

The For the Earth Association's Activities Promoting the Integration of Refugees – a Case Study

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For the Earth Association

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The article discusses selected aspects of the activity of the For the Earth Association aiming to integrate refugee children and women into Polish society. The methodology of case study research is used in order to explore the issue and present the data. The study begins by discussing the role and functions of non-governmental organisations and the nature of the integration process, before outlining a brief history of the formation and activity of the association. The final section presents selected projects with the participation of refugee children and certain groups of Polish society which have emphasised the aspect of integration with Polish society. The analysis of the association's activity substantiates the hypothesis that it fulfils an integrative function through various forms of education, while also characterising the activity as methods of intercultural activation.

Key words: For the Earth Association, integration, refugee children, refugees

Introduction

The objective of this study is to present the areas of the activity of the For the Earth Association targeted at migrants applying for asylum in Poland. The term describing such people is "refugees", which expresses the forced nature of their arrival to Poland.

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The activities behind supporting foreigners have taken various forms since the 1990s and have been a result of the migration policy adopted by the authorities. The aim of the European and Polish policy was to integrate various groups of foreigners, whether from the EU or not.

The scope and funding of the integration process mostly depended on European funds since Poland did not develop a consistent integration policy that would regulate the status and rights of migrants. According to Pawlak and Matusz-Protasiewicz (2015, p. 19) "The activation of the European funds to finance activities supporting refugees and integration with foreigners gave a boost to non-governmental organizations, which, however, due to a lack of other sources of funding, became excessively dependent on these funds". Limiting or neglecting of the financial support for the actions aimed at foreigners, or a lack of a long-term integration policy, can have a negative effect on non-governmental organizations. It could be a loss to the potential of the human resources of non-governmental organizations in the light of their high-quality competence stimulated by the European funding programs targeted at long-term projects directed at migrants. It should be noted that external instruments of funding had a result on the way non-governmental organizations viewed integration, understood tolerance and cultural pluralism, which was of significance in developing civil society.

The adopted method, i.e. case study research, enables us to perform an in-depth analysis of the activity of the For the Earth Association and helps to present how the organization realizes the process of integration of refugees.

Case study research is understood in line with John W. Creswell's definition (2013, p. 119): "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study)".

A significant part of case study research is an analysis of the context of a given case. The context for the activity of the For the Earth Association is e.g. attitudes towards integration of its workers (or other subjects, refugees), the binding law, availability and consistency of financial resources. These are the factors which shape a given case in a direct or indirect way and help to understand it. Standard methods of collecting data here are observation and interviews, together with an analysis of the documents such as reports, statements, statistics, historical sources, documentation, etc. In this case study research we rely on all three methods. Most of the analyzed data can be accessed through the association's website, which is an element of the transparency policy of the organization.

Case study research comes with many variants, and Creswell "espouses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to case study development and discusses

explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive qualitative case studies". In the case of minor analyses, we adopted a descriptive approach allowing us to describe a given case together with its context. In the case of the activity of the For the Earth Association, the context was the understanding of integration by the members of the association, the socio-cultural competence of its members, the geographical location of the association and the sources of its funding.

Non-governmental organizations and their social functions

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Poland played an important role in building civil society after 1989, becoming a partner of local governments in the organization of diverse areas of social life. Since their work is not focused on profit, but on the good of the community as a whole, they are also called non-profit organizations. The key to the operation of NGOs is discerning existing needs in a given location and attempting to deal with them as a disinterested common good. Their work is characterized by diversity resulting in an assortment of projects, which consequently reach a wide range of recipients. NGOs attain their objective as sovereign entities, making them independent from state institutions as well as allowing them to implement bold plans (Boczoń, Załuska 1998, pp. 13–15).

In the context of the activity aimed at refugees, NGOs support migrants at every stage of the status procedure, i.e. "in centers where foreigners apply for the status of a refugee, during year-long individual programs of integration and once they come to an end, or when migrants are transferred to Poland by the authorities according to Dublin II procedure" (Pawlak, Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2015, p. 14). Pawlak and Matusz-Protasiewicz (2015, pp. 16–17) offer a taxonomy of NGOs into 4 categories according to the size and scale of their activity. The taxonomy is as follows: 1) organizations for which migrants are one of the subjects of activity; 2) organizations for which migrants are an important part of activity (e.g. legal counselling); 3) organizations for which migrants are the main area of activity; 4) organizations rarely dealing with migrants in Poland.

