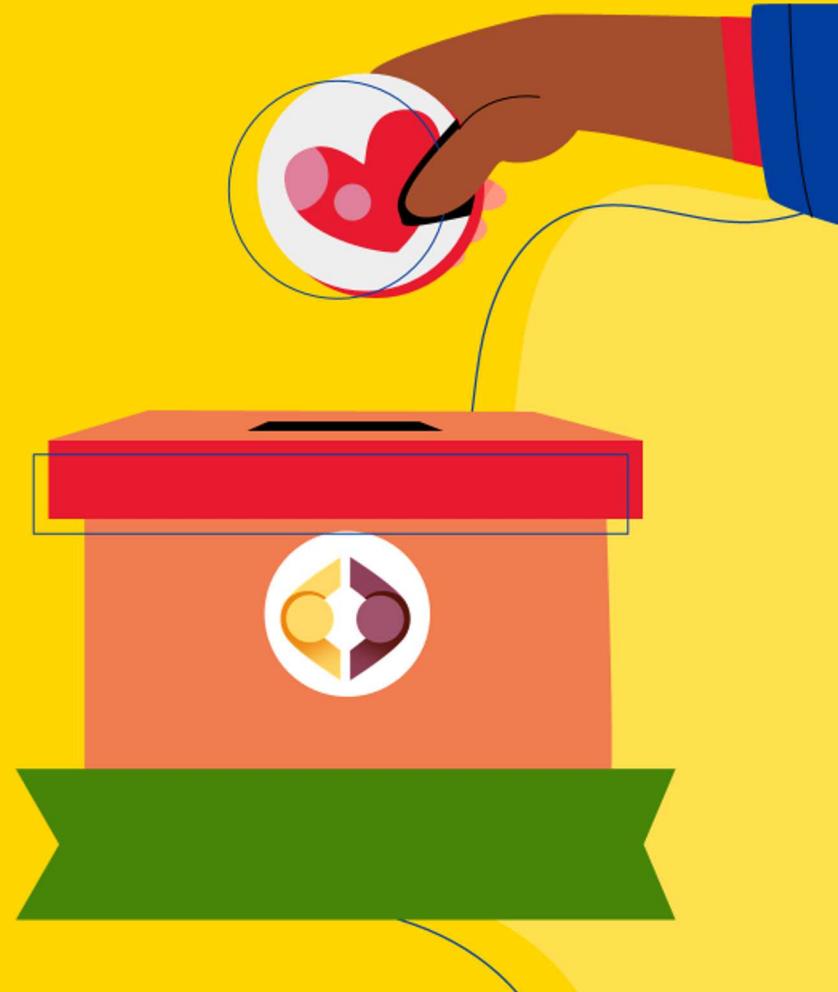


# ANNUAL REPORT

Arms Wide Open Association





# ABOUT US

- **Arms Wide Open** is a public benefit Association established in response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis in March 2022.
- **Our mission** is aimed at helping people affected by humanitarian crises to recover and rebuild their lives.
- **Our vision** is to deliver high-quality and cost-effective programs in close collaboration with local institutions and partners to support the integration of refugees in Bulgaria.
- **Our objective** is for migrants and refugees to be protected, cared for and independent in a society of just and welcoming communities.



# OUR TEAM

Arms Wide Open was created as an initiative of a group of volunteers from different nationalities and professional backgrounds who have been actively involved since the first days of the war in Ukraine in a number of initiatives and organizations to help refugees in Bulgaria.



**ANNA HAKMAN**  
/Chairman of the Management  
Board/



**NATALI TODOROVA**  
/Program Director/



**ALEXANDER  
MARCHENKO**  
/Director "Youth Programs"/

# OUR TEAM

The organization works actively with displaced families from Ukraine, which consist mostly of women and their children. Our work focuses on assisting families with professional development and social integration programs.



**VASIL TRETIAKOV**  
/Deputy Chairman of the Board/



**MILENA GEORGIEVA**  
/Administrative Director/



**BISER SMILENSKI**  
/Member of the Management Board/

# OUR TEAM

Interpersonal interactions allow our team to establish a strong bond and build trust with and among community members, which is the foundation for collaboration, sharing and active participation in our projects, increasing their effectiveness and sustainability.



