



HOUSE of HELSINKI

Since 2019

HOUSE OF HELSINKI
Annual Report 2023

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Board 2023

Artem Kuosti – Chairperson

Brix Ziemann – Vice Chairperson

Irina Levina – Board Member

Veera Rautio – Board Member



Greetings from the chairperson

The past year, 2023, has been highly meaningful and rewarding for our organization. It has been a time when the structures and strategies of our organization have been strengthened, albeit slowly but steadily. This developmental process has required exceptional commitment and effort from all parties involved, and we want to express our deep gratitude and pride for everyone's contributions. We are particularly proud of our employees' achievements in the areas of training, development of administrative structures, and volunteer recruitment. Their tireless work and innovative solutions have been fundamental to the sustainable growth and effective operation of our organization.

Our employees have demonstrated exceptional professionalism and dedication, enabling us to implement new training programs,

streamlining administrative processes and enthusiastic recruitment of new volunteers. The Refugin project has been a tangible example of how these efforts have borne fruit.

The success of the project and its positive impact on both volunteers and Ukrainians' daily lives have been possible only through commendable internal work and close collaboration. This has brought significant meaning and joy to all participants, reinforcing the sense of purpose that our work provides.

Looking forward to the future, we are excited and hopeful about what we can still achieve together. We believe that by continuing collaboration, developing innovations, and staying committed to our mission, we can overcome even greater obstacles and achieve new milestones.



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Advocacy and Representation



Image 1: Darya Gulik and Eliisa Saarinen opening the event.



Image 2: Darya Gulik interviews the experiential expert Anna Makarenko.

National Crisis Group for Ukraine

Kansalaisareena provided significant support to all organizations assisting Ukrainians in the years 2022–2023. During network meetings, practices and current information on crisis management were shared under the leadership of the network coordinator and development expert Eliisa Saarinen. The last meeting of the National Crisis Group for Ukraine was held in August.

This live event marked the conclusion of the national network as it was and the beginning of a new network. Since the core activities of the key players were no longer crisis-focused, it was decided to transform the network into an integration network.

Over 30 experts from various fields, including Migri, KELA, and different reception centers, gathered to share valuable insights and experiences. Their presentations addressed topics such as the current state of the reception system, benefit practices for refugees, and the effects of obtaining the right of domicile. The event was organized in collaboration with Kansalaisareena, the City of Helsinki, Helsinki Missio, House of Helsinki, and the Helsinki Parish Union, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Webinar on Getting to Know the Partnership Project and Organizations

In October, the House of Helsinki had the opportunity to present the organization and the Refugin project's activities. During the event organized in collaboration between Moniheli and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Darya Gulik and Nikolay Gofman provided the audience with an overview of the origin, goals, and achievements of these initiatives. Approximately 30 participants, including representatives from the public sector, educational institutions, businesses, and organizations, attended. The objective was to strengthen collaboration and raise awareness about the work related to immigration and integration.

Youth Volunteering Festival on October 11, 2023

The JEP project by Kansalaisareena organized a festival in October, together with many other volunteer organizations, focusing particularly on youth volunteer activities. The event featured expert lectures in the morning for professionals and an opportunity in the afternoon for organizations to showcase their activities to young people. Approximately 25 volunteer organizations and 100 high school students participated in the festival, demonstrating the growing interest of young people in volunteering. It served as a platform for inspiration and offered practical ways to encourage the involvement and participation of young people in volunteer work.

Picture: House of Helsinki volunteer Maria and intern Illia at the Youth Volunteer Festival.





Multicultural Independence Day Celebration

Photo by Juke Luoma: House of Helsinki Ry volunteers: Denis, Yulia and Maria, along with Refufin Project Manager Darya Gulik and Project Coordinator Nikolay Gofman

The Multicultural Independence Day Celebration, held on December 6, 2023, is an esteemed annual affair that commemorates Finland's independence while embracing the nation's cultural mosaic. The 2023 theme, 'FINclusion knows no borders,' underscored the pivotal role of inclusivity and unity within Finland's diverse society. Aiming to foster cross-cultural understanding and dialogue, the event showcased the richness of various cultures and nurtured a sense of cohesion among individuals from disparate backgrounds.

