

Municipal libraries of Parma for Ukraine



Soon after **February 24**, the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Province of Parma saw the arrival of several Ukrainian refugees.

At the end of **March**, the Emilia-Romagna Region already had 17,637 refugees, of which about 8,000 minors. **1,093 people** arrived in **Parma**, including 19 guests in the network of *Extraordinary Reception Centers* (CAS).

At the end of May, the **students** enrolled in the schools of the province amounted to **147**.



The Municipality and the local health service took action through their own structures, also opening a **service center** dedicated to refugees.

The turnout, however, decreased considerably starting from the summer.

Currently most of the refugees are hosted by **relatives** residing in the area and by **families**, only a small part is in charge of the institutions and associations that deal with welcoming.



Collection

In spring, the Municipal Libraries of Parma organised the purchase of **books for children** in the Ukrainian language using the official supplier for current purchases, *Leggere*, and the distributor *BookBank*, specialized in the distribution of books in foreign languages and supplier of books for Ilaria Alpi International Library.



Ilaria Alpi International Library, a place dedicated to exchange, dialogue and meeting with foreign communities, since its opening in 2009 has had a small collection of books in Ukrainian for adults, to which it has now added the collection of children's books.



From 27 July **2,500 books** printed in Ukrainian for refugee children are being distributed in Emilia-Romagna: illustrated books, fairy tales and stories for children up to 10 years old. It is the result of fundraising in favor of the **Ukrainian Book Institute**, the Ukrainian government office for the promotion of reading in Ukraine, supported by the **Federation of European publishers**, which followed the printing of the volumes, and by the **Italian Publishers Association**.



Biblioteche Civiche dell'Ospedale Vecchio, the main Municipal library of Parma, has the role of coordinator for the request and distribution of the volumes to all the libraries of the municipalities of the Parma Province.

The volumes are on their way and will be delivered to the **37 libraries** that have requested them, using the traditional **Inter Library Loan (ILL) service**.



As for the Libraries of the Municipality of Parma, these are currently the volumes in Ukrainian owned:

Biblioteche Civiche dell'Ospedale Vecchio: 16

Biblioteche del San Paolo (Guanda e Internazionale Ilaria Alpi): 40



Biblioteca Pavese: 35

Biblioteca di Alice: 2

NUOVI
LIBRI
IN LINGUA
UCRAINA
IN BIBLIOTECA



Activities

In August, the first two activities started at *Biblioteche Civiche dell'Ospedale Vecchio* aimed at **children** and **teenagers**, possibly accompanied by a parent.

The meetings were organized in collaboration with *CIAC*, an association that welcomes Ukrainian families on the territory, and whose cultural mediators accompany the children to the library on the occasion of the appointments but don't participate actively in their development.



The meetings are run by a volunteer who is doing a year of civil service at the library and speaks Ukrainian. This is the only way to communicate with the participants, whose knowledge of Italian or English is practically nil.

The educators of *Spazio Giovani*, a permanent service of the Library aimed at adolescents, were also involved with older children (14+). The language barrier here is overcome through the use of playful activities that do not require the use of language or by comparing images and words in different languages.

For the little ones, the activities proposed were reading books in Ukrainian.



Four more meetings are scheduled with the same structure from today until 9 September in *Biblioteche Civiche dell'Ospedale Vecchio*.

These first six meetings represent just the first series of appointments, a testing ground to better plan the **strategy** for the following series in autumn and winter.

The other Municipal Libraries of Parma are also preparing appointments dedicated to the Ukrainian public to be scheduled starting in **autumn**.



In particular, in September the International Library is planning to organise a **Ukrainian-Italian bilingual book festival**, with readings and snacks, aimed at Ukrainian children accompanied by their parents and participants from **all backgrounds**.

