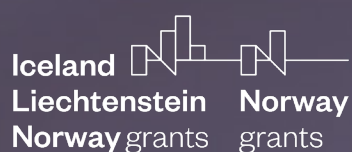




OPEN NATIONS IMPACT REPORT

2022-2025





Open Nations is on a mission to transform division into social cohesion by fostering **trust,**

belonging,
and resilience

among immigrants, displaced people, refugees, and host communities.



We bring together people from diverse backgrounds—different cultures, religions, and life experiences—through a human-centered, family-oriented approach.

Our work focuses on creating meaningful connections and shared understanding via integrational family camps, cultural gatherings, facilitated dialogues, and community development programs. We also support healing and growth through rehabilitation initiatives and build a global perspective through exchange and study programs.

At Open Nations, we believe that when people come together, communities thrive.

Problem Statement

Many refugee families, especially mothers and children displaced by war, face **emotional exhaustion, social isolation, and disrupted family cohesion**. Despite policies supporting basic needs, few programs create the safe, immersive, and human-centered experiences needed to rebuild trust, regain emotional strength, and foster intercultural belonging.

Open Nations solves this by offering **Family Camps**: short-term, high-impact experiences that support refugee families in restoring well-being, strengthening family ties, and planting seeds for integration and community rebuilding.



Program Overview

Open Nations' Family Camps are immersive, weekend-long programs designed to support refugee and host families in rebuilding emotional strength, restoring family bonds, and fostering intercultural understanding.

Through a combination of structured activities, shared experiences, and facilitated discussions, these camps create a safe space where participants can process trauma, develop coping mechanisms, and build supportive communities. By bringing together diverse families, the program not only aids in individual and familial healing but also promotes mutual respect and integration within the broader society.

Between 2022 and 2025, the Family Camps were **funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants**.

Saving people's relationships – humanity's greatest challenge

We are committed to enhancing emotional stability, reducing anxiety, and promoting resilience among families by providing practical coping strategies and tools to navigate the challenges of migration, displacement, low levels of trust, and cultural differences. Together, we can foster a sense of belonging, strengthen interpersonal connections, and build a more supportive communities.

Origin and Philosophy Behind the Methodology

The Open Nations' program methodology was developed as a **direct response to the deep personal and collective traumas caused by the war in Ukraine and the resulting forced displacement of millions**. Its foundation lies in the long-standing experience of the Ukrainian **NGO Zorelóvy**, which had been implementing therapeutic family camps even prior to the full-scale Russian invasion. With the onset of war, the approach was adapted to the new context of Ukrainian families seeking refuge in Lithuania, while also recognizing the needs of host communities who were welcoming them.

At its core, the methodology is built on the principles of **human-centered and humane pedagogy** – a philosophy that acknowledges the inherent dignity and unique potential of every person, even in times of crisis. This approach fosters **emotional resilience, self-expression, and community connection**, enabling individuals not just to survive but to recover and thrive. It places a strong emphasis on **emotional safety, trauma healing, and personal agency** – essential conditions for meaningful integration.



Open Nations address both visible and invisible wounds: loss of home and identity, family separation, parenting crises, survivor's guilt, and fear of the unknown. At the same time, it creates space for healing through structured intercultural dialogue, creative expression, and shared cultural experiences between Ukrainian and Lithuanian families. The program is implemented in three progressive phases – Cultural Gatherings (Phase Zero), Therapeutic Family Camps (Phase One), and Community Leadership Training (Phase Two) – each contributing to long-term community cohesion, integration, and resilience.

Rather than offering temporary support, our methodology aims to build sustainable, inclusive, and culturally enriched communities grounded in empathy, shared values, and civic participation. It not only supports the psychosocial recovery of displaced families but also strengthens the social fabric of the host society, ensuring that both can move forward together with dignity and mutual respect.



1. Rebuilding Identity Through Cultural Healing

Many refugee families expressed a desire to preserve their Ukrainian cultural identity while adapting to a new environment. Open Nations doesn't just support cultural preservation – it actively facilitates cross-cultural celebration and exchange through shared activities with Lithuanian families.

