



Valmez 4 Shelter

Supporting Refugees in the Czech Republic



Women, children and the elderly are particularly affected by the war. We help them settle into their new home.

Valmez4Shelter Annual Report 2025: Support for Refugees from Ukraine

It has been four years since Russia attacked Ukraine. Millions of people have left the country since then. In early March 2022, we sent an initial sum of money to friends in the small Ukrainian town Valašské Meziříčí (Valmez). Our friends of many decades, , used the money to buy food, mattresses and cooking utensils for the first refugees. Even today, new refugees arrive in Valmez almost every day. But the situation has changed. Finding accommodation has become more difficult; the three large emergency shelters in Valmez are practically always full. Furthermore, in autumn 2025, a government came to power in Prague that no longer sees itself clearly on Ukraine's side in the war against Russia. Finally, the economic situation in the Czech Republic is deteriorating. Fortunately, the structure of our organisation has also changed: over 300 interested individuals now receive our newsletter, many of whom donate regularly, some even on a monthly basis. We are also able to rely on collections from church parishes and

contributions from foundations.

And Valmez4Shelter can rely on a well-coordinated and highly motivated team in this small town. Around 250 Ukrainians in Valmez regularly benefit from our psychosocial services.

On behalf of the refugees and our team, we would like to express our sincere thanks for your support and hope we can continue to count on you in 2026.

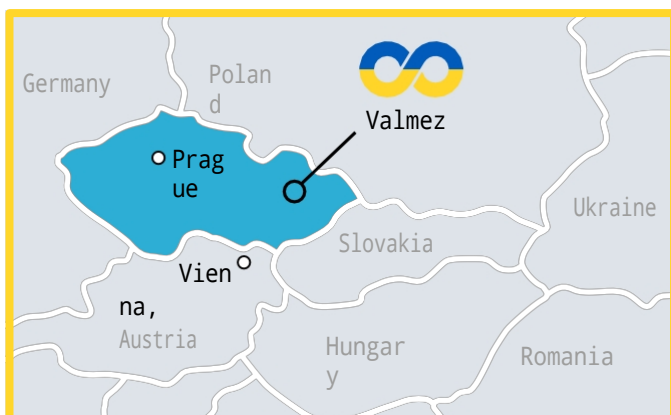
Valmez4Shelter Board

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An overview of the year 2025

In the summer of 2022, we founded the Valmez4Shelter association ('Valmez as a Shelter'). Since then, we have been working towards three main objectives: emergency assistance for new arrivals, psychosocial support to help people settle into their new circumstances, and childcare centres to enable mothers with pre-school-aged children to enter the workforce.



Valašské Meziříčí (Valmez for short) is located in the east of the Czech Republic.

VALMEZ – THIS IS WHERE WE OPERATE

The small industrial town of Valašské Meziříčí (Valmez), with a population of 22,000, is situated in the east of the Czech Republic, close to the border with Slovakia and Poland. Even before the war, many Ukrainians worked in the Czech Republic. That is why numerous refugees have ended up here. In Valmez, 5.5 per cent of the population are Ukrainian refugees. In Switzerland, Ukrainians with S status.



10 May 2025

BIKES – FOR EXPLORING THE SURROUNDINGS

The green countryside around Valmez is wonderful to explore by bike. This is because children and young people who have recently arrived usually only know the hostel and the school. Valmez4Shelter has twelve bikes, which a group sets off on every Saturday or Sunday. Our team has got the bikes back into working order after the long winter break.

francs towards food and drinks. Celebrations like this are highlights for Ukrainian refugees.



8 March 2025

MUSIC AND DANCE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 March, International Women's Day, is traditionally celebrated in Ukraine as it is throughout Eastern Europe. Our team organised a free venue provided by the city, and Valmez4Shelter contributed 200 Swiss

4 July 2025

READY FOR NEW ARRIVALS

Almost every day, new people arrive in Valmez, assigned to the town by the central refugee centre.

Initially, the refugees live in one of the three emergency shelters. Once an affordable flat is found, the room in the centre becomes vacant again. But there is usually not enough time for the council to carry out a thorough clean.

Hanna P., originally from Kharkiv, has been living in the 'Stadion' hostel for three years now. She volunteers ensure that new arrivals are greeted with a clean, tidy room. Valmez4Shelter thanked the proactive Hanna P. with 100 francs and a box of Swiss chocolates.