Associations are the most common form of civic activity. Their legal framework is regulated by the Act of 7 April 1989 – Law on Associations (consolidated text Polish Journal of Laws 2015, item 1393, amended). Their role is to mediate between citizens, municipalities and the state, based on the rule of subsidiarity and social dialogue. At present, 117,000 associations and 26,000 foundations are registered in Poland (Chadrycka, Gumkowska, Arciszewska 2019, p. 3; <https://api.ngo.pl/media/get/127153>; access: 15.01.2021), representing an upward trend in comparison to previous years and possibly indicating increasingly active civic attitudes and a growing number of conscious and responsible observers of social life. Many factors affect the success of an organization. According to experts, owing to organizational concerns it is much

more straightforward to run a foundation than an association. "Running an association requires social and communicative competencies as well as openness and respect for democratic procedures providing a voice to all members" (ibidem, p. 11). Associations are also more likely to "struggle with challenges associated with human capital in the organisation" (ibidem, p. 13), and also "make more frequent use of public funds" (ibidem, p. 14) to achieve their statutory objectives. Experts say that "associations are the future and have enormous potential. Let us make people aware of what it means to be an active member of an association and a joint host" (ibidem, p. 20). The founders of associations are conscious and competent people capable of building cooperation networks, who work for the public good to form partnerships and provide mutual support. NGO work is not for profit in a commercial sense. They face the constant need to confirm the sense of their existence and the usefulness of their activity, acquiring funds from various places and programs as well as operating monetarily to provide for continuity of the practices contained in their mission and statutory objectives.

The subject literature lists numerous types of functions of NGOs. Aleksander Kamiński's classification is based on a hierarchy of human needs, ranking the following functions as the most important: affiliative – referring to the individual's need to belong to a certain community; integrative – concerning building interpersonal ties and relations; and expressive – enabling self-fulfillment and development and advancing interests and passions (Kamiński 1982, pp. 155–158). Piotr Gliński lists the important functions of the third sector as: "1) articulation and identification of the needs and interests of various social groups, particularly the interests of different minorities; 2) expression of social protests; 3) checks on government at various levels; 4) participation in the processes of preparation and making of decisions by government; 5) participation in legal procedures concerning various decisions by government; 6) signalling social dangers and conflicts; 7) independent administration of the non-commercial, non-governmental and non-state sphere; 8) formulating visions for development and alternative programmes of development; 9) creating generalised norms of reciprocity and trust (social capital); 10) a broad self-educational and educational function; 11) nurturing civic culture in society, socio-educational advancement through participation in these organisations" (quoted in: Grzywna et al. 2017, p. 93).

NGOs operate dialogically, furthering the construction and integration of civil society. In the literature, no single, universal definition of integration is employed. Immigrants (refugees) opt for this strategy as "the result of both the desire to continue to be culturally identical and the desire to maintain contact with the new culture" (Grzymała-Moszczyńska 2000, p. 18). Assuming the intentionality of the actions of both sides – guests and hosts – is the best solution "from the point of view of individuals' mental health and chances of fully fledged functioning in the new country" (ibidem, p. 19), as foreigners employing this strategy "are able to retain important elements from their own culture while also living the new culture" (ibidem, p. 18). Integration is treated as a dynamic social process during which newcomers from a different culture gradually

learn to function effectively in the society in question, making conscious use of the opportunities, rights and freedoms that society offers and participating in public life in order to ensure a decent standard of living. At the same time, these newcomers try to “fit in” to the local legal as well as social, cultural and customary norms.

Today, a discussion on integration, treated by many European countries as a panacea to all “problems with foreigners”, takes the form of nationalized concepts of integration. The countries have great demands both on internal (European) and external (non-European) migrants when it comes to language command, adherence to their laws and policies, and moral values (see: Favell 2013). At the same time, a need for reflection arises concerning the chances that people’s mobility offers. The concept of “integration”, according to researchers, is intertwined with isolation since it shows that a given group does not fit in and requires special actions to be taken. Additionally, “those coming from more affluent countries, with resources; economic migrants with skills that could be used in the host country, and those with access to an economic market niche have the greatest adaptation chances”. On the other end of the spectrum are refugees who, forced to migrate, did not prepare to integrate with their new social environment” (Kindler 2008, p. 71).

