

1. Self-care in working with refugees & migrants

Self-care when working with migrants is essential to manage high emotional demands, prevent burnout, and mitigate secondary traumatic stress. Effective strategies include setting clear professional boundaries, engaging in regular supervision, building team support, fostering self-awareness of personal limits, and intentionally separating work from personal life. Storytelling methodologies in refugee and migrant contexts involve structured engagement with lived experiences of displacement, violence, loss, identity rupture, and systemic exclusion. While storytelling can promote empowerment, meaning-making, and social inclusion, it also exposes facilitators to repeated trauma narratives.

Key self-care strategies for professionals in this field include:

1. ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

Why It Matters

Professionals in refugee and migrant services often face *unlimited emotional demands*, requests for personal assistance, and high expectations from clients. Without clear boundaries, helpers become vulnerable to emotional overload, role confusion, and burnout. Research shows that professionals who maintain **professional distance** and **clearly defined limits** are better able to sustain empathy without internalizing client distress and experiencing compassion fatigue.

Best Practices

- **Define Work Hours & Off-Work Time**
Set and communicate specific working hours. Outside these hours, intentionally disconnect from work to allow emotional regeneration.
- **Scope of Practice Statements**
- Develop scripts or statements (e.g., *"I can help with..., but this matter falls outside my role; here are some additional resources..."*) to clarify what support you **can** and **cannot** offer.
- **Professional Distance vs. Emotional Empathy**
- Aim for *empathetic presence* without collapsing into sympathy and identification and own problems triggering, which can lead to taking on clients' emotional states.

Outcomes

Boundaries help reduce emotional exhaustion, preserve cognitive focus, and foster sustainable helping practices.

2. SUPERVISION AND PEER SUPPORT

Why It Matters

Working with trauma, uncertainty, and systemic hardship (e.g. an unpredictable legislative framework or housing insecurity) can create **moral distress** and **vicarious trauma**. Supervision and peer networks provide essential spaces to process emotional reactions and maintain professional growth.

Formal Supervision

- *Reflective and trauma-informed supervision* helps professionals examine emotional responses, identify counter-transference, and connect challenges to broader practice principles.
- Supervision should be **safe, collaborative, and non-punitive**, allowing reflective exploration rather than performance judgment.

Peer Support Networks

- Regular discussions with colleagues (internal or cross-agency) normalize stress reactions and create shared problem-solving opportunities.
- Peer support also fosters a sense of shared professional identity and reinforces that professionals are *not alone* in the challenges they face.

Benefits

Research links high-quality supervision and peer support with **reduced burnout** and **stronger resilience**.

3. SELF-AWARENESS AND MINDFULNESS

Why It Matters

Self-awareness helps professionals *notice internal cues*—such as emotional tension, fatigue, or cognitive overload—before these reactions escalate into more serious stress responses. Mindfulness supports **present-moment focus**, emotional regulation, and detachment from intrusive stress reactions.

Self-Awareness

- Encourage regular check-ins (daily or weekly) to identify emotional shifts and stress triggers.

- Reflective practices such as journaling or situational reviews help professionals understand *how* and *why* certain client interactions resonate strongly.

Mindfulness Practices

- Techniques such as mindful breathing, body scanning, or grounding exercises can reduce physiological signs of stress and improve resilience.
- Research shows mindfulness helps improve emotional regulation, reduce anxiety, and attenuate compassion fatigue among professionals working in this field.

Outcome

Regular self-awareness and mindfulness practices build emotional intelligence and strengthen cognitive flexibility—key components of sustainable practice.

4. VALUE-BASED WORK AND RESILIENCE

Why It Matters

Connection to personal values (e.g., justice, human dignity, cross-cultural solidarity) provides professionals with a **sense of meaning** that buffers against stress and burnout. When work aligns with core values and personal motivation, professionals maintain purpose even in adversity.

Strategies to Reinforce Values

- **Regular Reflective Review:** Periodic reflection on **why** you chose this work helps sustain motivation.
- **Strengths Inventory:** Acknowledge the skills and character strengths you bring to the role.
- **Learning & Growth:** Engage in training and professional development that expands your skills and reinforces your professional identity.

Research Insights

Studies on care workers' resilience indicate that strong self-efficacy and adaptive coping strategies are associated with **higher emotional resilience** and **lower stress reactions**.

5. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL RELEASE

Why It Matters

Sitting with emotional content all day can lead to accumulated stress in the body and mind. Engaging in activities outside work that *activate the body* and *stimulate joy* helps:

- Lower stress hormones (cortisol)
- Improve sleep quality
- Create psychological distance from work stress factors

Examples of Effective Practices

Physical

- Regular exercise (walking, running, yoga)
- Time in nature (parks, hikes)
- Mind-body practices (yoga, tai chi or mindful movement)

Emotional & Creative

- Hobbies (painting, music, gardening, crafting)
- Journaling to release emotions without judgment
- Social connection with friends and family (socializing)

Why It Works

Engaging in activities that provide pleasure, body movement, and relaxation supports overall well-being and prevents emotional exhaustion from work-related stress.

DIMENSIONS of Self-Care in Refugee and Migrant Work

Self-care in trauma-exposed professional contexts must be understood as **multi-layered**. It is not limited to individual coping strategies but extends to relational and institutional structures and systems that sustain wellbeing and ethical practice.

Self-care operates across two primary, interconnected dimensions:

1. **Individual Dimension that is the Personal Responsibility and Awareness**
2. **Team / Organizational Dimension that is Structural and Cultural System Responsibility**

Both dimensions are essential; individual resilience cannot compensate for systemic neglect.

1. Individual Dimension of Self-Care

The individual dimension focuses on maintaining personal psychological, emotional, and physical wellbeing while working in high-stress and trauma-exposed environments.

A. Maintaining Personal Wellness

Professionals working with migrants and refugees are frequently exposed to narratives of war, displacement, discrimination, and loss. Over time, this exposure can alter emotional regulation and cognitive schemes (for example, beliefs about safety and justice).

Maintaining wellness includes:

- Regular sleep hygiene
- Balanced nutrition
- Physical activity
- Emotional expression outside professional contexts
- Social connection unrelated to work

Wellness must be proactive rather than reactive. Waiting until exhaustion or distress are evident or too much, reduces effectiveness of interventions.

B. Seeking Therapy or Professional Support When Needed

There remains stigma in many professional settings around professionals in the aid work seeking psychological support. However, accessing therapy or counselling is a protective measure—not a sign of weakness.

Indications that professional support may be needed include:

- Persistent intrusive thoughts about clients' stories
- Emotional numbing
- Heightened irritability or withdrawal
- Sleep disturbances
- Reduced empathy
- Loss of motivation

Personal therapy supports:

- Processing of secondary trauma exposure
- Exploration of counter-transference
- Emotional regulation skills` strengthening
- Boundary reinforcement

Encouraging professionals to seek therapy reflects an ethical culture of care.

C. Limiting Exposure to Traumatic Content

While refugee and migrant work inherently involves trauma exposure, unnecessary cumulative exposure should be minimized.

Examples of exposure management:

- Avoid reviewing traumatic case files outside working hours.
- Limit consumption of distressing media related to migration crises.
- Rotate responsibilities when possible
- Schedule breaks between emotionally intensive sessions.

This is particularly important in storytelling methodologies, where detailed narratives may heighten emotional immersion.

2. Team and Organizational Dimension of Self-Care

Self-care cannot rely solely on individual coping skills. Organizational culture plays a decisive role in preventing burnout and secondary trauma. A trauma-informed organization recognizes that staff wellbeing directly influences client safety and service quality.

A. Creating a Supportive Work Environment

A supportive environment is characterized by:

- Open communication without fear of judgment
- Recognition that stresses reactions are normal

- Leadership modelling healthy boundaries
- Encouragement of rest and leave usage

Psychological safety allows staff to express vulnerability without risking professional credibility.

B. Recognizing the Risks of Burnout

Organizations must explicitly acknowledge that refugee and migrant work carries inherent psychological risk.

This includes:

- Formal training on burnout and vicarious trauma
- Routine wellbeing check-ins
- Early identification systems for distress
- Clear procedures for requesting workload adjustments

Supervisors should be trained to identify warning signs rather than interpret distress as performance failure.

C. Providing Adequate Resources

Resource adequacy directly impacts stress levels. Inadequate staffing, unclear roles, or excessive caseloads accelerate burnout.

Organizational responsibilities include:

- Reasonable caseload distribution
- Structured supervision systems
- Access to psychological consultation if needed
- Clear referral pathways for complex cases
- Administrative support to reduce emotional overload

When organizations fail to provide adequate resources, individual self-care strategies become insufficient.