20 July 2025

TEENAGERS AMONG THEMSELVES

In the Czech Republic, too, the summer was mixed. Hot weeks were followed by heavy rainfall. Because it is difficult to

As it was not possible to meet outdoors, our colleague Anna Gavrylenko arranged for the Ukrainian young people to use a room at the Domeček community centre. They met there once a week. Valmez4Shelter provided drinks and snacks on each occasion - helping to create a good atmosphere.

of 800 Swiss francs a month on the assembly line, 480 of which goes towards accommodation. Valmez4Shelter therefore covered the cost of a



24 August 2025

SECOND CHARITY CONCERT: MUSIC FOR UKRAINE

On Sunday, 24 August, Ukraine's National Day, Valmez4Shelter's second charity concert took place in Männedorf. Once again, the outstanding Ukrainian violinist Vladyslava Luchenko and her ensemble delighted the audience with top-class classical and folk music. We welcomed 170 guests and raised around 7,000 Swiss francs in donations. Another charity concert will take place in 2026, on 29 August in Winterthur. We will provide further details in our newsletter.

First week of September 2025

LUNCH AT THE SPORTS CAMP

In the Czech Republic, the summer school holidays do not last five or six weeks, but the whole of July and August. The downside is that, as the children



usually provided at school, this meal is not available in the summer. Very few Ukrainian refugees can afford to go on holiday. Although the town of Valmez offers various leisure activities, in some cases children had to bring their own lunch. For many mothers, this was too expensive:

They earn the equivalent

simple lunch for 15 children for a week, totalling the equivalent of 350 Swiss francs. Furthermore, it became clear on the very first day that most of the children who had only recently arrived in Valmez did not understand the information and instructions provided by the management. We were able to engage Yuliia as an interpreter at short notice.

The 18-year-old Ukrainian girl came to Valmez straight after the war broke out; she is currently training to be a pastry chef and was also on holiday. Valmez4Shelter paid her 100 francs - everyone was very happy.

12 October 2025

NEW COURSE FOR THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN

Children aged four to eight living in Valmez often not yet attended school in Ukraine. Although they speak Ukrainian and are learning Czech in Valmez, Ukrainian

They only learn to write in Ukrainian if their parents teach them. Mothers working full-time often lack the time and energy for this. Valmez4Shelter has therefore hired Inna B. from Ukraine, who spends an hour and a half twice a week teaching the children the Ukrainian alphabet in a playful way. This also improves the chances for families to make a fresh start with their children in their homeland once the war is over.

11 to 13 November 2025

IMPRESSIVE PROJECT VISIT

In mid-November, a delegation from the Swiss board visited the project, held a staff meeting with the team and met, amongst others, Josef Matocha, the secretary of the town of Valmez, as well as three teachers who work part-time for Valmez4Shelter. They were also able to visit our two childcare centres and two emergency shelters and speak with just under a dozen refugees. The visit helped them to gain a better understanding of the team's work, build trust with the authorities and partners, and prepare new projects. You can find the report on the project visit on our website.



Valmez4Shelter in figures

153 START-UP GRANTS FOR NEW ARRIVALS

New refugees arrive in Valmez practically every day. Some come directly to this small Czech town



because relatives or friends already live here. Others are assigned to Valmez by the regional reception centre. Those with sufficient funds organise themselves and usually have only brief contact with our team. However, some of the new arrivals have hardly any savings and struggle to find their feet.

Valmez4Shelter

supports people in need with a starting grant equivalent to 150 Swiss francs. This money is enough to buy food and hygiene products for the first two weeks. After that, social security benefits from the Czech state come into effect.

Our 'start-up grant' is documented with a photo of the passport. The refugees also sign a receipt. Our team records all beneficiaries in an online tool so that the disbursement of aid remains transparent and traceable at all times.

3,094 KILOGRAMMES OF AID SUPPLIES

Around 1,200 refugees from Ukraine are living in Valmez, half of them in emergency accommodation. Here, they have to



cook for themselves. But there is a shortage of pans and crockery. So that they do not have to spend their limited funds on household goods, we send several parcels of relief supplies to Valmez every week. Our Swiss office is located

Two kilometres from the German border. This means we benefit from low-cost parcel postage within the

EU and can avoid customs formalities. Valmez4Shelter covers the cost of parcel postage. We receive kitchenware, bedding, towels and toys as donations.

43 LAPTOPS, 20 SMARTPHONES, 8 TABLETS

Digital devices are essential for staying in touch with family in Ukraine. Even applying for social security in the Czech Republic is only

available online. Appliances often break down, or older people find themselves without these useful aids. Our team the devices only on a selective basis and in exchange for a receipt.