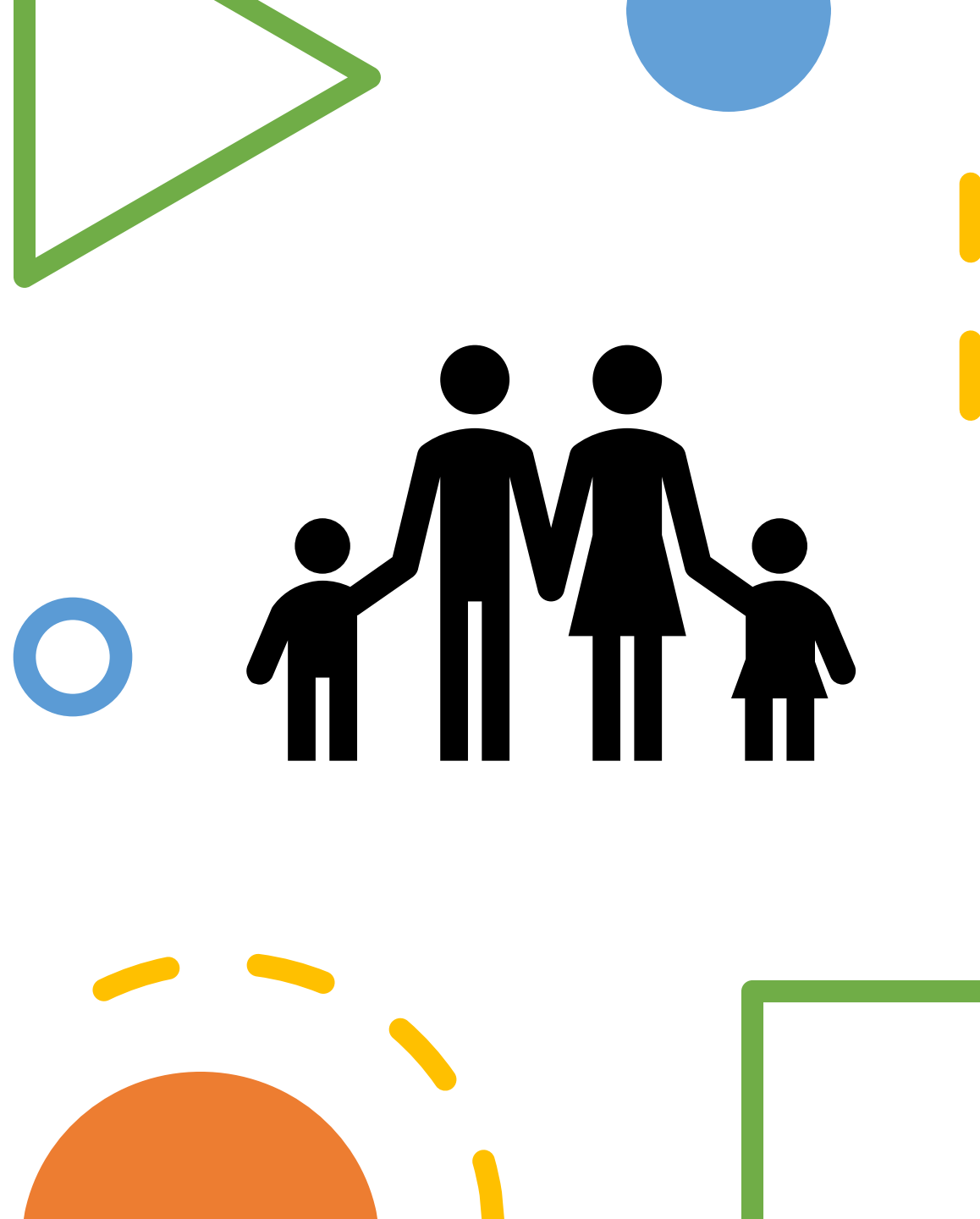


Considerations

The staff of the International Library has realised that it is precisely its **adult regular readers** who are hosting the relatives and bringing them to the library, where a fair number of books have been loaned.

In Parma, the welcome is above all **familiar** and only secondarily does it pass through associations.

This makes the work of identifying referents **more difficult for the institutions**.



Many families living in cities less affected by the conflict are contemplating **returning to Ukraine** before school starts.

This trend is particularly significant for all those children who have to start **primary school**: in their country they would learn to write and read in Ukrainian and they want to avoid the inconvenience and difficulties that would entail being placed in such delicate years in a different school system.

Some Italian teachers even before the end of school in the summer proposed the adoption of **bilingual texts**.



Our role as libraries relates more to the capacity for **inclusion** and **socialization**, as well as the support of the **mother tongue**, and the appointments to be scheduled in libraries for autumn are conceived in this direction.

The first two meetings showed that children and teenagers have **little interest in reading in the Ukrainian language**. This is probably due to the fact that most of the refugees are staying with relatives or in any case relate only to their own family.

The **transitory aspect** is very strong and this makes the planning of interventions by libraries complex, as well as the structuring of language paths by schools and associations.



The approach that we consider most fruitful is the **intercultural** one, with cross-cutting elements not necessarily linked to the use of the Ukrainian language. This is particularly important as it also avoids the creation of **cultural and linguistic niches**.

This intercultural approach is also in line with the intervention that *Biblioteche Civiche dell'Ospedale Vecchio* want to carry out in their neighborhood, rooted in the center of Parma but in the last few years inhabited largely by foreign communities.



Thank you for your time

Filippo Ziveri

Librarian at *Biblioteche Civiche
dell'Ospedale Vecchio*

Parma