For the Earth Association – a history of a “non-settlement”

The For the Earth (Dla Ziemi) Association was registered on 14 February 1995 as an “ecological association”. Its founding ideas are described at length and passionately in the “longer story” on the organization’s website by its chair, Ewa Kozdraj (<https://dlaziemi.org/longer-story/>). The association’s “prehistory” is a colorful story about the quest for an alternative to the then ubiquitous systemic framework of social life in the 1980s. The search for a creative, free, ecological living space resulted in the formation of a “non-settlement”, as Kozdraj put it. “Non-settlement” semantically not only points to the means of spatial organization of the environment, but also characterizes the quality of interpersonal relations and activities constructed and undertaken there. In this context, the association’s founders made it their “field of concern” to jointly create spacetime with the local community. Bratnik, a place in the buffer zone of the Kozłówka landscape park in the Lublin voivodeship, became a space in which various social interactions were constructed. These were spontaneous, as an effect of contacts and relations formed; engaging, resulting from a type of thinking in terms of care, responsibility and agency; and dynamic, responding to the needs shaped by changes occurring in the world. The resultant creative community, fulfilled in artistic passions and shared interests, focused its engagement on the process of building new cultural, existential and aesthetic experiences.

The association’s first projects were aimed at the local community, especially children and young people with limited access to educational and cultural opportunities

by their place of residence. By stimulating creative and independent activities in the community, Kozdraj writes, they were able to bring up “a generation of wise, independent and creative people, who, as volunteers, developed projects that realized their dreams, the dreams of their friends and of their neighbors. Most importantly – in their adult life they have decided not to leave, but are still here – building their futures and homes. This is the source of our greatest joy” (<https://dlaziemi.org/about-us/>). The experiences and new competencies acquired in several years of working with the local surroundings were a mechanism activating the organization's further development.

Subsequent projects and activities also directed the attention of association members towards socially neglected areas in need of strengthening and an alternative to the government's means of operation. From 2009, supporting refugees, and especially their children and activity in support of integration, became priority actions of the association and informed its mission: to work to ensure “that the children and their parents, who were forced to flee from their own, could learn and play together with their Polish peers [...] that the inhabitants of our region recognise refugees as people seeking help – not trouble” (<https://dlaziemi.org/about-us/>).

The For the Earth Association, like other “third sector” entities, is constantly looking for funds for its activity. The association's work has therefore encompassed projects with various timeframes (cyclical and one-off), reaching groups of participants differing in terms of culture, age and gender, and taking place in various places, not only the Lublin voivodeship. Funds have also been obtained for its statutory activity from various financial sources: the state budget, district and municipal budgets, European funds, strategic partners and private donors. Public collections have also been held to provide children with holidays or essential educational equipment. Volunteers have been a further non-monetary but major source of support for the organization.

Data visualized on the For the Earth association website (www.dlaziemi.org) provides information on the quantitative effects of the organization's work for integration of refugees to date. These include 5,466 hours of Polish lessons and educational/artistic classes for refugee children and young people, 108 refugees trained in vocational courses, and 14 songs recorded with refugees and migrants as part of the support program. These are just some of the achievements that can be found in the information, descriptions and photographs. They are characterized by huge diversity in terms of scale, target groups, forms and working methods. It is worth citing such ventures as “Strangers? Growing closer”, “More than words”, “Feminist fund grant”, “We can do it! Support for education of refugee children”, and “Strengthening the role of intercultural and Romani assistants”.

As well as its work bolstering the process of integration of refugees, the association is active in tangible activities such as the preparation of recommendations in the form of reports and good practices, organizing conferences, as well as publishing. A further important aspect of the qualitative approach to its mission of building of social networks within its own NGO community.

The association's website – dlaziemi.org – and two Facebook profiles play a major part in creating its image and communicating its accomplishments as well as disseminating educational materials. One of the Facebook pages bears the organization's name and refers to its current activities, while the other, "Bardzo dobre wieści" (Very good news), promotes information about ideas, initiatives and ecological solutions for people and the Earth. The association is also the organizer of public collections for the purchase of necessary equipment for refugees and their children, the effects of which it shares on its social media.

The association's diverse educational and artistic activities paint a picture of a group of people with a certain type of thinking and attitudes expressing concern about values such as equality, justice, and democracy. In this context, they implement various practices based on sensitivity, benevolence, openness and tolerance. In doing so, they utilize artistic skills to create a shared reality for all communities.

For the Earth Association – integration activities

The For the Earth Association is a learning organization interested in action and change through performance and cultural management. The people who form it reflect upon their actions and draw conclusions from them, collaborate and form intercultural partnerships with other organizations, and want to actively improve reality rather than being passive bystanders. Socio-cultural integration binds together the association's initiatives for the local environment, with refugees, but particularly their children, as participants.

