

## S U M M A R Y

# PoMOCna KAWA #40



## EMPLOYMENT OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN POLAND

**39** REPRESENTATIVES OF ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATED IN OUR MEETING Mudita Association, Unitatem Foundation (Poland Welcomes), New Story Foundation, Blue Dot Krakow, Social Integration Centre, YOUkraine Foundation, Good Start Foundation and others....

The fortieth meeting of the 'PoMOCna Kawa' series is behind us, which took place on Tuesday 22 August 2023. Our speaker was Grzegorz Prujarczyk from Unions Help Refugees Poland (UHR), an organisation that helps refugees of all nationalities to become active on the Polish labour market, primarily by providing legal advice. The lecture covered the most important issues related to the employment of refugees from Ukraine in Poland. Additionally, the topic of the UHR's activities and the role of trade unions in improving the position of foreign workers was raised. You can read a summary of the most important issues that were raised during the "PoMOCna Kawa" below.

### About unions - historical context

At the beginning of the meeting, Grzegorz Prujarczyk of the UHR outlined the historical background of unions. It is worth recalling them in order to better understand why to direct refugees to this type of organisation for help. Unions played an important role in the struggle for workers' rights and improved working conditions. Their achievements have been crucial in developing a balance between employers and workers and ensuring decent and safe working conditions, such as:

- reducing working time to 8 hours,
- pay rises and ensuring minimum wage standards,
- improving health and safety conditions at work,
- providing health care and social security,
- prohibition of discrimination and equality at work,
- tackling abusive employers

Today, unions are fighting to ensure that these standards are respected in every workplace, regardless of nationality. Refugees and migrants are more vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace, and unions have a great deal of experience in countering abuse. **Aid workers should therefore consider them as a place to send a refugee for help.**

## Major challenges

Some of the biggest challenges, the UHR representative recounted, include:

- **weak 'unionisation' of the sectors where refugees are most often employed.** Related to this is the lack of a larger entity that can disinterestedly protect them from rogue employers;
- **the use of legal, albeit non-relational, contracts** (contract of mandate, contract of specific work) **as a basis for employment;**
- **in relation to the above - abuse of contractual penalties, non-payment or untimely payment, failure to ensure holiday entitlement;**
- **lack of knowledge of refugees' labour rights** and procedures for reporting violations of these rights;
- **the psychological state of refugees** - e.g. lack of willingness to change, fear of the future, unwillingness to confront employers,

## Let us take an interest in the situation of the refugees we are helping

During the meeting, there was no shortage of examples of practical interventions by the OHIM regarding violations of labour rights. **Sometimes, a simple interest in the situation was enough for the employer to stop the abusive practices.** This state of affairs suggests that if an aid organisation becomes aware that its beneficiary has problems in this area, it is worth contacting the abusive employer. The organisation's intervention may have a chilling effect because it is a larger entity than an individual. This is, of course, an example and its application depends on the policies of specific organisations.

## Unions Help Refugees's Labour Law Knowledge Base

UHR's objectives are to support Ukrainian refugee women in their difficult entry into the Polish labour market, to help them fight exploitation, unfair practices and predatory employers. Grzegorz Prujarczyk commented on the mission of Unions Help Refugees as follows:

*We want to help people regain control of their lives turned upside down by war, forced displacement and rogue employers. So that they can help themselves and their communities and establish good relationships in the places where they currently live. Through extensive education we aim to improve the experience of refugees and migrants, their situation and understanding of their issues in the labour movement. By reaching out and developing partnerships with other NGOs, we are also building a wider, more skilled and efficient support network and better resources for those in need.*

**Unions Help Refugees has prepared a knowledge base on labour law, where you can find answers to general questions on, among other things, contracts, forms of employment, unfair practices, wages and overtime. It is available in Polish, Russian, Ukrainian and English. For more detailed case studies, you can contact the UHR directly by email at [pomoc@uhr.org.pl](mailto:pomoc@uhr.org.pl) You can also use the toll-free helpline +48 800 800 605.**

## KNOWLEDGE BASE

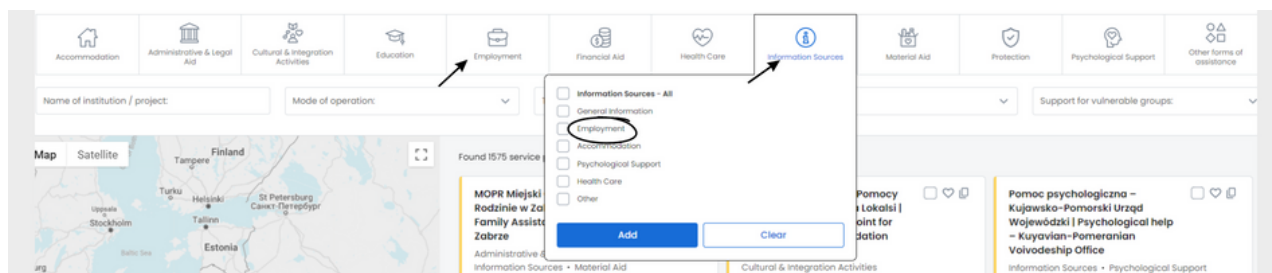
### WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

Click the image above to be taken to the UHR knowledge base

## List of organisations that assist refugees in professional activation

In [Mapuj Pomoc](#) you can find organisations that help refugees to become active in the labour market in Poland. All you have to do is select the "Employment" or "Information → Employment" categories on the map. With a user account, you can create a list of organisations that will always be available on your profile - quick to download and share with refugees or employees of your organisation.



*If you need a contact for a specific organisation, please email us at [mapujpomoc@culturelab.pl](mailto:mapujpomoc@culturelab.pl).*