000 people a week are still arriving into Ireland having fled the war. The CSO indicates a demographic breakdown of women aged 20 and over accounting for 46% of arrivals to date, while children and teenagers aged 0-19 (both male and female) account for 35%. The highest percentage of those arriving (35%) were categorised as 'One parent with children'².

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which has responsibility for housing the new arrivals, has confirmed that 31,547 Ukrainian people have been accommodated in "serviced accommodation". In August 26,100 beds were being provided in hotels, hostels, commercial self-catering accommodation and other emergency or repurposed settings. The department has further contracts for 5,700 beds in student accommodation. Accommodation pledges from members of the public have housed 3,500 Ukrainian people in 1,269 properties. There are 1,095 Ukrainians living in 579 private accommodations where the host is in receipt of 'Accommodation Recognition Payment' for hosting people from Ukraine. Tented accommodation at the Gormanston Army base in

¹ CSO, 2016

² Central Statistical Publication, 2022, 'Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland Series 6', CSO, 25th September 2022

Co Meath is still being used to temporarily house new arrivals and the transit hub at City West is also still in use³.

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The CWP SICAP programme receives funding from the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development for the period of 2018 to 2023 as well as funding from the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. This funding is used specifically to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

SICAP addresses high and persistent levels of deprivation through targeted, innovative and locally led approaches. It supports disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups such as new communities.

As of the 25th September 2022, per CSO stats⁴, Lot 15-2 SICAP programme, which is the area supported by County Wicklow Partnership, recorded 657 Ukrainian nationals with a PPS number under the temporary protection directive. The breakdown of this population of Ukrainian nationals in LOT 15-2 by Local Electoral Areas (LEA) is as follows:

- Arklow LEA – 208 Ukrainian nationals.
- Wicklow LEA – 210 Ukrainian nationals.
- Baltinglass LEA – 239 Ukrainian nationals.

As soon as Ukrainian nationals started to arrive in County Wicklow, the SICAP programme immediately sprang into action. Our core funding and collaborative focus ensured that SICAP was central to providing support to the rising needs of the Ukrainian population in our Lot. In order to be able to engage with this cohort of people and to remove language barriers SICAP hired three Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers on a part time basis with each designated to an LEA area. Initially individuals coming through Wicklow were of a transient nature with one or two weeks in a centre and then moved to more permanent locations in other parts of the country. This was a challenging environment to manage and support individuals due to not knowing how long they would be in Wicklow for. As demands increased from the rising number of Ukrainians in each LEA and the duration of stay became more stable and more permanent, SICAP received additional Ukrainian funding allowing us to increase the hours of the Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers while also enhancing existing supports and increasing our offering to these refugees engaging with SICAP.

The type of supports offered by SICAP to Ukrainian refugees consists of:

- Conversational English language courses through our Failte Isteach programme which is crucial to the integration of refugees into Irish society. This allows new communities to avail

³ Hogan, L. (2022). *CSO confirms 47,962 Ukrainian refugees now in Ireland*. RTE.
<https://www.rte.ie/news/ukraine/2022/0819/1316672-ukraine-refugees-ireland/>

⁴ Central Statistical Publication, 2022, 'Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland Series 6', CSO, 25th September 2022

of opportunities such as courses and education, employment and general societal engagement and integration.

- Once a basic level of English is grasped other opportunities can be availed of through SICAP such as:
 - Access to Life Long Learning both in-house with SICAP staff and externally through third party providers.
 - Support into employment through in-house CV support and interview preparation.
 - Making connections with local employers, providing transport to interviews if needed or guidance on accessing transport routes.
 - Support into self-employment through the provision of advice and guidance to access the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) scheme through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as well as Start Your Own Business workshops and Bookkeeping & Taxation courses through SICAP.
 - Advice and guidance in everyday life matters, which is crucial to refugees in areas such as:
 - Translation support
 - Financial support to overcome barriers in accessing opportunities such as transport costs, course fees, material costs for courses.

SICAP Collaborative Partners

Collaboration between SICAP and third party organisations such as voluntary and statutory authorities is crucial in achieving the level of supports required by Ukrainian refugees. These collaborations are possible due to the years of close working relationships nurtured by SICAP both on a local, regional and national level. They have become invaluable resources in achieving the volume of supports required in a condensed period for the Ukrainian crisis. Some of the collaborators supporting SICAP services are:

- Wicklow County Council Local Authority
- Children & Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC)
- Local businesses
- Local Community Group's
- Third party Course providers such as Glenealy IT, Kildare & Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB), Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE) to name only a few.
- The Association of Ukrainians in Ireland (AURI)

Ukrainian Individuals supported by SICAP

Ukrainian refugees arriving in Wicklow are spread out in various accommodations across the county, which reflects the national picture. Some are based in towns living in host accommodation or hostels and some in more rural locations requiring more focused supports.

To date SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers have registered 186 Ukrainian refugees. Of these 139 are female and 57% are in the 25 to 45 age band. 1098 interventions have been provided across

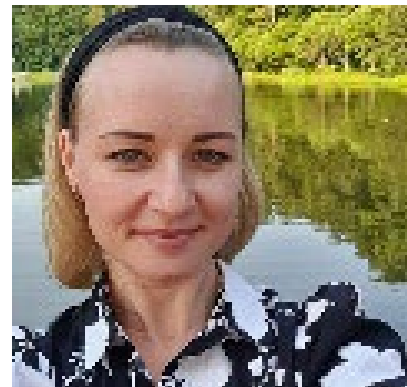
the 186 individuals resulting in 96 participating in Life Long Learning supports and 4 progressing into employment.