612 COOKING STUDENTS

Cooking classes take place every Friday. Under the guidance of one or two adults, a group of 10 to 20 young people prepare an evening meal. Afterwards, everyone eats together - and then the kitchen is cleaned until it sparkles. In 2025, Valmez4Shelter covered the costs for the 51 Cookery courses, totalling 4,304 Swiss francs.

1,477 DIP INTO THE WARM WATER

Valmez is a regional centre and boasts a well-developed leisure infrastructure. In addition to an outdoor pool and an ice rink, it features an attractive indoor swimming pool complete with

slides. The indoor pool is equally popular with children, young people and senior citizens. We therefore go swimming three times a week with a group of up to twelve people. We have agreed a special rate with the operator.

52 COFFEE AND CAKE FOR THE ELDERLY

Many older people have come to Valmez on their own. Our team makes every effort to involve this age group

in activities: trips in the local area, a small Christmas present and, every Sunday, a get-together over coffee even a cup of tea in a café many of the retired refugees the bill, which amounts to 6 francs a week.



Annual Accounts 2025

BALANCE SHEET	2025	2024	2023
ASSETS			
Postal account Czech Republic	0	0	29
Postal account Switzerland	9,658	21,999	16,593
Total assets	9,658	21,999	16,622
LIABILITIES			
Equity	21,999	16,622	31,804
Loss/profit	-12,341	5,377	-15,182
Total liabilities	9,658	21,999	16,622
INCOME STATEMENT			
INCOME			
Donations from private individuals	98,461	86,003	47,577
Donations from organisations	45,010	34,000	35,957
Total income	143,471	120,003	83,534
EXPENSES			
Staff costs Valmez	64,719	51,667	37,096
Emergency aid	39,160	17,491	10,696
Renovation and operating costs for after-school clubs	316	1,276	11,021
Psychosocial support	31,037	34,628	30,599
Purchase of laptops/mobile phones	4,343	3,085	5,013
Parcel postage for relief supplies	5,117	3,912	1,099
Administration, advertising	11,120	2,567	3,192
Total expenditure	155,812	114,626	98,716
Net profit	-12,341	5,377	-15,182

2025: Young refugees, online registration, support with doctor's appointments

Since autumn 2025, Ukrainians have been allowed to leave the country up to the age of 22, rather than 18 as was previously the case. In Valmez, this has meant that many young men are arriving to work and support their families in Ukraine. However, Valmez4Shelter does not provide them with a starting allowance, but helps where necessary with bedding and an initial food shopping trip. Such assistance is also needed more frequently than before by other people in precarious situations. Numerous registration processes that refugees must complete online are also complicated, and we assist with these where necessary (see last page). Our team put in extra hours to handle this. Finally, there has been a significant increase in the need to drive sick people to medical appointments - Valmez4Shelter covers the petrol costs. In 2026, we aim for a financially balanced year and will, in particular, refrain from supporting a holiday stay in Croatia.

Fleeing to Valmez – Portraits of Refugees

Ukrainian refugees of all ages are arriving in Valmez.
We met some of them during our project visit in November 2025.



Irina, Yuliia and Alexei M. - the family came to Valmez from Sumy four years ago and have settled in well here.

Aspiring pastry chef, energetic helper

Alexei M. (42) had actually only intended to come to Valmez for three months. He and his wife Irina (42) had bought a flat in Sumy, in northern Ukraine. To pay off the mortgage, he travelled to the Czech Republic in early 2022 to work for an automotive supplier. But then the war broke out. Alexei brought his wife and daughter Yuliia (now 19) over to join him. The three of them lived in emergency accommodation for 20 long months. Then they managed to rent a flat. Today, both parents work and enjoy taking part in the activities and celebrations organised by Valmez4Shelter.

Yuliia stood out as particularly hard-working right from the very first Czech language courses offered by the association. A year ago, she began training as a pastry chef. Then, last summer, we were able to call on her at short notice: at the football camp, there was a group of Ukrainian children who could barely understand the instructions from the organisers. Yuliia offered to act as an interpreter. And recently, Valmez4Shelter was able to engage her again: for a modest fee, she accompanies elderly people to appointments with specialist doctors in neighbouring towns. In doing so, she takes the pressure off our permanent team, which is already under considerable strain.



Svetlana K. lovingly looks after her granddaughter Myroslava in Valmez.

Help with missed insurance payments

In 2022, Myrnograd had a population of just under 50,000. Today, the front line runs through the small town. Together with Pokrovsk, five kilometres away, Myrnograd was in our headlines for months. Svetlana K., a nurse specialising in gynaecology who lived on the outskirts of Myrnograd, is now at home in Valmez with her granddaughter Myroslava. In 2025, Valmez4Shelter covered half the cost of Myroslava's glasses and enabled her to take part in the weekly dance class. When the conversation turns to her daughter and Myroslava's mother, Svetlana becomes reticent and fights back tears.