RISKS of Neglecting Self-Care

Failure to address both individual and structural dimensions can result in serious psychological and professional consequences.

1. Burnout

Burnout is a work-related syndrome characterized by:

- **Emotional exhaustion** – feeling drained and depleted
- **Depersonalization** – emotional distancing or cynicism toward clients
- **Reduced professional efficacy** – feeling ineffective or incompetent

In contexts of work with refugees and migrants, burnout may manifest as:

- Reduced empathy
- Irritability toward clients
- Avoidance of emotionally complex cases
- Decline in ethical decision-making quality

Burnout not only harms professionals but can compromise the quality of care and increase risk of procedural or safeguarding errors.

2. Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma refers to psychological changes resulting from sustained empathetic engagement with trauma survivors.

Unlike burnout (which is related to workload stress), vicarious trauma specifically involves:

- Altered worldview (e.g., heightened sense of danger)
- Intrusive images from clients' narratives
- Emotional numbing
- Hypervigilance
- Distorted sense of responsibility

Professionals working with migrants and refugees may be particularly vulnerable due to repeated immersion in detailed trauma narratives.

If left unaddressed, vicarious trauma can lead to:

- Withdrawal from professional roles
- Chronic anxiety or depressive symptoms
- Reduced capacity for safe facilitation

Ethical Imperative of Self-Care

Taking care of oneself is not self-indulgence; it is a professional obligation!

Self-care ensures:

- Continuity of services for migrants and refugees
- Maintenance of ethical and trauma-informed practice
- Preservation of empathy without emotional depletion
- Long-term sustainability of programs such as SAFE

In storytelling methodologies especially, the facilitator's emotional regulation capacity directly influences:

- The safety of the narrative space
- Participants' sense of containment
- The prevention of re-traumatization

Integrated Perspective

Effective self-care in refugee and migrant work requires:

Level	Focus	Outcome
Individual	Emotional regulation & personal wellbeing	Sustainable presence
Team	Shared processing & peer validation	Reduced isolation
Organizational	Structural protection & resources	Ethical sustainability

When all three levels function together, professionals are better equipped to:

- Hold complex narratives
- Maintain compassionate engagement
- Prevent re-traumatization
- Sustain long-term commitment to migrants' support work

Conclusion – Self-Care in Working with Migrants and Storytelling Facilitation

Self-care is not optional but essential for professionals, volunteers, and facilitators working with refugees and migrants. The unique demands of this work—including repeated exposure to trauma, uncertainty, and systemic challenges—make structured **self-care a professional responsibility**.

KEY TAKEAWAYS for facilitators:

- **Boundaries safeguard empathy:** Clear work limits and scope of practice statements prevent emotional overload while sustaining effective support.
- **Supervision and peer support are protective:** Regular reflective supervision and collegial networks reduce isolation, provide guidance, and mitigate vicarious trauma.
- **Self-awareness and mindfulness foster resilience:** Monitoring emotional states, recognizing stress triggers, and practicing mindfulness support cognitive flexibility and emotional stability.
- **Values-driven work strengthens purpose:** Connection to personal and professional values sustains motivation, meaning, and ethical engagement.
- **Physical and emotional release maintains wellbeing:** Exercise, hobbies, and social connection provide essential recovery from intense work demands.

Organizational responsibility is equally important: Supportive leadership, structured supervision, manageable workloads, and trauma-informed policies create a framework in which individual self-care can succeed.

When self-care is neglected, professionals risk **burnout and vicarious trauma**, which not only endanger their own wellbeing but also compromise the **quality, safety, and ethical integrity of services** provided to migrants.

For professionals working with migrants and refugees and youth affected by war, self-care is particularly critical. The act of engaging deeply with participants' personal narratives—often

containing displacement, loss, and violence—can amplify stress reactions. Practicing self-care ensures that professionals:

- Maintain emotional regulation within the space
- Preserve participants' safety and sense of containment
- Avoid re-traumatization
- Sustain long-term engagement

Integrated self-care—at the individual, team, and organizational levels—creates a **safe, sustainable, and effective environment** for refugee and migrant support work. By prioritizing their own wellbeing, facilitators strengthen the very foundation of the programs they implement, ensuring that both participants and practitioners thrive.