Five of these Ukrainian refugees kindly consented to sharing their stories for the purpose of this case study giving a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees and demonstrating the supports provided by SICAP to Ukrainian individuals since their arrival in County Wicklow. A profile of each individual is provided to give you an understanding of them and how their lives have changed since the 24th February 2022. They then describe the SICAP supports they individually have received and the effect these supports have had on their lives.

Resident in Arklow LEA

Svitlana Dzhuruk

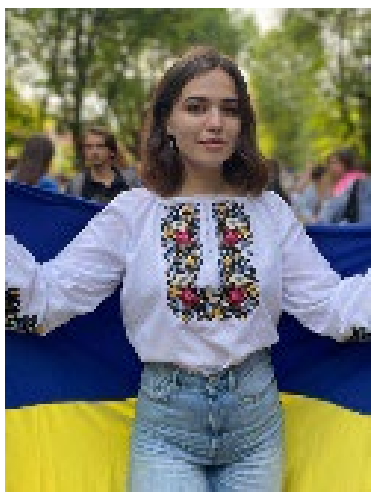
My name is Svitlana Dzhuruk and I am 40 years old. I have two children, a 14-year-old daughter who is in Ireland with me and a 16-year-old son who is in Cyprus in college since finishing school in Ukraine earlier this year. I am a trained Italian translator and worked with my ex-husband in the family logistics business. I love to cook as a hobby and sing, which I did as part of a folk group called 'Korinya' in Ukraine. My family lived in Kiev until the war started and myself and my daughter evacuated to Germany on 1st April 2022 to friends who offered us a place to stay.



While we were grateful to them for inviting us into their home, we found the cultural differences to be difficult along with communication challenges, as we had no German. A Ukrainian friend in Ireland knew how difficult I was finding life in Germany and I asked her *"to please help me as we are struggling in Germany"*. She invited me to come to Ireland as she said, *"I can help you here"*.

When we arrived in Ireland in July, we came straight to a Ukrainian accommodation facility in the Coral Leisure building in Arklow town, Co. Wicklow as my friend had arrived here some months earlier and had a good experience and we immediately felt at home.

Mariia Humennyk



My name is Mariia Humennyk and I am 22 years old. I am in Ireland with my mom (43) and my 13-year-old sister. I worked in Ukraine for a radio station and I trained as a journalist with experience in event management and publicity. I also taught English to children at A1 level. My mom, dad and sister lived in Kharkiv and I lived in Kiev until the war started.

Prior to leaving, on 5th March, I wrote to a Facebook group about our situation and how we were looking for somewhere to go. I received a message from a volunteer in Ireland inviting us to Arklow and he arranged for an apartment for us to live in. My mom, sister and I left Ukraine with a backpack each on the 16th March and it took two days to travel across the border, we arrived in Ireland a few days later. My dad stayed in Kharkiv to fight in the war. Before coming here, we knew very little about Ireland and had never been to this country before. While my English was ok, my mother and sister had very little English.

Resident in Lough Dan & Baltinglass LEA

Anastasiia Sazonoua

My name is Anastasiia Sazonoua, I am 25 years old, and I am in Ireland with my Mom. We come from Zaporizhzhia, South East of Ukraine, which is 7km from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station. Prior to the war, I travelled on and off after college and I was in Poland when the war started.

"I spoke to my parents every day on the phone, they were worried, and I could hear air raid sirens when I called."

I didn't want to stay in Poland as I didn't feel it was the best place for me while the war was on going so in April I spoke to a friend who was in Ireland and she said *"Ireland is an amazing country, its like from a Shrek movie."* I called my parents to tell them I wanted to go to Ireland and my mom said she would leave home and come with me. This was a very big decision as she had no English and had travelled very little before the war. *"My father and brother are still in Ukraine so it was hard for her to make this decision"*.

My mom came to Poland to meet me, which took two days travelling, and we flew to Ireland in early May. When we landed, an Immigration Officer met us and asked if we needed help. *"He took us by the hand and brought us to an area for support and we ended up on a bus to City West where we stayed for 3 nights. We were given a ticket to travel to Lough Dan in Roundwood, we have been here since May and we like it very much"*. Currently there are 35 Ukrainian people staying in Lough Dan.



Resident in Wicklow LEA

Viktoriia Kozak



My name is Viktoriia Kozak, I am 38 years old and I am in Ireland with my two daughters aged 8 and 10 years old.

I worked as a journalist with photo and video skills in Ukraine and we lived in Kiev. I am married and my husband remains in Kiev in the Territorial Army.

When deciding if we should stay or leave Ukraine *"I thought what do I do if this all takes a long time and I was a little bit scared; I listened to the news and every day they say how close it was (the fighting) to us so I researched to see how to get a visa or where we can go. We didn't need a visa to go to Ireland so we came here. We left Kiev six days after the war started (1st March). We didn't have a plan (for leaving). We (including husband) just come in a car and we travel in the best direction. We stayed with some relatives in different places for days at a time on the way and it was a very hard decision to break family for not understandable time".* We eventually left my husband and arrived in Ireland in the beginning of April.

We arrived in City West and I started to help a volunteer group that was helping people. *"I translate and translate each day".* Eventually we moved to a sports hall in Dublin, people were very good and very helpful. Then we were told we *"were going somewhere"* on a bus but nobody told us where. We were wondering where we will stop. We ended up in accommodation between Doolin and Lisdoonvarna. *"We lived there 3 weeks and after volunteers find me and bring me here to Wicklow".* I realised we needed to leave there as *"I had realisation I told social workers we were isolated and not many opportunities".* We left and went to stay with a host family at first in Wicklow town and now we are in a hostel in Wicklow town.

Tetiana Halytska

My name is Tetiana Halytska, I am 42 years old and I am in Ireland with my son (9) and my daughter (12). I was working with children preparing them for school and I then became an administrator in the school prior to the war.

We lived in Kiev, near Bucha, and left due to the war three days after it started on 27th Feb. *"I was very afraid, the children were very afraid, they were running around the house asking 'why' and my hands were shaking because Russian planes were flying over our roof and very low and very big sound and everything was*



bomb, bomb, bomb everywhere. I decided we had to go". We travelled to Poland, stayed there for one week, and then travelled to Ireland. I don't know if my home is still there now.

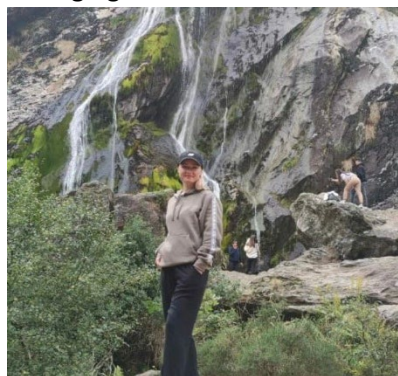
I have relatives who have lived in Dublin for some years and they asked us to come stay with them. We lived with them for 3 months after arriving in Ireland. My relatives were very kind to us but space was tight for us all so Tanya, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, advised me of a host family in Wicklow who could provide accommodation to us. We arrived to Wicklow in June.

Individual SICAP Support Experiences

Svitlana Dzhuruk

A SICAP, who came to meet us and introduce us to people staying in the Coral Leisure facility, brought us to the Ukrainian Hub in Arklow where she works. At the Hub, we could get clothing and other provisions as well as a space to meet and talk to other Ukrainians and ask questions and opinions. This guidance was very helpful when choosing a school for my daughter. *"The hub and SICAP helps with everything that I need. It's a great support for Ukrainians".*

Within one week of arriving, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker had supported me to get set up on the Irish system with a PPS number by attending the INTREO office in Dublin with me and arranging for SICAP to cover the cost of my bus trip to Dublin. She also acted as an interpreter between me and my administrator in INTREO to ensure everything was taken care of very quickly.



In August, we visited Powerscourt gardens and Dublin Zoo on trips arranged by SICAP, which gave us *"an opportunity to see the country which was very lovely.... Every part of Ireland is so interesting with its history; it is difficult to express my thinking because I am very happy. I hadn't heard about Irish people before just no information but staying here it opened me up to great people. My feelings for them are very strong".*

While I can understand English, I still struggle to speak fluid English so my SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker supported me into an English language class straight away upon arrival, which has resulted in me having sufficient conversational English and confidence to attend an interview for a Kitchen Assistant role in the Arklow Bay Hotel. My SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker helped me prepare for this interview and gave advice as to what to expect. She also brought me to the Hotel for my Interview.

Next Chapter

I was successful in my job interview and I started in the Arklow Bay Hotel on the 14th September. My daughter has started in a secondary school in Arklow and is settling in well. Recently she said, *"Mama sometimes I already start to think in English, Mama I am proud"*. This makes me feel *"really happy just because she integrate very quickly here"*.

We have now moved to shared accommodation with my friend and her family. It is so nice to have our own space however it is in a rural area and this can be challenging with transport. This will become a big issue for me with my daughter in school and now I will be on shift work for my job. For now, my friend, who recently bought a car, will provide transport to my daughter and me.

"I'm here because of my daughter; I know it is better for her. I don't want her to hear the air raid sirens. But I'm not at home. Everything is great, SICAP support is great but I'm not at home. Of course I want to go home as soon as possible".

Mariia Humennyk

The volunteer that invited us to Ireland brought us to the Ukrainian Hub where we met the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker and she was "... so so kind, so friendly and helpful especially to my mom". She spoke to my mom "... about English language course supports and about cooking dinner for other Ukrainians which my mom was so happy" to be asked to help with. She also supported us with the paperwork required for the PPS number in Ireland and acted as a translator with the INTREO office; *"she took away the stress so we did not need to worry"*. The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker arranged day trips to see County Wicklow, such as Glendalough, she signed my mom up to English language classes, and *"I hope she can find something to do once her English improves"*. My sister started school prior to the summer holidays however it was difficult for her with such limited English.



