



# Annual Report

# Arms Wide Open

# Association

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 2025

**Protection. Care. Integration.**

Activities and Impact Report

# Who We Are



Arms Wide Open works for the integration and support of children and families in vulnerable situations.

We believe that being a refugee is not a normal condition. It is in our hands to help each other feel at home and safe.



## Our Focus

- ✓ Education (Bulgarian language, The National External Assessment prep)
- ✓ Cultural & creative programs
- ✓ Social counseling & support
- ✓ Community events

Arms Wide Open Association



## Our Values

Inclusion      Empathy      Sustainability  
Partnership      Care

We strive to create an environment where everyone feels accepted and supported.

## Future Vision

We build an active civil society where difference unites.

2022

FOUNDED

4+

YEARS EXPERIENCE

# Team and Governance

People Behind the Cause



## Anna Hakman CHAIR & CEO

Visionary leader and driving force behind Arms Wide Open. CEO since founding in 2022.



## Vasil Tretyakov VICE CHAIR

IT expert and systems integrator. Main engine behind the association's founding and tireless benefactor.



## Biser Smilenski BOARD MEMBER

Master in History with 15+ years political career. Believes it is in our hands to help each other for security and home.



## Maria Kacharava VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

14 years of people management experience. Mother of 5 and an example of finding time for inspiring causes.



## Milena Georgieva ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

The heart of the Association. Political scientist with corporate experience, dedicated to improving quality of life for the vulnerable.



## Aleksandar Marchenko SUMMER SCHOOL COORD.

Main driver of Summer Schools. Expert in operational management with high efficiency standards.



## Lyudmyla Ivaniuk FINANCE DIRECTOR

Arrived from Ukraine and became an indispensable part of the team. Manages financial reports for small and large projects.



## Lalita Koshel YOUTH PROGRAMS

The soul of the Association and Chair of Safe Circle. Committed to inclusion through education and empathy.



## Dimitar Dimitrov PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Mentor and communications expert. Author at "Uspelite". Civically active in standing up for various causes.

# Core Projects

2025



## Integration Center

KEY PILLAR

Cultural & educational hub for refugee and migrant children. A place for Bulgarian language lessons, creative workshops, and social support.

Partners: EEA Grants, Sofia Municipality



## Safe Circle

YOUTH

First youth organization in Bulgaria led by young refugees. Focused on leadership, mutual aid, and building a supportive community.

Chair: Lalita Koshel



## Summer School "Arms Wide Open"

VOL. 4

Annual program for grades 1-4 combining education and outdoor activities. Includes Vitosha mountain excursions and museum visits.



Education & Nature Activities



## "Impossible Conversations"

CULTURE

Immersive performance and "Civic Activist Art Notebook". A powerful tool for emotional resilience and dialogue with oneself.



Support: Unhack Democracy & Bulgarian Fund for Women

# Integration Center “Arms Wide Open”

Space for Support and Development



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## Years Together

On March 31st we celebrated our 3rd birthday and the successful completion of the first phase. The event brought together parents, children, partners, and sponsors for creative workshops and celebration.

## Key Activities



### Education

Bulgarian language lessons, school support, and exam preparation.



### Creativity

Workshops in art, music, and stop-motion animation.



### Social Support

Counseling, information sessions, and legal aid.

## FUNDING

EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 Fund for Bilateral Relations

## PROJECT PARTNERS



Oborishte District



Sofia Municipality



Prios Kompetanse

# Educational Programs

## Part 1: Academic Support



### Key Areas



#### **Bulgarian Language & Literature**

Intensive classes for students in grades 1-7. Focus on grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills for easier school integration.



#### **NEA Preparation**

Specialized groups for grades 4 and 7. Teachers Galina Kalcheva, Lalita Koshel, Tsvetelina Yordanova and Martin Iliev prepare children for successful exam results.



#### **Inclusive Education**

Individual approach and support methods in the learning process, tailored to the needs of children with different mother tongues.

# Clubs and Activities

Creativity &amp; Skills

## Art & Creativity



Vocal Group 2025



### Music and Visual Arts

Music activities and participation in a children's vocal group led by Liliya Levitska, including stage performances and concerts. Creative workshops for expressing emotions through drawing and applied arts with Natalia Velcheva.



## Skills & Development



### Social Skills

Group activities for team building, communication, and emotional intelligence in a supportive environment.



### Sports & Movement

Active classes, dances, and sports games that promote physical health and discipline.



### Cultural Exchange

Events for multicultural understanding and tolerance, bringing together children from different nationalities.

# Social Initiatives

Part 1: Awareness



## 📢 Awareness Campaigns



### Regular Meetings

Monthly info events for Ukrainian refugees, e.g. 11th foster care meeting with SOS Children's Villages.



### Foster Care

Explaining options for temporary placement providing safe family environment.



### Community Solidarity

Targeted campaigns supporting single mothers and at-risk families.

