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INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE UKRAINIAN VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT IN IRELAND

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The large-scale displacement of Ukrainians caused by the full-scale Russian invasion has significantly intensified migration processes across Europe, including Ireland. In these conditions, the issue of social adaptation and integration of displaced persons becomes especially relevant. One of the most effective mechanisms facilitating this process is volunteering, which not only provides immediate assistance but also promotes social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and the preservation of national identity. The institutional dimension of the Ukrainian volunteer movement in Ireland is

characterized by the transition from spontaneous activism to structured organizational frameworks. This evolution has enabled the community to move beyond immediate crisis response toward long-term strategic support and advocacy.

Key pillars of this institutionalization include- formalization of Entities: The emergence of registered non-profit organizations (e.g., Ukrainian Action in Ireland, Association of Ukrainians in Ireland) has provided a legal basis for large-scale fundraising, official partnerships, and transparency.

Imptrant strategic cooperation with State Bodies and integration with Irish governmental structures , such as the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Has allowed volunteer organizations to act as essential intermediaries between the state and the displaced community. The establishment of dedicated hubs and logistical networks has optimized the collection and delivery of humanitarian aid, moving from individual initiatives to professional supply chain management.

Beyond humanitarian aid, institutionalized groups now perform a political function, representing Ukrainian interests within the Irish socio-political landscape and fostering bilateral cultural ties.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of volunteer activities in supporting the Ukrainian community in Ireland, as well as to analyze the contribution of both Irish and Ukrainian organizations in addressing humanitarian, social, and cultural challenges. The research is based on the analysis of organizational practices, public initiatives, and available informational resources.

Volunteering in Ireland is characterized by a high level of institutional development and public engagement. The country has established an effective infrastructure that supports volunteer initiatives at both national and local levels. A key coordinating role is played by Volunteer Ireland, which acts as a central platform connecting volunteers with organizations in need of assistance. Through digital tools and local volunteer centres, individuals can access a wide range of opportunities adapted to different needs, skills, and levels of availability.

Volunteer activities in Ireland encompass various forms, including community volunteering, remote participation, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and international cooperation. This diversity allows individuals not only to contribute to social causes but also to acquire new skills, expand social networks, and enhance their employability. For displaced Ukrainians, volunteering often becomes an important step toward integration, as it facilitates language acquisition, cultural adaptation, and active participation in community life.

An essential role in responding to humanitarian crises is played by the Irish Red Cross, one of the leading charitable organizations in the country. “The Irish Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent

Movement- a global humanitarian network made up of 191 National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)”[1]. Its activities cover emergency response, healthcare support, and social services. Since 2022, the organization has significantly expanded its efforts to support Ukrainian refugees, including the coordination of accommodation programs, distribution of humanitarian aid, and provision of psychological assistance [1]. As the conflict enters its fifth year in 2026, the scale of displacement has solidified into one of the most profound demographic transformations in Europe since the Second World War. What began as an acute humanitarian emergency has evolved into a prolonged structural crisis, reshaping not only population distribution but also the social, cultural, and psychological fabric of Ukraine. This phenomenon is not merely a statistical disruption but a deep fragmentation of the Ukrainian national and social “canvas,” with long-term implications for both Ukraine and host societies across Europe. This displacement has become a structural feature of European society rather than a temporary anomaly. Countries such as Ireland have transitioned from emergency reception frameworks to more complex systems addressing housing, education, employment, and social cohesion. The challenge is no longer only humanitarian- it is systemic. Continuous exposure to war-related stressors – violence, displacement, family separation, and economic precarity- creates layers of unresolved trauma. In 2026, this is increasingly recognized as cumulative and intergenerational, especially affecting children and adolescents. The prolonged and unpredictable nature of the conflict sustains a “liminal state” – a condition of suspended reality between past and future. This uncertainty complicates decision-making, weakens resilience over time, and contributes to chronic anxiety, depression, and burnout among displaced populations.

The Irish Red Cross provides a comprehensive framework of psychosocial interventions tailored for forced migrants, including Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BoTPs) and International Protection Applicants (IPAs). By addressing the specific etiologies of displacement-related trauma, the IRC offers a multi-tiered support system that encompasses specialized clinical psychotherapy, professional training, and adaptive wellbeing courses. This holistic approach extends to frontline volunteers and professionals, ensuring the sustainability of the humanitarian response through the mitigation of secondary traumatic stress [1].