When I look at the Irish culture *"Irish people so great, all of you are helpful and open. 'Ok you need help, I help you. Ok you need help, I don't know how I can help you but I know a man who can help you'. I hope I go back to Ukraine and I tell my friends about Irish people, and the great experience and great people, that's people who saved us. I'm so thankful for my country, my people for the help and support and for kindness."*

Thanks to the Irish people and SICAP supports *"we have enough money, we have enough food, we have enough clothes"*. When I look to the future, it is difficult but *"In Ukraine, I haven't a future now in my profession. That is so bad for me"*. My mom used to love to go to the big shopping centre in Kharkiv but that is now bombed, and *"our home is also bombed"*. *"Ireland is a beautiful country but you know the thing I really miss about home is my dad because he is in the war now and every day we have a call that is something difficult maybe for my mind"*.

Next Chapter

For me, I am looking for a job in a radio station, at the moment I volunteer in a Dublin radio station. This can be difficult with the cost of transport for a volunteer role so I want to earn money so I hope to get a job. I have an interview soon, which my SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker is preparing me for. *"I have a lucky ticket, that's Ireland. I didn't know about this country, I didn't know about this*

culture, but Ireland is so interesting for me. I want to explore that and my future here. I want to visit Ukraine but to come back to her”.

Anastasiia Sazonoua

We have received many supports since arriving in Ireland. We were introduced to Tetiana, our SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, and she has supported us with information on courses, transportation information due to the rural area Lough Dan is in and translation supports as well as English language courses. SICAP also fund the cost of a bus from Lough Dan to Roundwood to get connecting buses to do courses and to get shopping. Irish people have been good to us, *“I feel welcomed for sure. Since the moment I arrived people were so nice, people are so friendly offering to help, we are staying in Lough Dan and people were bringing clothes”.*



We started an English language course through SICAP initially and now we are continuing English language lessons with the KWETB, which our SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker arranged for us. All Ukrainians in Lough Dan went on a day trip, during the summer, as a group to Powerscourt Gardens.

The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker provided an information session on available courses to all residents in Lough Dan and my mother has signed up for a 24-week culinary course through the KWETB starting in October. The chefs doing the course went to Lough Dan and interviewed those interested and she was accepted onto the course. *“This meant a lot to my mother”.*

I signed up to do the Film Production course in Glenealy IT through SICAP and I am very excited about this course. *“There are 12 people on the course, five are not Irish and seven are Irish. I was thinking maybe my English will not be enough but when I get there and see a girl from Spain so it is nice when there is a mix of nationalities. They have everything we need to do the course, there is so much support”*



I have recently bought a car however it was difficult at first as my Ukrainian license was not accepted but I was advised who to talk to to overcome this and now both myself and my mother are driving. *"I don't like this; I cannot drive because my mam has the car!"* We have also received psychological support. This has helped both my mother and me to adjust to our situation and to live together with others.

Next Chapter

Our SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker has arranged a meeting, and will provide translation support, with the housing authority seeking accommodation outside of Lough Dan. We are waiting to see the outcome of this meeting. I will miss Lough Dan when we do leave and everyone here as *"We have gone through a lot together in Lough Dan; we have gone through the 5 stages of acceptance together ..."*

For the next year, with the support of my SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, I want to finish the film production course and possibly progress on in this area after the course. Tetiana has also supported me in applying for jobs and I have an interview for an administration role with the KWETB, which I hope to be successful in. My mam will do the cookery course, however, *"I hope that my mom can go home to my father and my brother but for me I hope to travel a bit more and use my film course to make movies"*.

Viktoriia Kozak

The host family introduced us to the Ukrainian Hub in Wicklow town as a way to introduce us to the local Ukrainian community. The hub has *"been very valuable"* as we have found a community where we *"don't feel alone"*. Here I met Tanya, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker.

At the beginning, we only had just winter clothes and we needed clothes for summer. *"The price of clothes was a shock and I always converted back to Ukrainian money"* so the Hub was very helpful to get clothes for my girls and me. It is a place to meet other Ukrainians and ask for

advice on things. The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker arranged day trips over the summer to see Ireland and experience cultural events such as a trip to the Theatre in Dundalk to see 'The Wizard', she also gave me advice on courses and how to access these courses as well as how to help my girl's access school and to integrate. *"I needed to prepare my kids for school and get used to new rules and new language; everything was new for them and for me"*.



I then started looking for work in journalism and I had an interview for a job but this was difficult as my written English would not be the same level as my conversational English. Thanks to support from my SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, I have been doing Failte Isteach conversational English classes since arriving in Wicklow. To work on my written English, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker advised me to do a professional course and guided me to look at courses with the KWETB and



I have just started a Business course there. *"The KWETB courses are good preparation for learning English through the course even though the course itself is a lower level starting course than I need".*

While I am here, I like to meet as many people as I can and to help where I can so *"I volunteered with a project for a fly day for people who have special needs"*. It's a day for kids and parents with special needs and they go up in the plane for therapeutic supports in Newcastle Aerodrome. *"I volunteered to make a video and photo work of the day"*. *"I am a very active person and I meet different people everywhere. I met a person who works in the airport and he asked about learning Ukrainian and I help him and he understood that I'm in journalist work and he said please help me organise this day"*.

I also volunteered to help the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker and the Ukrainian Hub in Wicklow town, *"I did a project for Independence Day with the Ukrainian Hub recording a video and photographs of the day"*. This video can be viewed through YouTube⁵.