# Social Consultations and Legal Aid

Expert Care

## Legal & Administrative Consultations



### Tax Declarations

Annual campaigns for the free completion and submission of tax declarations with the expert assistance of lawyer Galina Golikova for individuals working under civil contracts.



### Legal Advocacy

Individual support and advocacy campaigns for the protection of rights, such as assistance to a single mother in cases related to parental rights.

## Social Support & Prevention



### Community Support

Implementation of joint initiatives and the creation of shared experiences between the local community and people with refugee and migrant backgrounds, transforming the unfamiliar into something familiar and contributing to a more open, supportive, and inclusive society.



### Community Adaptation

Regular informational meetings for Ukrainian refugees regarding access to housing, education, and social services in Bulgaria.

# Cultural Events



## "Impossible Conversations"

Immersive performance at Toplocentrala (Feb 24), exploring communication beyond words.



*"Art is the language we speak when words are not enough."*

## Part 1: Creative Projects



### Art Notebook

A special tool for activists designed for emotional resilience and self-reflection.



### Women's Day

March 8th: Spring workshops and a festive concert featuring Liliya Levitska's vocal group.

# Cultural Events

Part 2: City Engagement

**CHARITY**

## Christmas Mosaic

**Pop-up Bazaar**

A fundraising event uniting the community's creativity to support the association's social causes.



MARCH 2025

## 3rd Birthday

**Our family is growing**

An unforgettable party with cake, songs, and dancing. A shared moment of joy with parents, children, and partners.

**FESTIVAL**

## Democracy Mosaic

**Slaveykov Square**

Active participation in the festival of the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law. Presentation of our activities to the general public in the heart of Sofia.

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

# Summer School Vol. 4

Gallery of Adventures



# Summer School Program



## Educational Visits

CULTURE

Exploration of Sofia Planetarium, Zoo, Earth and Man Museum, Kvadrat 500, and the Fire Service to learn about the city and its institutions.

Partners: Sofia institutions



## Nature & Creativity

ACTIVITIES

Weekly day hikes on Vitosha mountain combined with art, dance, and sports clubs. Focusing on physical health and creative expression.

Healthy body, healthy mind



## Partners & Food

CARE

Daily warm lunch provided by "Beryozka". Activities supported by Vitosha for Kids, Walltopia, and Momentum Climbing.

Nutritious & Safe



## Target Groups

COMMUNITY

Designed for children in Grades 1–4. We build an inclusive, multicultural community where difference unites us all.

Unity in diversity

# Partnerships and Support

Stronger Together



**Sofia Municipality**  
INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER



**Oborishte District**  
DISTRICT PARTNER



**EEA & Norway Grants**  
FUNDING PROGRAM



**Prios Kompetanse**  
NORWEGIAN PARTNER



**SOS Children's Villages**  
NGO PARTNER



**Bulgarian Fund for Women**  
FINANCIAL SUPPORT



**Unhack Democracy**  
PROJECT SUPPORT



**Four Paws Foundation**  
THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT



**Toplocentrala**  
CULTURAL CENTER



**Cultural Institutions**  
MUSEUMS & PLANETARIUM



**Walltopia & Momentum**  
SPORTS & ACTIVITIES



**Beryozka**  
FOOD & CATERING

And many other friends and like-minded partners, including the Sofia Directorate "Fire Safety and Civil Protection," Muzeiko, JAMBA, Platformata.bg, "Podai Raka" ("Lend a Hand"), and volunteers.

# Impact and Achievements

2022 — 2026



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## Years of Growth

Sustainable community development, overcoming challenges and turbulence, but always with care and love.



2766+

## Supported Families

Hundreds of children, parents, and families in need who have received shelter, education, social support, and friendship.



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## Summer Schools

Four consecutive successful editions, established as a recognized integration model.

## KEY MILESTONES



### Safe Circle Founded

Establishment of the first refugee-led youth organization.



### "Impossible Conversations"

Creation of prototype of an innovative Art Notebook & performance for emotional resilience.



### Sustainable Team

Strengthened team capacity via "Sustainable Together" (BFW).



### Integration Center

Successful completion of a large-scale project with the support of the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

“

*“Together we showed what love, care, and support can mean to hundreds of people in need.”*

—  
ARMS WIDE OPEN ASSOCIATION

## Be Part of the Change

Your support helps us continue making a difference. Join us as a volunteer, partner, or donor.

[Contact Us](#)

[www.ArmsWideOpen.eu](http://www.ArmsWideOpen.eu)

 Open Hearts  Shared Care

# Contacts and Future Horizons

We are here to answer your questions and discuss partnership opportunities. Our doors are always open!

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**FOLLOW US**



Next steps

## **Our goals for 2026+**

**01**

### **Safe Circle Development**

Strengthening the youth organization and creating new leadership programs for refugee youth.

**02**

### **Expanding educational programs**

Introducing new training modules and increasing the capacity of the Summer School.

**03**

### **Sustainability**

Building long-term partnerships to achieve financial independence and greater social impact.