The integrative function – in keeping with Kamiński's typology – involves building ties and active relations between refugees and the host society within the association's projects. It has been put into practice through educational initiatives, described in the literature as the intercultural management method. "Intercultural management serves on the one hand to reveal difference and to preserve and develop the phenomenon by creating bonds, while on the other hand, it uses the actions of intercultural managers and the methods they employ to look for a path(s) for realising its uniqueness among other phenomena. It is a kind of continuous dialogue between cultures, held in various contexts and, creating new contexts, extracting the hidden potential of individuals and groups. It constitutes a method of intercultural education which, through a variety of forms and high level of intercultural competencies of managers, carries out work resulting from the value of interculturalism in multicultural societies" (Świdzińska 2013, p. 92).

By analyzing the organization's initiatives, we can determine the areas of support in the context of its participation in the process of integration of new groups with the host society. A typology of forms of support offered by NGOs was developed by a team led by Krystyna Słany. The report divided these types into three extensive

categories of NGO activities. The most important ones are those providing help, specified as information and consulting support, legal aid, help finding work, and material aid. The next form is initiatives of an educational nature, aimed at two categories of recipients: immigrants and Poles. The third area is activities in the field of culture, broken down into promotion of multiculturalism and intervention initiatives (Ślusarczyk, Nikielska-Sekuła, Strzemecka 2014, pp. 13–26).

With the multifaceted and multidirectional activity of the For the Earth Association in mind, its projects are mostly educational in nature. The effectiveness of the organization's activities is demonstrated by its capacity to select forms of work in the community of refugee children. These correspond to non-directive, stimulating, activating forms employed in cultural education. The education offered in the association's integration work is therefore artistic (using theatre, dance, music, literature, art), as well as using techniques based on sport, tourism, traditional education, multimedia, and museums (Jedlewska 1999, p. 161–196). Ideas and methods from film, ecological, intercultural and global education are also used.

Cyclical project initiatives have taken place at centers for foreigners in Lublin, Łuków, Bezwola and Niemce-Leonów. There has also been collaboration with schools (primary school no. 31 in Lublin, primary school no. 5 in Łuków, Bezwola and Wołyń primary schools) and with local districts, resulting in integration initiatives in these communities as well as smaller places in Lublin province (such as Wołyń and Lubartów).

One of the particularly important projects activating both the refugee community and the host community was the "Strangers? Growing closer" cycle, which lasted from 2009 to 2014 and was financed from the European Refugee Fund. A total of 475 refugee and Polish children took part in numerous activities. These initiatives, aiming to level up children's educational opportunities, comprised 3,000 lessons including English and Polish classes as well as educational, artistic, musical, drama and dance, ethnographic, and vocal workshops. Football coaching and excursions for children were also held. The activities also led to professional musical recordings concerning refugee issues or referring to the culture of the country of the foreigners looking for refuge in Poland. These projects have given children and young people the chance to develop their artistic passions (music, dance and drama groups) and to present them to a wider audience. This activity was supplemented by further projects such as "Strangers? Growing closer – Chechen childhood" (2009), "Strangers? Growing closer – Sing to me about the Caucasus" (2012), "Strangers? Growing closer – Climate for integration" (2013). Each of these targeted different recipients and had slightly different goals. The "Strangers? Growing Closer – Safer together" project (2016–2017) had tangible significance for female refugees from Łuków and Bezwola. They participated in a psychological workshop on education without violence and received individual psychological support in this respect (<https://dlaziemi.org/obcy-zblizenia/>).

An unquestionably innovative integration activity that was a collaboration between the association and primary school no. 31, attended by refugee children, was

the project “Strangers? Growing closer – Education through fun” (<https://dlaziemi.org/obcy-zblizenia-edukacja-przez-zabawe/>). This was mainly aimed at children of pre-school age and the youngest primary school classes. With the support of staff and cultural mentor Urszula Jędrzejczyk (a teacher at the school), Polish was taught using computer software and in the form of learning through fun. Apart from the lessons, the initiative also included a book entitled *What are we playing?*, which was produced jointly with the parents of Chechen and Polish children. It was published in Polish with a translation into Chechen in the form of drawings and comic strips supervised by specialist cartoonists with the active participation of the children (who helped draw the illustrations). Together with the book, an instruction CD was recorded on which the children presented their games.