Svetlana receives a meagre pension from Ukraine, supplemented by social security benefits from the Czech state. This is enough to get by, but not to cover unforeseen expenses: because she didn't know that children aged 7 and over must be registered for health insurance, she received a bill from the health insurance fund for 1,200 francs. Valmez4Shelter helped her pay off two instalments. She is also happy that she can take part in the outings, such as a visit to the zoo in nearby Zlín and the cosy get-togethers with other Ukrainian senior citizens on Sundays.

Our coordinator Galyna has received a lot of praise: "When new refugees arrive, they are often depressed and unsettled. Galyna knows how to register and where to find the best bargains."

Found each other in a foreign land: Dmytro V. and Svetlana P.

Second love in their new home

Immediately after the outbreak of war, Dmytro V. (73) fled Pavlograd, a small town in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, with his wife to Valmez. But she was already ill at the time and died the following year. Because she had wanted to be buried in Ukrainian soil, he took her body back to his homeland. But as luck would have it, at the funeral he met his former classmate Svetlana P. (73). "We were both without partners, so I suggested she come back to Valmez with me," he explains. Svetlana, however, in Pavlograd, a mother in her 90s, a daughter and a granddaughter - though they want to stay in Ukraine.

In Valmez, Dmytro lives with his son, who has difficulty walking, in a small flat, whilst Svetlana shares a room with another pensioner at the 'Diamant' emergency shelter. The two attend the Czech language course run weekly by Valmez4Shelter staff member Anna for a group of senior citizens. They also make the most of their joint visits to the indoor swimming pool whenever possible. And whenever they are invited on an outing, they sign up straight away.

Both are very happy with their situation in Valmez, and they're still amazed by everyday life: "Cars actually stop at zebra crossings," says Svetlana. Nevertheless, both want to return home once the war is over, as Dmytro emphasises: "Home is still home."

We will still need your support in 2026

The eight staff members at Valmez4Shelter look after new arrivals, organise psychosocial support, run two after-school clubs and provide start-up assistance to refugees in a precarious situation. All of this is only possible thanks to donations from our supporters – thank you very much!



Since taking up a permanent position at the Masaryk nursery, our colleague Liliia has been helping older refugees to apply for their Ukrainian pension online.

Although the refugees are registered by the authorities upon their arrival in Valmez, further registration is required, specifically online. Older people in particular often find this overwhelming and are grateful that the Valmez4Shelter team is supporting them with this:

- Pensioners had until the end of 2025 to register with the Ukrainian pension fund.
- All Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic were required to re-register by the end of March 2026.
- Monthly registration is required to receive social assistance from the Czech state.
- Young people must apply online for a place at a secondary school.



Valmez 4 Shelter

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Valmez4Shelter: Team and Board

Marek and Jana Irgl (Coordination): They are familiar with the various authorities at city and district level, assist with negotiations and resolve disputes.

Galyna Kubalska (Coordination): Develops and coordinates activities, helps new arrivals with registration and administrative difficulties.

Anna Gavrylenko (psychologist): Supports children, young people and adults with psychological issues and develops leisure programmes for young people.

Kateryna Osokina (nursery teacher): Head of the Masaryk nursery.

Liliia Kosova (nursery teacher): Staff member at the Masaryk nursery and assistant project manager.

Anastasiia Hresko (nursery teacher): Head of the Domeček nursery.

Natalia Prohorova (nursery teacher): Staff member at the Domeček nursery.

Viktor Verteletskyi (Support, Care and Logistics): Organises leisure activities, repairs bicycles, picks up new arrivals and transports goods.

Olga Kozachuk (Cook): Cooks lunch for both after-school clubs.

In Switzerland, a volunteer **board** coordinates the work: Pieter Poldervaart (Basel, Chair), Dominik Brunner (Männedorf), Susanne Kress (Basel), Charlotte Nager (Zurich), Thomas Schwager (St. Gallen). Katharina Truninger and Erich Rudin (both Basel) form the **audit committee**.

Newsletter

We'd be happy to keep you up to date. Every two months we send out an electronic newsletter.

Sign up at:
info@valmez4shelter.ch

Donations

Postbank account for the Valmez4Shelter Association
IBAN: 4076 0000 0000 1602 1000 0000 0000
PostFinance AG
PostFinance AG



Valmez4Shelter is recognised as a charitable

organisation. Donations
are tax-deductible in
most cantons

Donations via Twint: