

In February 2022, Denys, a 41-year-old father of four, was forced to flee his hometown in the frontline oblast of Zaporizhzhia to ensure the safety and security of his family. With limited housing options, he found refuge in a collective site in Drohobych, a community in western Ukraine. The site was supported by the CCCM partner NEEKA, which not only provided non-food items (NFIs) and care and maintenance services but also implemented an integration project to ensure dignified living conditions and support displaced families in adjusting to their new environment.

**CCCM Intervention:** The CCCM team recognized Denys' strong communication skills and analytical mindset, developed through his previous work as an IT teacher. They continuously involved him in coordination meetings with representatives from the city council and service providers, focusing on the challenges faced by collective site residents.

**Empowerment and Growth:** Eventually, with the support of the CCCM NEEKA team, Denys established the NGO Drohobych Creative Centre for IDPs, dedicated to implementing integration programs for displaced persons both within and beyond collective sites across Lvivska oblast. The NGO has provided psychosocial support, as well as cultural and educational initiatives, benefiting 2,500 IDPs, including 770 children, some of them in cooperation with CCCM partner NEEKA. Notable initiatives include coding and 3D modeling workshops for children, cooking master classes, art therapy sessions, and burnout prevention training for local teachers.

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Building on the success of his NGO and strengthened by NEEKA's support, Denys joined the local IDP council—a consultative body supporting the city council in local self-governance. In this role, he advocates for IDP rights, ensures that the needs and perspectives of displaced persons are incorporated into local decision-making, and contributes to the design of livelihood programs that benefit both the local community and displaced persons.



**Conclusion and Impact:** Having experienced displacement firsthand, Denys became a symbol of resilience and leadership, supporting fellow IDPs in the community. Thanks to NEEKA's continued support, he gained the connections, authority, and knowledge needed to drive integration efforts. Denys exemplifies how such support can benefit both IDPs and the wider community, fostering cooperation, mutual understanding, and positive change.