**MARIA KACHARAVA**

/Founding member of the  
Association/



**LYUDMILA IVANYUK**

/Finance Director/



**DIMITAR DIMITROV**

/Coordinator "Youth Programs"/

# OUR TEAM

Many of the specialists included in the Association's team are Ukrainian refugees who have successfully integrated over the last two years and are ready to provide their knowledge, skills and support to people in a similar situation - forced to leave their homeland and rebuild their lives.



**IRINA BELEY**

/Teacher in „Karapuz“  
kindergarten/



**VALENTINA SOLODKA**

/ Teacher in „Karapuz“ kindergarten /



**LILIA LEVITSKA**

/ Musical supervisor /



# OUR TEAM

In this way, we do not simply provide job for the refugees, but we give them an opportunity to develop their professional activities despite the difficulties faced at the Bulgarian labor market.



**OLENA SKRINICHENKO**

/ psychologist /



**OLEKSANDR LOVUSHKIN**

/Преподавател по балет/



**VERA STOYANOVA**

/Teacher of Bulgarian language/

# OUR TEAM

Our team also employs many local specialists, who continuously go through various courses and training to improve their qualifications.



**VALERIA GEORGIEVA**

/Teacher of Bulgarian language  
and literature/



**KRISTINA NIKOLOVA**

/Teacher of Bulgarian language and  
literature/



**LALITA KOSHEL**

/ Teacher of Bulgarian language /

# 2023 IN NUMBERS

400+

Refugees passed through our education programs  
in 2023



# 2023 IN NUMBERS

**100+**

Adults who have passed through our psychological support programs, Bulgarian and English language courses, professional capacity building

**250+**

Children benefiting from our educational and cultural programs

**50+**

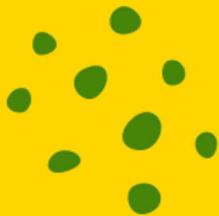
Visited our all-day kindergarten Karapuz





“Education is the most powerful weapon  
which you can use to change the world.”

— NELSON MANDELA





# OUR PROJECTS



- The activities and projects of Arms Wide Open are based on the specific needs of the target groups we work with. After the complex and difficult process of adaptation, the time has come for active support for integration - Bulgarian language courses, education, orientation in the labor market, psychological support and socialization.
- We believe that the integration process is two-sided and we always rely on joint activities with the local society. In our projects, we work purposefully with local organisations, companies, institutions, volunteers and active citizens.



# BULGARIAN LANGUAGE COURSE



Period of realization: 12/2022– 03/2023

Budget: 11 588 BGN

- For level A1-A2, developed by the specialists of the educational center "Christina Progress", who have gradually become advisors and true friends of our students. The activity covered **52 people** divided into 6 working groups that met twice a week for 6 months.
- The course also focused on practical knowledge needed by the students to cope with their work and everyday life in Bulgaria, organizing together with Sofia Development Association workshops and workshops on business Bulgarian language, CV writing, job search and finding, rights and obligations of employees and their employers, etc.



# COURSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Period of realization: 11/2022– 06/2023

Budget: 5 500 BGN

- Tailored to the individual abilities and aspirations of all who wish to participate. It involved 30 people aged between 16 and 45, divided into 2 courses of 3 months each, led by a local teacher from 19 Elin Pelin Secondary School and an English-speaking teacher from the First English Language School.
- Goal - participants developing their abilities for free verbal and written communication, while also enriching their vocabulary.
- The main task at hand is to help prepare for job interviews where English language proficiency is required, taking exams and preparing students.

# BULGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE COURSE



Period of realization: 02/2023– 06/2023

Budget: 10 000 BGN

- Preparatory courses in Bulgarian language and literature, with a main focus - preparation for the compulsory exams and external assessments in 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. A total of 22 students participated in the different groups.
- The most intense preparation was that of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, who had the difficult task of getting acquainted with a huge amount of Bulgarian literature and writing a retelling in a foreign language.
- In addition to the lessons, we focused on introducing parents and children to the meaning of external assessment.
- The exam results of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students ranged between 35 and 70 points, with the average result for Bulgaria in 2023 being 55.04 points.



# PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Period of realization: 11/2022– 01/2023

Budget: 2 100 BGN

Designed for women 18-35 years old. Offline and online group sessions of 7 to 12 people, over 3 months. The main objectives set were:



- Helping participants recognize and cope with the symptoms of PTSD.
- Coping with the effects of the cumulative trauma of the war, possible loss of friends and family, separation from loved ones, sudden move to Bulgaria, difficulties in adaptation.
- Coping with loneliness and isolation from family members.
- Restoring and strengthening the personal identity of each participant.



# ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN



Period of realization: 06/2022–текущ

Budget: 3000 BGN/месец

- "Karapuz" all-day kindergarten for children aged between 4 and 7, aiming to support Ukrainian mothers and their children in their adaptation, orientation and development in Sofia.
- **50 children** have passed through the day-care center so far, 7 of whom entered the Bulgarian first grade in 2023 and 5 visited local kindergartens.
- The kindergarten is self-supporting, and the parents themselves participate in its organization. We rely on formal and informal education, learning both Bulgarian and Ukrainian languages.
- The main teachers are educators from Ukraine and their children also went through "Karapuz".



# YOUTH PROGRAMME



**Period of realization: 09/2022–текущ**

In the process of working with many students and families over the past year, we have created an informal youth program for high school and college students, sustainably engaging Ukrainian youth between the ages of 14 and 18 and their parents in a variety of activities.

The focus is on empowerment and acquisition of personal and social skills for successful and rapid integration into society.

Local youth, youth organizations and specialists are actively involved in their initiatives.



# YOUTH PROGRAMME

**Period of realization: 09/2022–текущ**



The youth program involves between 30 and 40 young people who have, in the last year, been actively engaged in a number of informal educational initiatives, cultural and social initiatives, conquered mountain peaks, visited and got to know several towns. In the months from March to June, 12 youngsters attended lessons in Bulgarian language and literature as part of their preparation for the state exams. Three of them were preparing with our teachers for matriculation exams and admission to local universities. Four youngsters aged between 17 and 24 went through an internship programme in our association, creating and running their own educational programme for small children and taking an active part in the preparation, planning, implementation and running of the activities at our Summer School.



# SUMMER SCHOOL

## 2023 Г.

Period of realization: 07-08/2023

Budget: 76 020 BGN (with food included)



- Innovative Integration Summer School Arms Wide Open 2023 for refugee children, held for the second consecutive year, involving 128 children from Ukraine and the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Syria) aged between 5 and 17 .
- The program provides a safe environment for communication, equal opportunities for development and access to education, socialization, Bulgarian language learning, adaptation, integration and psychological support for refugee students who have found asylum in Sofia.
- Supporting parents in caring for their children during the summer holidays, helping and motivating them to continue their personal and professional development in Sofia.

# SUMMER SCHOOL

## 2023 г.

Period of realization: 07-08/2023

Budget: 76 020 BGN (with food included)



- The Summer School managed to attract many local, Ukrainian and international volunteers, giving them the opportunity to contribute to the program with various activities and skills - logistical, field, educational, financial.
- Through the mission of the Summer School, this year we were able to convince many local artists, museums and galleries to open their doors to refugee children free of charge and to prepare programs for our students.
- All these meetings have shown that bilateral integration is the key to interaction and acceptance, with volunteering being one of the important tools for the integration of young people.



# BALLET SCHOOL

Period of realization: 02-08/2023

Budget: 10 000 BGN



- The project brought together about **30 creative children**, with an interest in ballet art from Sofia and Ukraine. The training took place within 6 months, in the DK OKI "Sredets", where the children had the opportunity to communicate, immerse themselves in the magic of ballet art and together develop their talent and skills.
- In February, we held auditions for various roles in the production, and in March we started rehearsals with a ballet choreographer from Ukraine - Olexandr Lovushkin.
- The "Petya and the Wolf" project was implemented with the support of the DC OKI "Sredets" and the financial support under the "Culture" program of the Municipality.