Why it matters: Most integration programs focus on language or employment. Open Nations creates a space where identity is honored and elevated, not just assimilated.

2. Building Micro-Communities of Support

Families often described the camp experience as the only time they could freely connect with others who share similar life experiences, beyond institutional or transactional interactions.

Why it matters: Unlike policy frameworks that emphasize macro-level systems, Open Nations fosters intimate peer-based community networks – the micro-social glue that accelerates belonging.

3. Trauma-Informed Family Systems Approach

Several families mentioned unresolved grief, loss of family members due to war, and ongoing emotional tension at home. Open Nations' camp model provides a whole-family intervention, not just programming for individual children or adults.

Why it matters: This family systems model is distinct from most aid services, which target children or adults separately. It supports emotional synchronization and collective healing.



4. Intercultural Partnership, Not Just Integration

The camp equally involves local Lithuanian families and hosts – not just as supporters but as participants and learners, co-creating the environment of mutual respect and curiosity.

Why it matters: This creates horizontal solidarity rather than hierarchical “host–refugee” dynamics, fostering mutual transformation that traditional integration metrics miss.

5. Activation of Civic Intent

A few respondents noted that the camp experience inspired them to “give back” or start something in their own communities. This latent civic energy is a sign that Open Nations doesn’t just stabilize people – it activates them.

Why it matters: This is rare and powerful. Open Nations’ camps seed future community leaders and change agents, especially among refugee women.

Summary of Open Nations’ Unique Approach

Theme	Description	Why It’s Unique
Cultural healing	Emotional integration without cultural erasure	Few programs create mutual cultural learning
Micro-community building	Safe peer networks beyond institutions	Fosters deep belonging, not just service access
Whole-family healing	Trauma-informed support for all members	Uncommon in humanitarian aid models
Intercultural reciprocity	Lithuanians are participants, not just hosts	True co-creation, not charity
Civic activation	Empowers refugees as future leaders	Rarely part of short-term integration efforts

TANGIBLE & CURRENT SOLUTIONS



Open Nations' Results

2022 - 2025

DIRECT IMPACT

2500

individuals
participated

200

hours
facilitated dialogue and discussion
between Ukrainians and Lithuanians

25

cultural projects
organized and held

27

family camps
conducted

2

**Study and exchange
programs**

Secured funding:
EUR 800 912

Pro bono invested:
EUR 32,000

Geography:

12 Lithuanian cities
6 Ukrainian cities
2 Norwegian cities

Measuring Our Impact

We focus on improving social cohesion through three key areas:

Trust, Belonging, and Resilience.

Social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community or society. It reflects how well people live together, cooperate, and feel part of the same group, regardless of differences like ethnicity, religion, income, or migration status.

TRUST

96% of participants reported increased trust in people they had just met (attendees - Lithuanians and Ukrainians)

BELONGING

96% of Ukrainian attendees felt a stronger sense of community and belonging

RESILIENCE

99% of participants reported improved mental health and resilience.

TRUST

A strong trust is built through generalized belief in others and meaningful shared human experiences.