The housing support program deserves particular attention, as it enables Ukrainian families to find temporary accommodation with Irish hosts. This initiative not only addresses urgent housing needs but also fosters interpersonal connections between refugees and local communities, contributing to mutual understanding and social inclusion.

In addition to immediate assistance, volunteer organizations in Ireland actively promote long-term integration strategies. Community centres, such as the Ukrainian Community Centre in Rathmines, Dublin, serve as important platforms for social interaction and support. They offer a wide range of activities, including educational workshops, mental health support programs, creative initiatives for children, and professional development opportunities. These initiatives help individuals rebuild their sense of stability and belonging in a new environment.

Alongside Irish institutions, Ukrainian diaspora organizations play a crucial role in supporting their compatriots abroad. Their activities are aimed not only at providing assistance but also at preserving cultural identity and strengthening community ties.

One of the most active organizations is Ukrainian Action in Ireland, established in response to the humanitarian crisis. Its activities are focused on three main areas: humanitarian aid, integration support, and cultural diplomacy. The organization implements various projects, including educational programs, cultural events, and community-building initiatives, which contribute to the visibility of Ukrainian culture in Ireland and foster intercultural dialogue [4].

Equally important is the Association of Ukrainians in Ireland (AURI), which serves as a unifying platform for the Ukrainian community. The organization addresses a wide range of needs, including humanitarian assistance, educational support, and cultural development. It actively engages volunteers in organizing events, fundraising campaigns, and social initiatives aimed at supporting both Ukrainians in Ireland and those affected by the war in Ukraine.

A significant aspect of the activities of Ukrainian organizations is the support of children and youth. In the context of forced migration, preserving cultural identity becomes particularly important for younger generations. Educational initiatives play a key role in this process.

The network of Ukrainian Saturday schools “Ridna Shkola” is an important example of such initiatives. Established to maintain the Ukrainian language and cultural heritage, these schools provide educational programs for children aged 5–12. The curriculum includes language learning, history, traditions, and creative activities. The functioning of these schools is largely based on volunteer work, which demonstrates the high level of community engagement and responsibility [2].

Youth engagement is further supported by Irish organizations, among which Foróige occupies a prominent place. This organization focuses on youth development through leadership programs, community projects, and educational activities. By establishing Ukrainian youth clubs, Foróige creates inclusive spaces where young people can interact, develop skills, and adapt to a new social environment [9].

Another important institution contributing to youth development is Plast, the National Scout Organization of Ukraine. Its activities are based on the principles of patriotic education, leadership, and community service. The expansion of Plast initiatives in Ireland reflects the growing demand for structured youth programs that combine cultural preservation with personal development.

In addition, faith-based and community organizations such as Youth for Christ Ireland provide important support through youth programs, mentorship, and social activities. Their initiatives contribute to the holistic development of young people, including moral, social, and emotional aspects.

Student initiatives also play an important role in strengthening intercultural connections. The Ukrainian Society at Maynooth University actively promotes Ukrainian culture through events, educational activities, and cooperation with other organizations. Such initiatives contribute to the formation of a positive image of Ukraine and encourage intercultural exchange [3].

Organizations such as the Irish Red Cross and other civil society actors play a critical role beyond immediate aid. Their work represents a form of “social conservation”- preserving human dignity, sustaining community networks, and helping reconstruct the psychological foundations of a nation living through displacement.

An important trend observed in Ireland is the increasing level of cooperation between Irish and Ukrainian organizations. This partnership approach allows for more effective use of resources, better coordination of efforts, and the implementation of comprehensive support programs. Joint initiatives often combine humanitarian assistance with long-term integration strategies, ensuring sustainable outcomes.

At the same time, volunteering has a transformative impact not only on recipients of assistance but also on volunteers themselves. Participation in volunteer activities способствує розвитку соціальної відповідальності, емпатії та громадянської активності. For Ukrainians, volunteering often becomes a way to regain a sense of agency and contribute to the well-being of their community, despite the challenges of displacement.

Despite the significant achievements, certain challenges remain. These include language barriers, limited access to information, and the need for better coordination among different actors. Addressing these issues requires continued efforts from both governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as active involvement of local communities.

In conclusion, the volunteer movement in Ireland plays a crucial role in supporting the Ukrainian community and facilitating its integration into Irish society. The combined efforts of Irish institutions and Ukrainian organizations create a comprehensive support system that addresses both

immediate needs and long-term challenges. Volunteering serves not only as a tool for assistance but also as a powerful mechanism for building resilient, inclusive, and interconnected communities

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