2. SELF-Learning in Working with Refugees and Migrants

1. Conceptual Framework of SELF-LEARNING

Self-learning refers to a **continuous, self-directed, and reflective professional development process** through which practitioners strengthen their knowledge, skills, and cultural competence in response to the complex realities of migration.

In refugee and migrant contexts, professional competence cannot remain static. Legal frameworks evolve, migration routes shift, protection mechanisms change, and sociopolitical narratives influence integration environments. Therefore, self-learning is not optional but a core professional responsibility.

Self-learning in this field is characterized by:

- Flexibility (often digital and modular)
- Interdisciplinarity (legal, psychological, social, employment)
- Cultural reflexivity
- Integration of theory and practice
- Commitment to rights-based and trauma-informed approaches

It complements formal training and supervision and strengthens the sustainability of practice models such as SAFE's storytelling methodology.

2. Digital and E-Learning Platforms

Digital learning has become a primary avenue for accessible and flexible professional development in migration-related fields.

2.1 Structured Online Courses

Council of Europe – HELP Programme

The Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme offers free, self-paced online courses on migration-related topics, including:

- Refugee and asylum law
- Anti-discrimination
- Child protection
- Transition of migrant children to adulthood

These courses are particularly relevant for professionals involved in legal support, child protection, and safeguarding within storytelling interventions.

2.2 Webinars and Virtual Training

Scottish Refugee Council

Provides webinars and practical sessions on:

- Food insecurity among asylum seekers
- Housing precarity
- Access to services
- Integration challenges

International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation

Offers online modules on:

- Social protection systems
- Labour migration governance
- Migrant employment integration

These resources support professionals in understanding structural determinants of vulnerability.

2.3 Gaming and Interactive Tools

IEEDO- <https://ieedo.vgwb.org/app/>

IEEDO applies game-based digital learning to:

- Enhance digital literacy
- Promote self-learning skills among refugees
- Support remote education and empowerment

Interactive tools are particularly useful in storytelling-based methodologies, where digital narratives and participatory methods intersect.

2.4 UNHCR Learning Portal

The UNHCR platform provides:

- Updated protection guidelines
- Emergency response frameworks
- Statelessness resources

- Mental health and psychosocial support materials

It is essential for professionals seeking alignment with international protection standards.

3. Key Areas of Knowledge for Self-Directed Study

Effective work with refugees and migrants requires interdisciplinary competence.

3.1 Trauma-Informed Care

Understanding trauma is foundational.

Displacement may involve:

- Exposure to war and violence
- Torture or detention
- Family separation
- Ongoing uncertainty

Self-learning in trauma-informed care should include:

- Neurobiological impact of trauma
- Psychological first aid principles
- Avoiding re-traumatization in storytelling practices
- Strength-based and resilience frameworks

Professionals must distinguish between:

- Empathetic listening
- Therapeutic intervention
- Crisis response

3.2 Legal and Rights-Based Knowledge

Migration governance is shaped by international and regional agreements.

United Nations – Global Compact on Refugees

Professionals should familiarize themselves with:

- Non-refoulement principles
- Asylum procedures
- Child protection standards
- Anti-trafficking frameworks

At the European level:

European Parliament

Plays a central role in shaping:

- Asylum and migration policy
- Reception conditions directives
- Anti-discrimination legislation

Legal literacy enhances advocacy, ethical practice, and accurate referral.

3.3 Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is not merely knowledge of customs but involves:

- Awareness of power dynamics
- Recognition of implicit bias
- Sensitivity to communication styles
- Understanding differences in time perception, hierarchy, and gender norms

Self-learning includes:

- Challenging stereotypes
- Engaging with community voices
- Reflecting on one's own cultural positioning

Cultural humility must replace assumptions of expertise.

3.4 Language Acquisition Strategies

Language is central to integration and empowerment.

Professionals should learn:

- Adult language acquisition principles
- Non-formal learning techniques
- Workplace language training models

Language for Work Network

Provides tools and methodologies for:

- Supporting job-related language learning
- Integrating language with vocational training

Understanding language support mechanisms strengthens referral and program design.

4. Practical and Resource-Based Learning

Self-learning extends beyond theory into application.

4.1 Skills Validation and Recognition

Migrants often face de-skilling due to non-recognition of qualifications.

Professionals should familiarize themselves with:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) systems
- Informal and non-formal learning assessment tools

This supports dignity, employability, and social inclusion.