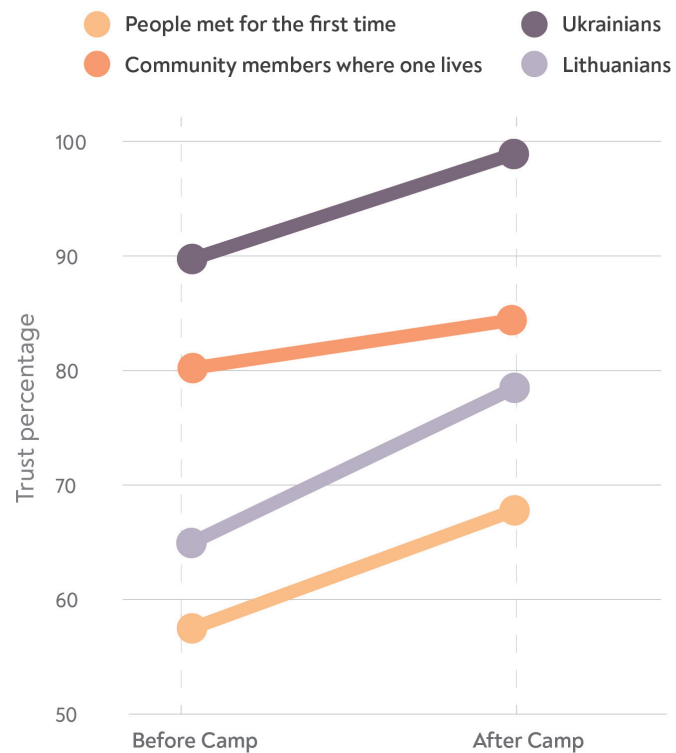


Our Impact on Trust

After attending Family Camp,

- Attendees (Lithuanians and Ukrainians) reported a **96%** increase in how much they trust people they have just met.
- 100%** of Lithuanian attendees reported that they trusted or highly trusted Ukrainians—an increase of 13% from before the camp
- Ukrainian attendees reported a **26%** increase in how much they trusted Lithuanians.

Extended Family Program participants' trust in various groups before and after the Program



Based on data "Trust metrics" in Appendix 1

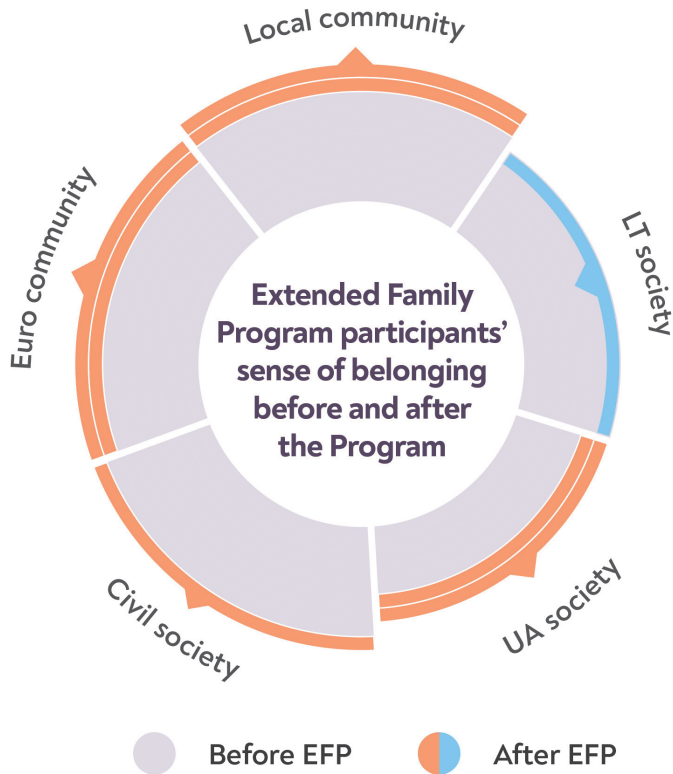
What Our Participants Said

"Svarbu vaikams užmegzti ryšį su Ukrainos vaikais, išmokti bendrauti, plėsti suvokimą apie kitas kultūras. Man asmeniškai labai svarbu būti bendroje aplinkoje su žmonėmis iš Ukrainos, padėti jiems per mane pajusti pasitikėjimą kitais žmonėmis, galbūt iš dalies padėti jiems perduoti dalį jų skausmo ir išgyvenimo."

("It is important for children to build connections with Ukrainian children, to learn how to communicate, and expand their understanding of other cultures. Personally, it is very important for me to be in a shared environment with Ukrainians, to help them feel trust in others through me, and perhaps help them process some of their pain and experiences.")

BELONGING

Belonging stems from feeling included in a community, pride in identity, and frequent, positive contact across social groups.



Based on data "Trust metrics" in Appendix 1

Our Impact on Belonging

After attending Family Camp, Ukrainian participants reported a

- 44% increase in their sense of belonging to Lithuanian society
- 24% increase in their sense of belonging to civil society

After Family Camp, **96%** of Ukrainian participants reported that the program made them feel part of the community.