I would not have been able to do these volunteering projects if I had not *"... found the Wicklow Photographer club and when I came here everyone was welcoming and they say that they give me photography equipment because I didn't take mine with me when I left Ukraine."* I go to meetings with this club and *"it's very valuable for me for integration"*. I have Ukrainian friends but *"I also need Irish friends and this is very helpful for that"*.

Next Chapter

Looking to the future *"is very difficult"*. *"My younger daughter when asked about being back in Ukraine she said 'I think never'"*. The problem is we miss my husband and their dad. My daughters are learning English and *"she is so happy when she comes home and tells me 'Mama I had a conversation with a girl', She is so happy"*.

After the completion of the business course, *"I think it would probably be a good idea to open a business here and I'm watching around looking and I am in business community with Ukrainians who had business in Ukraine and we are seeing if we can do something together"*. My SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker has asked me to let her know when I am ready to progress in this line of support.

⁵ <https://youtu.be/-zk00Wmga5w> - Ukraine Independence Day held in the Wicklow Hub. Recorded and edited by Victoriia Kozak.

Tetiana Halytska

I love to bake and, after arriving in Ireland, I posted on Facebook about making gingerbread and Tanya, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, seen my post and made contact. *"She suggested I should do something for Ukrainian people to make Ukrainian food and sell at a market"*. The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker invited me to the Ukrainian Hub to do a master class for Ukrainian people. *"In Ukraine Gingerbread is very popular and what you have in Ireland is not the same as Ukrainian Gingerbread"*. The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker asked me to demonstrate this for Irish people and to remind Ukrainian people of home. I brought the gingerbread with edible paint and paintbrushes. We had a class to show how to make it and after that, the Hub ordered the gingerbread to sell in the Hub. Before the war, I did this for a hobby.



After moving to Wicklow, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker brought me to Newcastle Community Market and introduced me to the Newcastle Community Group which I have now joined and where I now have a stall every Saturday selling my gingerbread. I also had a stall at the Ukrainian Cultural festival in Dublin, which was on 17th September. *"If I had my equipment that I had in Ukraine I could set up a business but here I don't have this. We came to Ireland with a backpack each but I buy when I can"*. One thing I have learned since starting my stall in the market is that *"Irish people don't like to try something new, they are very traditional and I find out this in market. I called my food Ukrainian name and nobody buy but when I call it the English name they buy!"*

One day at the Newcastle market, some people suggested I look for a job in a café in Ashford who was looking for someone so I contacted them and I am now working part time in a café in Ashford as a Chef's Assistant.

Culturally things are very different in Ireland, *"Irish people are not in a rush, Ukrainian want to do something and they do it then but not Irish. I am still getting used to this"*. Also, I am finding the lack of *"... transport very difficult in Ireland, if you don't have a car you can't do anything without planning how to get there"*. Services are very spread out in Ireland but in Ukraine *"... you can walk to hospital, shopping centre, school"* so there is no need for a car.

Next Chapter

Before coming to Ireland, I did not know much about this country. *"I knew about nature, about St. Patrick's Day and about expensive alcohol!"* Now *"I'm not missing home, I'm quite comfortable. I do miss working with kids. If I wanted to go back to work with children I would have to go back to school but I can do the business straight away so I see myself more in the business for the future"*. I am working with my SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker to increase my business and work on a business plan and when I am ready SICAP will support me through the BTWEA.

CWP SICAP Ukrainian Team

SICAP supports to Ukrainian refugees need a specific skill set in order to engage with individuals, understand them culturally while identifying their needs and how to satisfy those needs. This is why CWP SICAP immediately, upon receiving additional funding for Ukrainian support, hired and subsequently increased the hours of three SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers. This ensured the language barrier was eliminated and the cultural gaps were non-existent.

The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers are committed to supporting their fellow Ukrainians to ensure all available supports are offered thus increasing the possibility of as smooth a transition into Irish life and culture as possible. Their own story and their experience with integration into Irish society and educational background contributes to the understanding they have of the challenges facing Ukrainians at this time.



Tetiana Leshchenko is the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker for the Baltinglass LEA supporting Ukrainian refugees in the West of Wicklow and the Roundwood/Lough Dan area.

Tetiana is 38 years old and married with a son, Michael and a daughter, Elizabeth. She has been living in Ireland since 2010, coming here originally with her husband who had contracted employment in Ireland. Tetiana came here as a 26 years old pregnant girl who had never been abroad before, who had never been far away from her family and friends and who had no understanding of the Irish mentality, culture and lifestyle. Initially she found her time in Ireland to be *“a real struggle”*

and she *“learnt a lot the hard way”*.

Tetiana is a fully qualified primary and secondary school teacher with a Master’s Degree in Ethno linguistics having worked as a tutor in Zhytomy State University while finishing her PhD degree in Ukraine. Upon arrival in Ireland, Tetiana realised that her qualifications were not valid as Ukraine was not a part of EU. She then set about completing a Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care Level 8 and subsequently worked in a crèche for 8 years. She won a National Award as a newcomer for the best practice in community work with children.

When the war started in Ukraine, Tetiana *“felt as if I betrayed my country”*. She could not go back to Ukraine because her family was here in Ireland but her mom, dad and brother were all in Ukraine and her brother was in the army to protect *“the Motherland Ukraine”*. Therefore, she started to look for a job with Ukrainians, thinking, *“If I can’t go back to Ukraine, I can help Ukrainians here in Ireland.”* A short while later Tetiana feels *“the Universe heard my prayers”* and she seen the post advertising the role of SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker.