4.2 Guidelines and Toolkits

Numerous NGOs and institutions provide downloadable toolkits covering:

- Safeguarding
- Gender-based violence response
- Child protection
- Integration strategies

- Participatory methodologies

Self-learning involves critically assessing and adapting these tools to local context.

5. Self-Correction and Cultural Awareness

Self-learning is incomplete without reflexivity.

5.1 Recognizing Personal Limitations

Professionals must acknowledge:

- Emotional triggers
- Frustration responses
- Bias toward “ideal” integration models
- Rescue impulses

In storytelling work and working with migrants and refugees, this is particularly important to avoid:

- Emotional over-identification
- Imposing narrative frameworks
- Pathologizing silence or resistance

5.2 Diversifying Information Sources

Public discourse on migration is often polarized.

Self-learning requires:

- Consulting academic research
- Engaging with migrant-led organizations
- Reviewing policy documents
- Avoiding reliance solely on mainstream media narratives

Balanced information prevents unconscious reproduction of stereotypes.

6. Blended Learning Approach

Effective self-learning combines:

Digital Learning	On-Site Practice
Online modules	Direct engagement with communities
Webinars	Supervised practice
Toolkits	Case reflection
Policy study	Community feedback

Blended learning enhances practical wisdom.

7. Strength-Based Orientation

A core principle of self-learning in working with refugees and migrants is shifting from deficit-based thinking to a strength-based approach.

Professionals should actively study and recognize:

- Skills migrants bring

- Entrepreneurial capacities
- Multilingualism
- Community resilience
- Cultural knowledge

This aligns with storytelling methodologies that emphasize agency rather than victimhood.

8. Self-Evaluation in Professional Practice

Self-evaluation is an ongoing quality assurance process.

It involves examining:

- Cultural competence
- Ethical practice
- Intervention outcomes
- Impact on migrant wellbeing

8.1 Reflective Questions for Self-Evaluation

Professionals may regularly ask:

- Did I allow participant autonomy?
- Did I impose assumptions?
- Was the environment emotionally safe?
- Did my intervention empower or create dependency?
- What feedback did participants provide?

8.2 Monitoring Impact

Evaluation should include:

- Participant feedback mechanisms
- Indicators of social inclusion
- Emotional safety assessments
- Documentation of learning outcomes

At policy level, an emphasis on evidence-based approaches in migration governance reinforces the importance of systematic evaluation.

9. Ethical and Professional Imperative

Self-learning and self-evaluation ensure:

- Cultural humility
- Trauma-informed consistency
- Legal accuracy
- Ethical storytelling facilitation

- Sustainable, high-quality support for migrants

For the SAFE project, embedding structured self-learning pathways ensures that facilitators remain competent, adaptable, and reflective in evolving migration contexts.

Self-learning is a **core professional responsibility** for anyone working with refugees and migrants. The rapidly evolving legal frameworks, shifting migration patterns, and complex socio-cultural realities require facilitators to engage in continuous, self-directed, and reflective learning.

Key points for professionals working with refugees and migrants:

- **Flexibility and digital access:** Online modules, webinars, interactive tools, and e-learning platforms make professional development accessible and adaptable to diverse contexts.
- **Interdisciplinary competence:** Effective self-learning integrates legal knowledge, trauma-informed care, psychosocial support, social inclusion, and employment-related skills.
- **Cultural reflexivity:** Professionals must continuously examine their own biases, assumptions, and relational approaches to ensure culturally competent and ethical engagement.
- **Strength-based orientation:** Learning should prioritize recognition of migrants' skills, resilience, and community resources, aligning with SAFE's storytelling methodology that emphasizes agency over victimhood.
- **Practical application:** Theoretical knowledge must be reinforced through on-site practice, supervision, case reflection, and engagement with migrant communities.
- **Self-evaluation and ethical practice:** Continuous reflection on the impact of interventions, feedback from participants, and alignment with trauma-informed and rights-based approaches ensures high-quality and sustainable practice.

Blended learning—combining digital tools with practical, on-the-ground experience—is especially effective in storytelling-based interventions. It allows facilitators to navigate ethical dilemmas, avoid imposing narratives, and maintain emotional resilience while working with trauma-exposed populations.