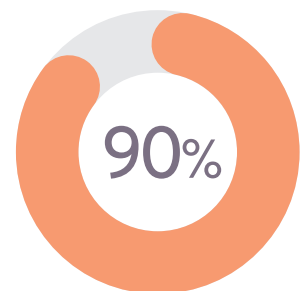
90% reported that camp gave them the opportunity to learn about both Lithuanian and Ukrainian cultures.

Programme made them feel part of the community



Nearly all Ukrainian respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the programme made them part of the community

Programme helped them discover cultures



Nearly all Ukrainian respondents agreed they learned about Lithuanian and Ukrainian cultures.

What Our Participants Said

"The camp was a great opportunity for Ukrainian families to integrate into Lithuanian society and for Lithuanians to better understand Ukrainian culture. Such initiatives are a big step towards mutual understanding and support for one another."

RESILIENCE

Resilience involves developing internal strength, sustaining productivity, and feeling motivated to shape a fulfilling life.



After Program



Improved ability to address family challenges



Improved mental health



Our Impact on Resilience

After attending Family Camp, Ukrainian participants reported

- A **94%** improvement in their ability to address parenting challenges and manage long-distance family relationships
- A **99%** improvement in their mental health

What Our Participants Said

"I am very grateful for this incredible, sensitive, emotional, rich, and informative project! It gave me strength and inspiration to move forward."

Sources:

[Evaluation report of the Extended Family Programme and Resilient Community Programme 2023-2024](#)

[Survey findings: extended family camps 2024 - 2025](#)

The Expertise Behind the Impact

Open Nations' impact relies on a multidisciplinary team of experts with decades of experience in trauma-informed care, integration, and community resilience.

Family Camps & Community Resiliense Programs

- Psychologists and psychotherapists.
- Theater therapists specializing in the theater of witnesses, documentary theater, theater of oppressed and playback.
- Certified trainers in non-violent communication.
- Art and body therapists.
- Group facilitators.
- Humane educators.
- Experts and lecturers in the development of sustainable communities, organizational systems, and self-organizing organizations.
- Specialists in family relations.
- Educators for children and adolescents.

Cultural Exchange

- Musicians, singers, dancers,
- Actors, poets, and directors.
- Historians and ethnographers.
- Painters and sculptors.
- Culinary experts.

Open Nations' Recognition



Presentation of the of human-centered and family-oriented approach to support Ukrainian refugee families to **Crown Prince Haakon of Norway**.



Speech at the Euro Parliament

about the project performance at the Photo Exhibition
“Our Stories. The EEA and Norway Grants”



Speech at Traditional Prayer Breakfast of the President of Lithuania dedicated to the theme “Strength and Hope”



Host of the meeting with the Norwegian MFA representing the National Focal Point, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Iceland and the Financial Mechanisms Office in Vilnius



Host of the meeting with the UNHCR Representative to the Nordic and Baltic Countries Ms. Annika Sandlund.

Co-host on the World – Refugee Day Celebration.



Host of the meeting with Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Ms. Pramila Patten



Speaker at the Peace and green, competitive and socially sustainable Northern Region – these are the main Icelandic Presidency Northern Council of Ministers in 2023



Invited for the dialogue by the Lithuanian Migration Center, Ministry of social affairs and Department of the National Minorities

Join Us in Strengthening Social Cohesion

The challenges of forced displacement, war trauma, and social fragmentation require more than temporary solutions – they demand human-centered, scalable approaches rooted in empathy, dignity, and evidence-based practice.

At Open Nations, we are committed to transforming division into cohesion by supporting families and helping communities move forward with strength and solidarity.

Whether you represent a funding institution, public sector body, NGO, or are a practitioner looking to collaborate, we invite you to join us.

Let's co-create safe, inclusive, and resilient futures across Ukraine and Europe.

Contact us



info@openations.eu



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L-Sapiegos 4-36, 10312,
Lithuania

Scan the QR code to explore our programs,
impact reports, and upcoming opportunities



Case Study:

Long-Term Impact Case:

Anna Zaika – From Participant to Community Leader



Background

Anna Zaika first joined Open Nations through the Recovery Family Program in Lithuania, specifically the “Family as a Pillar” retreat, which was supported by the EEA and Norway Grants. Invited by colleagues from a partner foundation, she came to the camp as an active social worker supporting Ukrainian families affected by war.