In a further important integration project in which the association participates, female refugees and migrants are given a voice. The report reads: “We thought about how to pass on their voice, stories and knowledge on the situation of refugees in Poland most effectively for a long time. We confronted our ideas in the project team and with the partner organisation. The actions taken as a result concentrated on education, joint meetings and an information campaign” (Głosem kobiet – raport z działań, <https://dlaziemi.org/pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/G%C5%82osem%20kobiet%20raport%20z%20dzia%C5%82a%C5%84-pl.pdf>, p. 2). The numerous planned activities included educational youth workshops and educational consulting, meetings with partners and exchange of experiences, a conference and meetings of refugees with groups of activists from various municipalities. Refugee women were able to tell women from another culture, the host one, about their lives, experiences, difficulties and joys. They also spoke about their hope for a peaceful future life for their families, and especially children. Teenagers from secondary schools, supported by refugee women in the role of experts, created models of multicultural peace villages.

Supplementary activities have taken place within such projects as “We want to live in Poland” and “We want to live in Poland – summer skills school”. These projects have enabled refugees and their children to improve their Polish, and in the children’s case also their native language – Chechen. Learning their ethnic language played an important role in sustaining the children’s cultural identity. This was also a means for the adult refugees to prepare for participation in vocational courses.

An important publication in terms of pre-integration initiatives aimed at refugee children was the welcome booklet *Powitalnik*, produced by the association as part of the “Action-Integration” project (<https://dlaziemi.org/archiwum/akcja-integracja/>). This series of activities envisaged preparing Polish society for accepting a new group of refugees from Syria and Eritrea. The publication can be downloaded from the organization’s website, with the following information: “*Powitalnik* is a publication aimed at refugee children aged 5–10 who arrive in Poland with their parents (from Syria and Eritrea) as part of international agreements. The text was written by Elżbieta Rojek and Katarzyna Winiarska. The idea for the publication came from reflections that,

whereas adults will be 'looked after', receiving information and publications, children who have travelled, facing stress, trauma, and perhaps lack of patience and time from adults, will encounter a new culture, a new country, without previous preparation".

The introduction continues: "By treating children as people who deserve explanations, respecting their right to knowledge and to a feeling of security, the authors decided to write a booklet dedicated to them. They chose as their heroine a girl named Hania who introduces children to her world, tells them about Poland, school, family, festivities, holidays, and how to be safe. She lets them in on the most important words and teaches games and counting rhymes that appear in Polish, in phonetic transcription and translated into Arabic (the translator had a lot of fun with this). *Powitalnik* has room for interactive activities – writing information about your own country (e.g. drawing the flag), drawing a picture or answering Hania's question" (ibidem).

The deepening relations between refugee women and the association led to the development of an arts and crafts studio at the foreigners' center in Łuków, named the Women's Meeting Club. Thanks to a grant from the Feminist Fund and institutional support from the Stefan Batory Foundation, the studio was equipped, and necessary materials were purchased in order to organize a space for learning, work and recreation for female refugees. Help from benevolent allies has permitted the studio to develop and expand. It contributes to building a sense of empowerment among migrant women, giving them a voice and tapping their potential for agency (https://dlaziemi.org/grant_funduszu_feministycznego/). Strengthening migrant women's sense of agency has a positive impact on their approach to their family, allowing them to think positively about their own and their children's futures. The mutual collaboration – between the women and the association – shows them the sense of being open to the host society, thereby also influencing the behavior of children in the new culture.

In 2019, in an effort to become an organization independent from external funds, the association set up a business and online shop – <https://sklep.dlaziemi.org/>. At first, notebooks and exercise books sewn by refugee women – "Notebook from Łuków" and "Exercise book with a surprise" – could be bought, as well as handmade objects (serviettes, shopping bags) sold under the "Craft for Dignity" brand. In 2020, the shop added unique "second-hand" clothes to its range. The "Second Things" collective was founded, made up of members of the organization and the Women's Meeting Club (people who formally cannot be members of the organization). The initiative received media coverage and artistic support from celebrities (<https://kukbuk.pl/artykuly/drugie-zycie-rzeczy/>), as well as from the foundation and culture and art institutions.

The For the Earth association was the first and only organization in the Lublin voivodeship to employ intercultural assistants. "These are people whose task is to support education and integrate children with experience of migration, from ethnic and national minorities and their families, and thus entire school and local communities" (<https://dlaziemi.org/asystentki/>). This initiative is an effect of working to engage

schools attended by children from other cultures as well as organizations working to strengthen the role of intercultural assistants.

