

**Living together in Belgium**

**REFUGEES IN BELGIUM TOOL OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

**"CODE OF CONDUCT"**

Dear community of refugees from Ukraine,

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, refugees arriving in the Kingdom of Belgium have enjoyed unprecedented solidarity from the local population.

Recognizing the extraordinary efforts made by Belgians to accommodate refugees, which is not a commitment but a manifestation of goodwill and humanity, the Ukrainian community wholeheartedly wishes to express sincere gratitude to the Belgian citizens involved in housing.

Despite our shared trauma and how we survived, we still strive to live a dignified life in a harmonious environment. We need to understand that the experience of refugees in Belgium is personal and shaped by each individual and evokes positive or negative emotions. There are three main areas where community members can positively influence the perception of the image of Ukrainians in Belgian society. The commune at the place of residence, the premises of the state administration and public common spaces are the places where you need to communicate with respect, listen carefully, and receive information. Despite your fatigue, don't let emotions such as anger and insecurity negatively affect your communication.

The Belgian government is making every effort to resolve relations between Ukrainian and Belgian families, and the hotline is receiving many concerns. The consequences of each individual's behaviour are always reflected in the refugee community as a whole. Therefore, the community emphasizes that, wherever you are, a refugee is a "permanent ambassador" of their country.

Belgian families did not expect to provide housing for such a long period. The impressions you leave with the house owner will influence his further decision - whether to continue the opportunity to stay with your family or start looking for a new home until the issue is resolved with your permanent housing.

We all know that public administrations, Belgian families and refugees are faced with a situation where everyone has to put themselves in the place of "others". Therefore, when homeowners or municipal staff are overburdened for us refugees, it is important to remain friendly, patient and attentive to maintain a good level of communication that will ultimately benefit our entire community.

This document is a tool that provides practical advice to refugees who are currently in a stressful and overly emotional state to maintain their dignity and successfully integrate into the Belgian community.

**Basic norms on living with a host family**

* Even if you feel uncertain and tired, do not forget to take care of yourself and take care of your neat appearance.
* Follow the requirements of the owner for non-smoking. If you smoke, do it on the street, but not under the windows.
* Provide a financial contribution to the food budget (consult with refugee coordinators or your association to find out how much money is needed based on your specific circumstances)
* Participate in household chores (cooking, washing dishes, cleaning rooms)

Based on equality, take your share of the workload on the house with all residents, discussing this with the head of the household and other residents.

With the word "equality", we emphasize that you should not become a "new servant" of the house. You just take your fair share of household chores.

* Take an interest in attending the events of the household that are important to their residents to show that you value their community if it is impossible to be present at some of them. Announce the reasons and ensure your presence at future events.
* Participate and contribute to home life and conversations. Do not lock yourself in your room by appearing only once or twice during meal times.
* In the event of unemployment, demonstrate your sense of initiative to the host family and your circle of friends by enrolling in all language courses and all relevant training offered by the government to facilitate your integration.
* Do not allow a dispute with the host or cohabitant to escalate to the point of no return. Difficult conversations with the host party should be conducted with third parties who know both of you or involve someone from your refugee association.

**Interaction with public administration (commune, CPAS, OCMW, etc.)**

* We need to understand that the government is expanding its services to cater for the arrivals of our community in the country but not all elements of the response planned are fully deployed or ready.
* The Belgian administration is not as organized and does not operate as we are used to in our country. You need to display calm and patience when communicating with government officials to ensure that you are understood and are quickly provided with the information or services you need.
* It should be understood that in case of delay or inconsistent information, you should not argue with the relevant civil servant. You should contact representatives of your refugee community, who are often associated with these administrations, or contact refugee associations to help you.
* The civil servants are as overburdened as you are impatient, and it is in our common interest to maintain a qualitative and calm communication to ensure that you get what you came for as soon as possible.
* Understand that in some cases (housing, medical examinations, banks and government agencies). Belgian citizens, like you, also experience the same administrative delays.
* To achieve your goals with Belgian administrations, your best best allies are Respect, Politeness, Patience, maintenance of communication with your fellow refugees and Ukrainian associations and especially when it is challenging project a good mood around you.

**Important reminders in public places**

* Be kind and polite.Take care of and help the elderly and people with disabilities.
* Stay away from tensions and confrontations, especially with strangers
* If you are provoked, leave the scene, do not confront and do not respond.
* Report the incident to a police officer or the nearest police station.

***Thank you in advance for your support and adherence to this Code of Conduct.***

***Sincerely, your Ukrainian Community Support Team.***

Useful Contacts for support services :

**For urgent medical care:**

Even if you have no papers proving your right to stay, you still have the right to receive emergency medical care. You can call 112 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

**112– emergency number**

**101 - Police**

**100 - fire service**

If you feel the need for psychological support, call 0800/12347

Caritas International: 0032 476 34 07 58 via WhatsApp (in Ukrainian)

Federal information line: Info-Ukraine Belgique: 0032 2 488 88 88 (in Dutch and French) - from Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Information line to answer questions from Belgians hosting Ukrainians: Caritas International: 0800 2 41 41 (in Dutch and French) - from Monday to Friday, from noon to 6 p.m.