Integrated Perspective

When self-learning is combined with **self-care and self-evaluation**, facilitators are better equipped to:

- Maintain professional competence and adaptability in evolving contexts
- Deliver culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and ethical interventions
- Support the autonomy, voice, and empowerment of refugee and migrant participants
- Ensure sustainable implementation of programs such as SAFE

Final Reflection:

Self-learning is **not a one-time activity but an ongoing process** that sustains professional growth, safeguards ethical standards, and strengthens the quality of support offered to refugees and migrants. For storytelling facilitators, continuous learning is essential to balance emotional engagement with participants' narratives and maintain safe, empowering, and impactful interventions.

3. Self-Evaluation in Working with Migrants

1. The Role of Self-Evaluation in Ethical Practice

Self-evaluation is a structured, ongoing reflective process through which professionals critically assess their attitudes, practices, service quality, and impact when working with migrants and refugees.

In migration contexts—where power asymmetries, trauma histories, legal complexities, and cultural diversity intersect—self-evaluation is essential to:

- Prevent unconscious bias
- Ensure cultural competence
- Strengthen trauma-informed approaches
- Improve service effectiveness
- Promote dignity and agency

Self-evaluation shifts professional practice from administrative processing to intentional, rights-based, and empowering engagement.

2. Key Components of Self-Evaluation

2.1 Intercultural Competence and Bias Awareness

Intercultural competence requires more than awareness of cultural differences; it involves continuous critical reflection on one's own assumptions, power position, and worldview.

A. Reflecting on Cultural Bias

Professionals must examine how their own cultural background, socialization, and institutional environment influence:

- Perceptions of “inclusion and integration”
- Judgments about family roles or gender norms
- Expectations about communication styles
- Interpretations of silence or emotional expression

Monocultural approaches—assuming one dominant model of behaviour or integration—risk marginalizing diverse experiences. At policy level, non-discrimination, inclusion, and intercultural dialogue should be the central pillars of migration governance.

Reflective questions:

- Do I interpret behaviour through my own cultural lens?
- Am I expecting conformity to dominant norms?
- How does power operate in this interaction?

B. Addressing Stereotypes

Self-evaluation must identify whether implicit or explicit stereotypes are influencing service provision.

Common risk areas include:

- Assuming low education levels
- Viewing migrants primarily as vulnerable victims
- Assuming dependency
- Generalizing behaviours across ethnic or national groups

Unchecked stereotypes may:

- Affect decision-making
- Influence tone of communication
- Limit opportunities offered to migrants

Professionals must consciously replace deficit-based assumptions with strength-based assessments.

C. Relational Style

Self-evaluation includes examining interpersonal dynamics.

Professionals should assess whether their relational approach is:

- Respectful and culturally sensitive
- Non-patronizing
- Collaborative rather than directive
- Empowering rather than controlling

Questions to consider:

- Do I speak with or speak for the migrant?
- Do I encourage autonomy?
- Is my communication accessible and inclusive?

Relational style directly affects trust-building and service effectiveness.

2.2 Quality of Service and Support

Self-evaluation extends beyond attitudes to measurable service outcomes.

A. Needs` Alignment

Professionals working with migrants and refugees must regularly evaluate whether services genuinely address migrants lived realities rather than merely fulfilling institutional indicators.

Examples:

- Is language training linked to employment pathways?
- Are housing referrals realistic?
- Are services adapted for single parents or undocumented individuals?

Needs` alignment requires:

- Direct consultation with migrants
- Community engagement
- Flexible program adaptation

Policy discourse at European level increasingly highlights evidence-based and impact-driven approaches to migration governance, reinforcing the need for practical outcome assessment.

B. Empowerment Focus

A critical self-evaluation question is whether practice promotes autonomy or reinforces dependency.

Moving beyond a “saviour” mentality means:

- Supporting informed decision-making
- Providing tools rather than solutions
- Encouraging self-advocacy
- Recognizing migrant resilience

Empowerment-based practice shifts the professional’s role from rescuer to facilitator.

C. Language and Communication Accessibility

Communication barriers remain one of the most significant obstacles to integration.

Self-evaluation must examine:

- Use of plain language
- Availability of interpretation services
- Cultural appropriateness of materials
- Literacy sensitivity
- Use of migrants’ own languages when possible

Organizations such as the European Trade Union Committee for Education emphasize accessible communication and inclusive education practices in migrant integration contexts.

Professionals should assess:

- Are migrants fully understanding their rights and obligations?
- Are written materials accessible?

- Is digital communication inclusive?