She felt this was the right position for her as she speaks both Ukrainian and English and feels she has a great understanding of the Irish/Ukrainian mentality and culture. She also feels that she has been

through what all Ukrainians are going through now in the relocation to Ireland and feels that she is in a good position to help and support them to the best of her ability.

Tetiana has a vision of the support she can provide to Ukrainian refugees based on SICAP supports and her personal experience illustrated in the graph below:



“.... people who are coming to Ireland it’s a good opportunity for them to turn into European people because Ireland gives them such a brilliant chance, not to live here like they don’t like to stay but to see what the world can be in Ukraine. After war, obviously, when they rebuild and people coming back they know English so they can contribute not only to Ukrainian economy, they can work for foreign companies. I always say you go to English classes. It does not only teach how to say hello, goodbye, it is where you will develop as a personality, you can earn money, you can put yourself into a better position and you have options for future”

Tetiana Leshchenko, SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker

Olga Sakiv is the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker for the Arklow LEA and is based in the Ukrainian Hub in the Bridgewater Centre, Arklow town.

Olga is 42 years old and has two children, a daughter, aged 7 and a son, 17 years old. Prior to the war Olga lived in the west of Ukraine and was a self-employed online fashion buyer. She and her daughter arrived in Ireland on 21st March to escape the war with her son following her to Ireland in August. Olga's daughter has settled into primary school and her son recently started a course in Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE).

Olga escaped Ukraine in March after trying to support her local community in the first month of the war. *"From the first day when the war started, I received a call from the teacher where my daughter was in school. She asked me to come and help to move the furniture because the people from the south were arriving. When I went to the school and I saw the kids on the floor, there is nothing, no mattresses only a blanket with the kids sitting with it. From that day I started volunteering, I was helping the school, and I was bringing the mattress, beds and pillow cases".*

However, over time her daughter was not sleeping well due to the air raid sirens and worrying about the war so she looked for a country where people speak English and she could travel to quickly. Ireland had recently waived its requirement for a travel visa as an emergency measure for Ukrainian citizens so they flew to Ireland and came directly to Arklow. They lived with a host family for 3 months and are now living in rented accommodation.

Olga immediately wanted to support her fellow Ukrainians in Arklow so she attended the opening of the Ukrainian Hub and said, *"Tell me what you need me to do"*. This resulted in Olga *"volunteering from 9am to 6pm every day of the week, Saturday and Sunday as well"* translating for INTREO interactions and helping at the Coral Sports Centre which was housing refugees at the time. While at the Hub, she met Kay O'Connor, SICAP Social Inclusion Manager for County Wicklow Partnership, and Kay asked her to apply for the role of SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, which was advertised at that time.

As it is the central point in Arklow for Ukrainians to meet, Olga is based in the Hub where she has an established presence since May to provide supports to individuals and families who walk in seeking help and guidance.





Tanya Antonova is the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker for the Wicklow LEA and is based in the Ukrainian Hub in the Old Library in Wicklow town.

Tanya came to Ireland in 2004 following her husband who was working here since 2001 *"to give my family a better life here in Ireland"*. They have 3 children, a son (21) who was born in Ukraine and two daughters, 13 & 5 years old, both born in Ireland. Tanya comes from Zhytomyr in central Ukraine. She has a Degree in Social Work, following her mother's example who is a doctor and has run an orphanage for 27 years in Zhytomyr.

Before the war started, Tanya worked in the Irish community looking after older people. *"I really loved my job. I think it gave me such a big experience according to the culture, language, everything really. But I always feel like I was missing something inside. I always knew I could do something more. When the war started, I felt helpless; I thought I have to do something. I make a post on Facebook about my mom's orphanage, I open a Go fund me page and after 3 weeks we had raised €40,000"*.

Tanya's Facebook post was picked up in the local media, by RSVP magazine and by East Coast Radio station and *"... when I see people sending me money I was shocked. It made me feel I can do something. It was an amazing response. This money helped my mom buy a car for the orphanage, which has 67 children, a lot of them have neurological diseases and some are social orphans."*

The Association of Ukrainians in Ireland (AURI) seen Tanya's Facebook post and they contacted her with a plan to open a Ukrainian Hub in Wicklow Town and asked if she would be interested in getting involved. *"At first I wasn't ready, but Kay (SICAP Social Inclusion Manager with County Wicklow Partnership) helped a lot". "Three weeks after the Hub was opened, I interviewed and was offered the role of SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker for the Wicklow Ukrainian Hub"*.

"I'm very happy with County Wicklow Partnership and SICAP as well. Everyone is very supportive and very friendly and it means something to have this type of support."

Tanya is now *"managing this place and trying to make these people feel happier"*. Looking back on when she arrived in Ireland Tanya explains *"the difference between me and these people is I choose this country, I was prepared a little bit, I knew my husband was here, but it was still such a big stress"*.

Given all that has been achieved in such a small amount of time *"I am proud of myself because I make proud my parents"*. *"I feel very enthusiastic and I really lucky with the team we have, we are very supportive and obviously we are all doing this for Ukraine. Not everybody has to have a gun in their hand or treat some people. Everyone can play a part and make this situation much better"*.