# ART SCHOOL



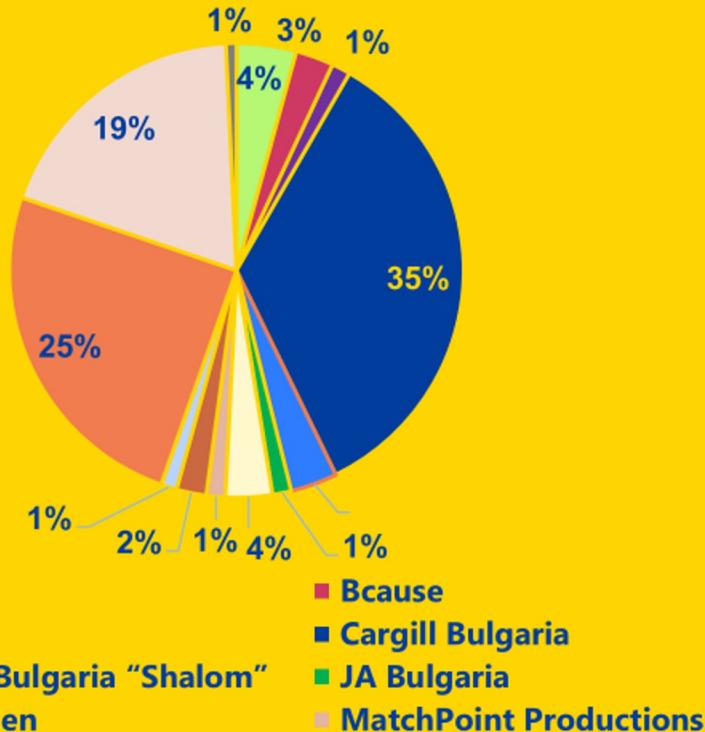
Period of realization: 09/2022- - текущ

- From the beginning of September 2022 up until now, the Association has provided **more than 100 children** with logopedic and creative classes on modern dance, music and singing in the spaces of our partners OKI DK „Sredets“.
- Our creative workshops are run by professional teachers from Ukraine, with many years of experience and a number of local and international awards.
- Our teachers include the sisters Vladislava and Marianna Stetsenko, Lilia Levitska, Olena Skrinichenko and many other specialists, who have received protection in Bulgaria and continue their professional development far from home..

# INCOME ACHIEVED



# INCOME ACHIEVED



■ SofiaLab

■ СУОБ "Мати Україна"

■ Organization of Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom"

■ Bulgarian Fund for Women

■ Bcause

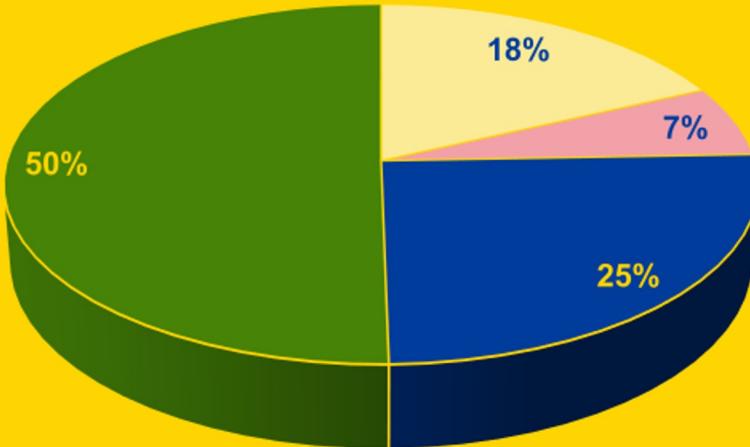
■ Cargill Bulgaria

■ JA Bulgaria

■ MatchPoint Productions



# EXPENSES INCURRED



- Donations
- Remuneration for Ukrainian refugees
- All-day kindergarten "Karapuz"
- Educational projects





# PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

We are grateful to all our partners who voted for us and support our work!



ШАЛОМ

Организация на евреите  
в България



the *beit* project

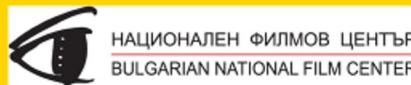
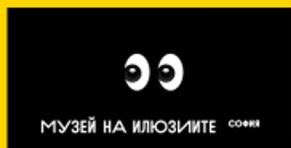




# PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

We are grateful to all our partners who voted for us and support our work!

Museums:



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR TRUST!





## AND FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

You still have questions?

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