

# Leuven

Response to Ukraine crisis



# City of Leuven

- 20 km east of Brussels, Belgium
- 103.000 inhabitants + 55.000 student population (KU Leuven and colleges), 171 nationalities
- European Green Leaf 2018
- European Capital of Innovation 2020
- Selected 1 of 100 EU Climate-Neutral and smart cities by 2030

# City of Leuven

## Context specific to Ukrainian crisis:

- Standard Ukrainian & Russian population of about 250 (researchers, students,...)
- Highest house prices of Flemish cities, very low availability and very high demand, also shortage of short term student accomodation
- “Leuven model” of distributed leadership, collaboration, and shared mission for a better future for and with all -> solidarity

Today: 620 Ukrainians with “temporarily displaced” status



# Response of Leuven to Ukraine crisis

1. Immediate communication flow
2. Emergency accomodation and support
3. Managing citizens and volunteers help
4. Challenges – long term outcome and options



## #freespace > launched by the secretary of state for Asylum and Migration follow-up requested from the local authorities

- Immediate influx of free space offers and requests from citizens and refugees
1. Setting up an information and reception point at the city hall
    - > Open daily + mail and phone monitoring
    - Application and registration with request for stay
    - Intake of profiles and needs of refugees (in order to get customised support)
    - Offer of assistance by citizens (accomodation, in-house rooming, goods, helping hands...)
    - Handling residence and asylum questions

Challenge: constant alignment with directives of the federal government



## Accomodation

- Collaboration with a local **hotel** to have fixed number of rooms, meals included (in anticipation of organising emergency shelters)
- Search, arranging and furnishing **emergency shelters**
  - 2 emergency shelters (150 p/each shelter)
  - Organising relocation of the refugees to the shelters
- Offering information and setting up legal framework to **citizens who offer rooms or a free accomodation**
  - Screening hosts and accomodation
  - Matching hosts with refugees
  - Legal framework (agreement, duration of stay, insurance,...)

Challenge: refugees with special needs, pets, shortage of housing



- 2.2 Support through partnerships
  - Education
    - elementary schools, high school, university
    - Language, professional training
  - Employment activation
    - Matching labour profiles with companies
  - Health and welfare
    - Basic healthcare & urgent medical attention
      - Medical insurance connection
    - Covid measures – vaccination
    - Mental health care – trauma sensitive workshops
  - Leisure activities
    - Access to culture and sports



## Citizens and volunteers help

- Rationalise the offers of citizens/volunteers
  - Offering goods
  - Helping hands
  - Interpreters
- Booking system to engage volunteers and interpreters
  - Agreement/contract
  - Insurance
  - Compensation/fee
- Screening/ quality check
  - Introduction and endorsement of the code of ethics
  - Crash Course interpreting needed





# Challenges – long term outcome and options

- Uncertainty about duration of stay
  - Fathers, brothers, sons – still in Ukraine
  - Long term integration necessary -> other instruments needed
- Shortage of housing
  - Expensive, no availability
  - Rental contract > long term
- Shortage of labour
  - But: Difficulty with language
  - Finding the right job profiles
- Financial capability of cities and government
  - Economic crisis, high inflation, partly linked to war