SICAP & the Association of Ukrainians in Ireland (AURI)

Who are AURI?

The main objectives of 'The Association of Ukrainians in Ireland' (AURI) organisation is to provide support for the educational, cultural, humanitarian, and medical needs of Ukrainians living in the Republic of Ireland and abroad, and also the unifying of Ukrainians and facilitation of their integration into Irish society.

As a result of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, AURI expanded its Charitable purpose and objectives and also focused on humanitarian efforts, including the purchase and distribution of medical aid in Ireland and Ukraine; information and legal support for families affected by emergencies and assistance in finding housing and jobs.

What is Palyanytsya?

After the start of the war in Ukraine and with such influx of Ukrainian refugees into Ireland AURI started to develop the concept of "Palyanytsya" which is otherwise known as the Ukrainian Hub. Palyanytsya is a charitable hub providing a location for displaced Ukrainians.

The Irish "Palyanytsya" is a symbol of sincerity and hospitality. Ireland welcomed Ukrainians with hospitality. The Irish Palyanytsya is the personification of the friendship, support, and commitment of the Irish people to the Ukrainians.

"They are very grateful (Ukrainian's); the people are very nice here. They are helping us a lot, in the beginning it was like 'oh my god I never seen this type of help in my life'. But even for example if someone is living alone the local people help with transport, with schools".

Olga Sakiv, SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker & Arklow Hub Manager

County Wicklow 'Palyanytsyas'

The first Palyanytsya Hub opened in Dublin on March 24, 2022 and was quickly followed by one in County Cavan and two in County Wicklow. The County Wicklow Hubs are based in Arklow Town, known as the Arklow Hub, which opened its doors on the 4th April 2022, and the Wicklow Hub is located in Wicklow town opening its doors on the 24th April 2022.

The Wicklow Hub location was offered to AURI by Wicklow County Council in the location of the Old Library in Wicklow town with the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, Tanya Antonova, managing this facility.

Wicklow Hub Before & After



The Bridgewater Centre Management Group based on the first floor of the Bridgewater Centre, Arklow town and managed by SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, Olga Sakiv, offered the Arklow Hub location.

Arklow Hub Before & After



Areas with no Hub resource

At present, there is no Hub available in the West of Wicklow or Roundwood, which can be challenging for SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker, Tetiana Leshchenko, who is working diligently with Ukrainian refugees housed in a variety of accommodations spread across towns and villages. Tetiana travels to communal dwellings such as hostels and hotels to support groups of individuals resident in these locations as well as meeting individuals at convenient locations. She provides support in a variety of areas such as accessing courses and providing guidance on services as well as translation supports. She also works closely with the Housing Officer in Wicklow County Council providing translation support during meetings on housing.

Tetiana is currently collaborating with CYPSC on a mapping project in the Ukrainian language to help identify all the available support offerings around the county as well as essential services, which can be identified in local towns and villages. This will help individuals to source core services independently in day-to-day life.

CWP SICAP supporting the Hub movement

The identification of and access to the Hub locations came about through the support of SICAP working with the local authority and the management team in the Bridgewater centre through representation by the SICAP Social Inclusion Manager.

"... Kay (SICAP Social Inclusion Manager with County Wicklow Partnership), helped a lot. She liaised with this association and with Wicklow County Council to access a building to locate the Hub in".

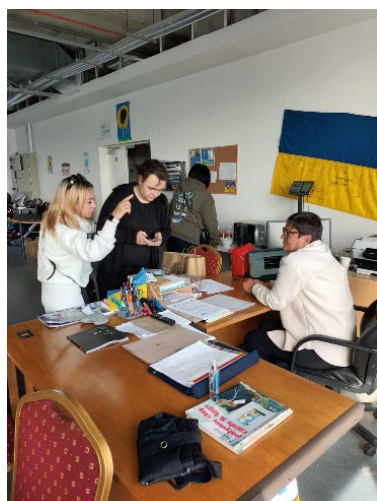
Tanya Antonova, SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker

Both locations were cleared out, cleaned, painted and set up for the Hub by volunteers from the local communities including both Lions Club and Rotary Club members who worked incredibly hard over a short period as well as artwork from Avoca Gallery. Once the premises had opened, the public answered the call for provisions and essentials for Ukrainian nationals with people arriving for support and to assist from the minute the doors opened.

"We had so much support from all organisations as everyone wanted this place to happen. It is so important as we liaise with all organisations to support with education, emotional support, mental support, visits to doctors and dentists, even just friendly advice and guidance".



Tanya Antonova, SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker and Manager of Wicklow Hub



Initially due to the urgent requirement to leave Ukraine, the majority of people who came through the doors of each hub left h empty handed and so were in need of essential items like clothes, shoes, toys, toiletries and other necessities as well as communication and emotional support.

"... sometimes I'm going with them to get temporary protection in Dublin, then INTREO social card. Then it could be medical card, GP translation, on the phone with the pharmacy or the schools. Generally, if they have a question or need help they come to the hub as they know I'm here".

Olga Sakiv, SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker and Manager of Arklow Hub

Due to the extensive work in opening both hubs and providing such valuable supports to refugees under such difficult circumstances both Hubs have been selected for entry into the Pride of Place awards 2022. We await the result of this award.