2.3 Ethical and Trauma-Informed Practice

Working with migrants frequently involves exposure to trauma and vulnerability.

A. Trauma Awareness

Self-evaluation must assess whether practice is trauma-informed.

Key considerations:

- Avoiding intrusive questioning
- Allowing control over narrative disclosure
- Recognizing trauma responses (anger, silence, avoidance)
- Avoiding re-traumatization in storytelling contexts

Trauma-informed practice recognizes that behaviour may reflect survival strategies rather than resistance or non-compliance.

B. Confidentiality and Trust

Trust is foundational in migration work, particularly where legal precarity exists.

Self-evaluation includes reviewing:

- Data protection procedures
- Informed consent practices
- Clarity about information-sharing limitations
- Safe documentation processes and procedures

Failure to protect confidentiality can undermine both safety and long-term engagement.

C. Respecting Agency and Resilience

Migrants are not passive recipients of services.

Self-evaluation must assess whether professionals:

- Include migrants and refugees, youth affected by war in decision-making
- Validate coping strategies
- Recognize prior achievements
- Avoid infantilization

Research consistently highlights resilience as a protective factor among displaced populations.

Professionals must ensure interventions reinforce—not diminish—this resilience.

2.4 Professional Development

Competent practice requires continuous development.

A. Identifying Skill Gaps

Professionals should regularly assess:

- Knowledge of evolving legal frameworks
- Cultural knowledge gaps
- Trauma response competence

- Digital literacy capacity
- Storytelling facilitation skills (if applicable to SAFE)

Identifying skill gaps is a proactive resilience strategy rather than a weakness.

B. Ongoing Training

Migration policies and social conditions evolve rapidly.

Continuous training ensures alignment with:

- Updated asylum procedures
- Integration policy reforms
- Anti-discrimination standards
- Best practices in psychosocial support

Engaging with research and professional literature strengthens reflective and evidence-based practice.

3. Tools for Structured Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation should be systematic rather than intuitive.

3.1 Self-Assessment Checklists

Structured tools improve objectivity.

The Council of Europe provides quality frameworks and teaching support tools relevant to adult migrant education and human rights standards.

Checklists may include:

- Cultural competence indicators
- Trauma-informed practice indicators
- Communication accessibility measures
- Empowerment-oriented practice criteria

3.2 Feedback Loops

Direct migrant feedback is essential.

Methods include:

- Anonymous surveys
- Focus groups
- Exit interviews
- Participatory evaluation workshops
- Community consultations

Feedback should explore:

- Perceived respect
- Clarity of information
- Emotional safety

- Usefulness of services

True accountability requires willingness to adapt practice based on feedback.

3.3 Peer Review and Supervision

Peer reflection reduces blind spots.

Practices may include:

- Case discussions
- Reflective supervision
- Team-based ethical consultations
- Interdisciplinary review meetings

Peer processes normalize challenges and promote shared responsibility.

4. Transformative Impact of Self-Evaluation

When self-evaluation is embedded in daily practice, it transforms service provision:

Without Self-Evaluation	With Self-Evaluation
Administrative processing	Person-centered support
Assumption-driven practice	Evidence-based adaptation
Paternalistic interaction	Empowerment-focused engagement
Cultural blindness	Intercultural humility
Reactive problem-solving	Proactive inclusion

Effective self-evaluation ensures that work with migrants supports:

- Long-term integration
- Psychological safety
- Social participation
- Dignity and autonomy

5. Relevance for SAFE Storytelling Methodology

In storytelling-based interventions, self-evaluation is particularly critical because:

- Power dynamics shape whose stories are amplified
- Trauma narratives can be unintentionally exploited
- Facilitator bias can shape narrative interpretation
- Emotional safety must be constantly monitored

Self-evaluation ensures that storytelling remains:

- Voluntary
- Empowering

- Ethical
- Trauma-sensitive
- Strength-based

Conclusion – Self-Evaluation in Working with Migrants and Refugees

Self-evaluation is a **cornerstone of ethical, competent, and sustainable practice** in refugee and migrant work. It enables professionals to reflect critically on their own biases, cultural assumptions, and relational approaches, while ensuring that services remain effective, trauma-informed, and empowering.