Drawing over 300 attendees, the two-hour vibrant program featured an array of performances, including poetry, music, dance, and comedy, each mirroring Finland's cultural plurality and offering insights into different cultural traditions. Notably, Ayaan Hassan's poignant poetry and the dynamic HOPE musical act by Joy and Ifunanya resonated deeply with the audience, enhancing the collective sense of belonging within Finnish society.

Moreover, the event was graced with memorable performances by Rina Januzi and Merve Abdurrahmani from Autokton Ry, Luna and Agata from SVK Graniitti, as well as the captivating dancers from Askelten Palo and BIBAK, each offering an invitation to the audience for an intercultural exploration. The light-hearted stand-up comedy by Karim Aldulaimin added a touch of humor to the celebration, playfully addressing the nuances of cultural interactions. The charismatic hosting duo, Chico Muya and Sandhja Kuivalainen, further contributed to the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere of the event. The 2023 Multicultural Independence Day Celebration marked a pivotal moment as Moniheli transitioned

the event's organization to its member entities, showcasing a strong dedication to fostering inter-community cooperation and celebrating Finland's multicultural fabric. The event's organization involved notable contributions from IWWOF - International Working Women of Finland, Autokton Ry, and Suomi-Marokko Ystävyyss- & Kumppanuusyhdistys Ry (SMYKY Ry), with Darya Gulik playing a central role, supported by five dedicated volunteers from the House of Helsinki organization. This collaborative effort underscored the event's significance, not just in commemorating Finland's independence, but also in highlighting its cultural diversity and richness.

Photo: Moniheli's Communications Manager Raakel Kumpunen, House of Helsinki Chairperson Artem Kuosti, RefuFin Project Coordinator Nikolay Gofman, and Moniheli Chairperson Emma Tamankag.





Tree planting event

House of Helsinki took part in the tree planting event organized by Moniheli ry and Martat. The event saw HOH, along with our volunteers, planting new trees in Helsinki and Tampere. The initiative extended beyond these cities, engaging communities across Finland.

A tree planting day gives participants the opportunity to get to know other people and feel a sense of community. Furthermore, the act of planting a tree in Finland can hold a special significance for those who have fled from the hardships of war. It can symbolize the hope for a new beginning and a brighter future.

Through this event, we hope to offer a sense of belonging and connection to our community for all participants, especially for those who may feel disconnected from their community or unable to reach their "roots".

Picture: House of Helsinki team and Nasima Razmyar, Member of the Finnish Parliament.



Picture: House of Helsinki volunteer Maria and Illia sorting out Christmas letters for Suomen World Vision

Sorting out Christmas letters for Finnish World Vision.

Volunteers from the House of Helsinki dedicated their time to managing Christmas letters for Finnish World Vision, an initiative where Finns sponsor African children, fostering bonds through letters and photo exchanges. Each sponsor is paired with a 'sponsor child,' creating a unique channel of communication and support. The volunteers' role was crucial in sorting, reviewing, and when needed, translating these heartfelt letters.

With several thousand Christmas letters received, their diligent work over approximately a month ensures that each message and token of kindness reaches its destination before Christmas. Participating in this process, even for a day, was a profound experience, immersing in the early Christmas spirit and the joy of contributing to such a meaningful exchange.



REFUFIN 

REFUFIN – project

The aim of the REFUFIN project is to support Ukrainians in Finland and develop volunteer work. The project is built upon the civic initiative initiated by Darya Gulik in 2022, which mobilized volunteers to assist Ukrainians. Darya's efforts garnered well-deserved attention, leading to the project being granted funding for the years 2023–2025. Recognizing Darya's significant contribution in the initial stages, she was appointed as the project manager, continuing her work in advancing the project in her new role and focusing on aiding Ukrainians in Finland.

The initial months of the project were dedicated to planning, preparation, and development, establishing a solid foundation for its operations.

In February, the recruitment of Project Coordinator Nikolay Gofman marked a significant milestone in the project's implementation. Gofman's previous experience as a volunteer coordinator at House of Helsinki, where he managed volunteer translators, became an invaluable asset to our project. His professionalism and commitment to developing volunteer engagement were manifest in his efforts to create comprehensive training programs and provide robust support for volunteers.