Over time, as the flow of individuals has steadied, the function of the hubs is moving from emergency support into a resource centre providing a range of social, educational and support activities such as Coffee mornings, Yoga classes, art classes and therapy as well as music and drama classes. They are also information hubs liaising with Ukrainians to advise on many aspects of everyday life such as translation support, accommodation enquiries, educational support, medical advice, basic administration requirements, banking queries as well as mental and emotional support.

'Every story is going through me and I find myself very emotion. You are trying to help but not always you can help and you have your own life going as well but I have to say I feel good, the only one thing I don't like is this paperwork!'

Tanya Antonova, SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker and Manager of Wicklow Hub

To celebrate the success of the Ukrainian Hubs, the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker in the Wicklow Hub held a Ukrainian Independence Day in August to celebrate the Ukrainian population and culture in the area. This was a successful day with both Ukrainian and Irish people immersed in Ukrainian food, culture, dance and musical events and was recorded and photographed by Viktoriia Kozak, profiled in this case study⁶.

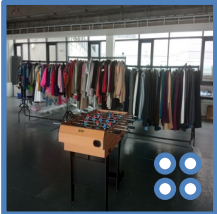


⁶ <https://youtu.be/-zk00Wmga5w> - Ukraine Independence Day held in the Wicklow Hub. Recorded and edited by Viktoriia Kozak.

Wicklow Ukrainian Hub



Arklow Ukrainian Hub Images



Future Plans

The SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker in the Wicklow Hub is working with local Ukrainian refugees in developing a photographic project to be displayed around County Wicklow. This would involve working with Ukrainian refugees on a voluntary basis to photographically document Ukrainian people and the challenges they face as well as their experiences in Ireland. The focus of this project is to visually display the effects of the war while also showing positive outcomes from such difficult times.

The future plans for these hubs is to become Ukrainian Cultural Hubs still providing essential supports where needed through SICAP while also developing into Ukrainian Cultural Centres with a Ukrainian School to preserve and develop the Ukrainian language, culture and education. To also interact with other ethical (national) Associations/Societies in Ireland and abroad providing representation of the Ukrainian community in public, cultural, political and media institutions.

SICAP will continue to support Ukrainian refugees providing a variety of one to one supports, information sessions, workshops, access to courses and activities for children and adults while also supporting facilitation of their integration into Irish society inclusive of supports seeking employment and self-employment opportunities.

Challenges and Learnings

Working with refugees, who have gone through a traumatic event such as having to leave their lives and in some cases families through no choice of their own, having to come to a country that does not speak their language and in most cases have very little if any knowledge of the people and culture, brings many challenges. Some of the more challenging issues faced by SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers in offering support are:

- Acknowledging the mental health and trauma, which may be present from what refugees have gone through, and supporting them where possible either directly with the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers support or where required providing referrals to other organisations.
- Cultural differences create frustration at times for refugees and accentuate the homesickness, which is often felt. SICAP aims to acknowledge these differences in how we work with and provide understanding of these challenges. This is why it was so important to CWP SICAP to provide support directly through other Ukrainian individuals. Thereby addressing this challenge straight away upon first contact and limiting frustrations where possible.
- The Ukrainian refugees are being housed in many different settings spread across the county with some in towns and villages while others are in rural and isolated area. Transportation for all but in particular those outside of urban and suburban settings provides challenges in identifying and accessing supports such as courses. CWP SICAP has addressed this by providing a local link bus from rural locations such as Lough Dan to Roundwood where access to more central transport routes can be made.
 - Where refugees live in one off rural dwellings such as with host families and are looking for independence in their own transport requirements we facilitate them to

access the TESS from DEASP for the purposes of gaining access to work/education supports.

- When refugees first started arriving in Wicklow, it was mostly of a transient nature for a week or two and then moving on to more permanent accommodation in the West and South West of Ireland. While these individuals were supported through the temporary protection directive set up process and we ensured they had clothes and necessities from the Hubs, not all were registered due to the short-term engagement period. Once it became clear that an individual was remaining in Wicklow, SICAP registered and rolled out the full range of services available and appropriate to that individual and their family.
- We at CWP realise the importance of our staff's wellbeing. Never before has SICAP been placed in a situation as complex and immediate as the Ukrainian situation. The use of Ukrainian born staff to work with refugees means we must pay particular close attention to the wellbeing of these workers, given it's a situation so close to their hearts.
- These challenges are especially relevant in the Baltinglass LEA. With no Ukrainian Hub in this general area, there is no centralised area for refugees to meet and congregate as a community and there is no centralised area for the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker to meet individuals to discuss their needs and plan what supports they might require. Providing support in this way is demanding on the SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Worker requiring her to move around this large area working out of many different venues, seeking locations for private one to one discussions and to provide information sessions.

We hope we have given you a flavour of the challenges of the Ukrainian crisis and the individuals SICAP is supporting, while demonstrating the efforts and commitment by SICAP staff in meeting these challenges and improving the experience of Ukrainian refugees in County Wicklow.

CWP SICAP would like to thank our funders for their continued support to the dedicated work being carried out by our committed SICAP Ukrainian Refugee Support Workers and administration team. We look forward to the next iteration of SICAP and your continued support in the work that is ongoing.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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