The association's many years spent working in a multicultural community has been an emancipatory and transgressive experience. Expanding its own perspectives and competencies seems to play a key role in the initiatives in which it participates. Expressing views with "one's own voice", speaking up for the excluded and weak, creating a space for harnessing people's responsibly and unleashing their agency have become the driving force for the coalitions and collaboration the association has formed with various entities, groups and organizations. Its work in many projects and programs at national and European level is testament to its considerable social capital and the asset of its personnel. The participation of members of For the Earth in debates, conferences, seminars and training schemes has done much to consolidate the conditions of respect for the principles of democracy (<https://dlaziemi.org/3998-2/>).

The skills of the association's members, which we could call intercultural competences, consolidate their dialogue-oriented approach. In the process of transitioning from a reaction to the Other to interaction with the Other, they forge the experiences they have acquired into constructing further activities and stimulating high-quality forms of collaboration. By developing a set of techniques and working methods, they activate and provide a connection between the host society and the communities entering Polish culture. Inextricable aspects of their work are constant self-improvement, dissemination of good practices and partnership-building. Analysis of the previous accomplishments means that the association's role among leaders of development of democracy is reinforced. Through synergic actions, they are situated in the integrative dimension of the operation of NGOs in Poland.

Instead of a conclusion – what next?

The For the Earth association has 25 years of activity to its name and has carried out dozens of projects in this time. These have ranged from small initiatives aimed at the local community, improving the educational situation of rural children, youth exchanges, activating young people to volunteer and conduct their own projects, to major projects targeted at the most important group with which they have worked – and continue to do so – refugees. The association bases its support for this group of migrants on a methodical approach, meaning creative, uninterrupted and flexible work.

With this potential, the association did not abandon its work during the pandemic (<https://publicystyka.ngo.pl/dzieci-uchodzycze-i-wyzwania-edukacji-zdalnej-z-doswiadczen-stowarzyszenia-dla-ziemi-w-2020-roku>). The new situation was treated as a challenge, with a public collection being held to buy laptops for the foreigners' center in Łuków to enable children to learn remotely and to allow the Women's Meeting Club to continue. Volunteers were also sought to help refugee children with catching up with

lessons. As they write: "Thanks to our cooperation with Professor Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens from the Institute of Polish Philology of the Pedagogical University of Krakow, we managed to organize work experience for female students from the university in Łuków. At present 20 people are completing this with us. They are teaching Polish as a foreign language, online of course, with a format of one child to one student. This collaboration will last throughout the 2020/21 academic year. Since this is an innovative practice at national level, we have managed to present it many times, including at the expert meeting 'Support for foreign pupils in remote education within the SIRUS 2.0 National Round Table 2020 project' conducted by the Institute of Educational Research" (ibidem). The association's artistic and educational classes have also been moved into the virtual space: "Online there is a theatre performance being produced, a musical group meeting, older pupils are learning programming and graphics, and the younger ones are learning about fairy tales and stories" (ibidem).

The association is approaching its future with optimism. Most importantly, it is aware of the tremendous social capital it possesses, having formed alliances with various universities, institutions and organizations and worked with many volunteers. Furthermore, it has equipped the participants in its projects with cultural and material resources to continue its work. At this point, it is therefore worth quoting the words of Ewa Kozdraj, the For the Earth association chair, which sound like a message to non-governmental organizations: "The most important thing is not to give up, but to look for ideas for how to change a difficult situation into a developmental one. One that allows children to learn and develop their passions" (ibidem).

In conclusion, we tried to address the question of how the For the Earth Association realizes the process of integration of refugees. The analysis of the written documents, observations and interviews allow us to formulate the following conclusions:

- the association members have extensive intercultural competence, gained over 20 years of its activity for the excluded and marginalized groups, including children and women refugees;
- members of the association have realized dozens of projects aimed at the integration of the local communities with refugees or to make children and women refugees more active. The association provides transparent reports of its activity, available online;
- the association operates on the basis of external funds obtained to support refugees in the integration process, which poses a certain limitation on long-term actions taken for the integration's sake;
- the association also engages in educational activity through the publication of materials in an electronic form (open access) and also through monographs;
- members of the association target their activity towards refugees, located in Lublin and its region, and also to children and adults in local communities, being a bridge between various groups and supporting their integration;

- in order to avoid the deinstitutionalization of the association caused by external funding being withheld by the authorities, its members applied for charity funds and aimed at networking with other institutions and universities.

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