The project underwent a comprehensive review of all existing volunteers and new volunteer applications. Lists were updated, and even though the first volunteer recruitment took place in September, it proved to be successful

Picture: Marttaliitto: Marttaliitto: Anna Anttonen, Moniheli: Anni Huovinen, HoH: Nikolay Gofman, Diaconia University: Margarita Sakilayan-Latvala, HoH: Darya Gulik and volunteers Sergei and Natalia.



REFUFIN – project

the success and brought new dedicated volunteers to our project. Significant efforts were invested in the training of volunteers. A comprehensive orientation was provided, equipping volunteers with the necessary information and skills for impactful actions.

Additionally, two training programs were created to support volunteers in both online and offline capacities. CHAI meetings and Fenix Finland Ry's counselling offered volunteers peer support and ways to maintain motivation and prevent burnout. In particular, events organised for volunteers, such as The Good People Meeting and mini parties, created a sense of community and provided volunteers with the opportunity to socialise and simply relax.

The Telegram channel served as an effective information channel, while the questions that were moved to the chat on the website allowed for direct and personal assistance for Ukrainians. As a result, the number of questions in the chat increased, demonstrating the need for the service.

The project's website and info-bank were regularly updated, ensuring the availability of up-to-date information for both Ukrainians and volunteers.

The support of the steering group was invaluable for the project's development. Group members, bringing extensive experience in volunteer and immigration work, provided valuable insights and support to the project staff. Their contributions helped guide the project towards its goals, strengthening its impact.

Our cooperation with other stakeholders and organizations has expanded, facilitating the exchange of information and resources. This networking has been instrumental in promoting the project and amplifying its impact. We are extremely proud of the outcomes achieved by the Refufin project and are committed to continuing our efforts to extend our activities across the nation in 2024.



Picture: REFUFIN volunteers and staff celebrating Christmas together.

The Good People Meeting

The REFUFIN team organized a thank-you event to honor all the volunteers who have contributed their time and effort over the past year. This special occasion took place at the Helsinki Mission, serving as a splendid celebration of our volunteers' invaluable commitment and hard work. Remarkably, for some volunteers, this event marked the first opportunity to meet in person, evoking a wave of emotions and a strong sense of community.

During the event, the impact of the volunteers' work was highlighted by presenting feedback, videos of gratitude, and thank-you letters from Ukrainians who received assistance from REFUFIN volunteers last year.

These heartfelt messages adorned the walls of one room, serving as a reminder to all volunteers of the meaningfulness of their work. After visiting the room, many shared warm hugs and tears of joy among themselves.

During the event, we also celebrated the joining of new volunteers to the REFUFIN team. We warmly thank each of them for their courage and willingness to participate and be part of the meaningful REFUFIN project. Once again, we express our gratitude to everyone who has been an essential part of the REFUFIN project. We are truly thankful for your presence and look forward to continuing our shared journey towards a brighter future.

Picture: House of Helsinki volunteers, staff, and board members.



The REFUFIN project in numbers



333	People from Ukraine contacted
421	Consultation sessions for Ukrainians
6	Volunteer meetings
78	Volunteers
181	Counseling sessions for volunteers

- Of those fleeing war who participated in REFUFIN services, 91% of respondents feel that they have received support in using the services of the Finnish authorities.
- Among those fleeing war who participated in REFUFIN services, 88% of respondents feel that they have received information about their legal rights and benefits in Finland.
- Of the volunteers who completed REFUFIN training, 100% of respondents feel the value of their work and feel the limits of their own capacity
- Among volunteers actively involved in REFUFIN activities, 75% of respondents feel that they are able to assess their own skills in volunteering.



Thank you to all our partners and stakeholders!

- City of Helsinki
- Länsi-Uudenmaan hyvinvointialue - LUVN
- Helsinki Missio Ry
- Moniheli Ry
- Kansalaisareena
- ELY -keskus
- FINUA Ry
- Fenix Finland Ry
- Metes
- Elisa Oy
- Luona Oy Vastaanottokeskukset
- Mieli Ry
- SPR
- THL
- Stadin AO, Ukraina Team

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