Experience at Open Nations Camp

What she found was more than a retreat – it was a deep, transformative experience. In Anna’s words, it was “a space of healing, discovery, and solidarity.” She highlights the power of storytelling and shared silence, the sense of calm and trust that was restored through collective rituals and honest dialogue. The retreat reminded her, even in the darkest times, “we can find light in community, connection, and breath.”

Inspired to Lead Locally

Motivated by this experience, Anna launched her own family-centered community event: “Family Strength – Ukraine’s Strength” in Solone, Dnipro region. The event responded to a deeply felt need, providing a safe space for veterans and families coping with trauma, grief, and reintegration.



The program brought together:

46 participants from 20 families

Including veterans, widows, children of fallen soldiers, and families of missing persons.

With tailored activities for each group: art therapy, family games, children’s play sessions, strength-building activities for veterans, and a heartfelt sharing circle.

Open Nations Methodology in Action

Anna integrated key elements from the Open Nations methodology:



- Emotional safety
- Deep reflection
- Strengthening intergenerational and community ties

Impact

The impact of Anna's work was deeply felt. Feedback from participants included heartfelt thanks from mothers of fallen soldiers, emotional breakthroughs during art therapy, and visible moments of healing among children. One participant shared:

"I thought nothing would come out of it. But my hands wove threads of hope. Thank you for this small victory over myself."

Ongoing Ripple Effect

Anna plans to host at least two more family events this year and now serves as a local voice for the power of family-based healing. Her leadership has mobilized community resources, built partnerships with veterans, and demonstrated how personal transformation can lead to social change.

Quote from Anna

"This experience reminded me that behind every word like 'war' or 'hero' stand real people – families, children, mothers. My mission is to create safe spaces where they feel seen, heard, and connected. That's where healing begins."

Methodology

This report is based on data collected through a key initiative implemented by Open Nations: the Extended Family Programme. The program was designed to strengthen social ties, emotional well-being, and a sense of community among displaced Ukrainians and local Lithuanians. A two-stage survey methodology was applied consistently across both initiatives. Participants completed a pre-camp survey on the evening of their arrival to establish a baseline understanding of their social attitudes and sense of belonging, unaffected by programme interventions. A post-camp survey was then administered on the final day, capturing changes in emotional well-being, social connection, and satisfaction with the programme. This structure enabled an assessment of the short-term impact of participation. It is important to note that the respondents were only adult participants of the programmes, who represented approximately 45% of all participants.

For the Extended Family Programme, data were collected over two cycles across ten camps held in various Lithuanian counties, including Utena, Panevėžys, Alytus, Klaipėda, Vilnius, Kaunas, and Šiauliai. In addition to camp-based surveys, a third, comparative survey was distributed via social media to Ukrainians who had not participated in the programme. Altogether, **the data used for this report is based on a cumulative total of 418 survey responses**, including both unique and non-unique entries across pre- and post-camp instruments.

Trust metrics

Definition: Trust levels in people met for the first time, members of the local community, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians.

Group	Ukrainians (Pre → Post)	Lithuanians (Pre → Post)
People met for the first time	34% → 62.5%	55.6% → 83.3%
Local community	73.6% → 83%	66.7% → 83.3%
Ukrainians	69.8% → 85.2%	88.9% → 100%
Lithuanians	64.2% → 80.7%	88.9% → 83.3%

→ Strong cross-group trust-building impact documented in all categories.

Source:

- [Survey findings: extended family camps 2024 - 2025](#)
- [Evaluation report of the Extended Family Programme and Resilient Community Programme 2023-2024](#)

Belonging metrics

% of people who feel they are part of the community or society

Ukrainian participants showed increased belonging:

- **Local community:** from 66% pre-camp to 83% post-camp
- **Lithuanian society:** from 39.6% to 56.8%
- **Ukrainian society:** 79.2% to 84.9%
- **European community:** increased to 72.7%
- **Civil society:** 62.3% to 77.3%

Source:

[Survey findings: extended family camps 2024 - 2025](#)