Key insights for facilitators:

- **Cultural competence and bias awareness:** Regular reflection prevents unconscious stereotyping, promotes intercultural humility, and ensures respect for diverse experiences.
- **Quality and relevance of services:** Evaluating whether programs meet the real needs of migrants fosters alignment between policy goals and lived realities, strengthening impact and trust.
- **Ethical and trauma-informed practice:** Continuous assessment of trauma awareness, confidentiality procedures, and participant agency ensures that interventions are safe, respectful, and empowering.
- **Professional development and skill enhancement:** Self-evaluation identifies gaps in knowledge, skills, and methodological expertise, supporting continuous improvement and adaptability.
- **Structured feedback and peer engagement:** Tools such as self-assessment checklists, participant feedback mechanisms, and peer supervision loops provide objective insights, reduce blind spots, and reinforce collaborative learning.

For **storytelling facilitators in SAFE Project**, self-evaluation is especially critical. Narrative work inherently involves power dynamics, exposure to trauma, and ethical responsibilities. Consistent self-assessment ensures that storytelling sessions:

- Respect participant autonomy and narrative ownership
- Avoid exploitation or re-traumatization
- Remain trauma-sensitive and culturally appropriate
- Strengthen participants' sense of agency, identity, and empowerment

Integrated Perspective

When self-evaluation is practiced alongside **self-care and self-learning**, facilitators are better equipped to:

- Deliver culturally competent and trauma-informed interventions
- Empower participants while minimizing facilitator burnout or secondary trauma
- Sustain professional growth and ethical engagement over the long term

- Maintain high-quality implementation of programs such as SAFE Project

Final Reflection:

Self-evaluation is **an ongoing, reflective, and structured practice**. It transforms professional activity from administrative routine to intentional, rights-based, and participant-centered engagement. In combination with self-care and self-learning, it ensures that both facilitators and migrants experience safe, empowering, and effective storytelling interventions.

4.Resources & Contacts for Additional Support

Professionals, volunteers, and facilitators working with refugees and migrants often require access to specialized, external support services beyond the scope of their immediate organization. This means, the professionals may need more information and resources in specific areas such as:

- Legal information
- Protection and safeguarding support
- Psychosocial and mental health resources
- Training and professional development
- Policy guidance and research
- Emergency referral mechanisms

Information and Resources from International Organizations and Protection Frameworks

These institutions provide authoritative guidance, training resources, policy updates, and global protection standards.

UNHCR- Focus: International protection, asylum systems, statelessness, displacement.

Provides:

- Protection guidelines, Emergency response frameworks, Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) tools, Country-of-origin information, Resettlement information

When to consult:

- Complex protection cases, Legal uncertainty about refugee status, Safeguarding or statelessness issues

International Organization for Migration- Focus: Migration governance, integration, return, labour mobility.

Provides:

- Research and policy reports, Integration best practices, Counter-trafficking resources, Community stabilization programs

When to consult:

- Labour integration challenges, Anti-trafficking referrals, Community-level program design

United Nations – Global Frameworks

Relevant agreements include:

- Global Compact on Refugees, Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, International human rights treaties. These frameworks help ensure rights-based practice and policy alignment.

European-Level Institutions and Policy Resources

For practitioners operating within Europe, these institutions shape migration governance, asylum law, and integration standards.

European Commission

Provides:

- Migration and asylum policy update, Funding programs (e.g., AMIF), Integration action plans, Anti-discrimination frameworks

European Parliament

Provides:

- Legislative updates, Policy resolutions, Research reports on migration and integration

Useful for:

- Advocacy alignment, Understanding regulatory changes

Council of Europe

Offers:

- Human rights standards, Anti-discrimination tools, Adult migrant education frameworks, HELP online courses

Especially relevant for: Legal professionals, Adult education facilitators, Human rights compliance

Psycho-social and Mental Health Support

Working with trauma-affected populations requires referral pathways for mental health support.

1. Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Professionals should identify:

- Local trauma-informed therapists, Community mental health services, culturally competent counselling providers, Interpreted therapy services

International guidance can be accessed via UNHCR MHPSS guidelines and/ or IOM psychosocial support manuals.

2. Crisis Support Services

Each country should have national mental health hotline, emergency crisis intervention services, domestic violence shelters, anti-trafficking hotlines

Legal Aid and Rights-Based Support

Access to accurate legal information is critical. Professionals should identify: national asylum legal aid providers, Refugee law clinics, Bar associations offering pro bono support, NGOs specializing in migrant rights

1 Specialized Legal NGOs

Examples at European level include:

European Council on Refugees and Exiles

Provides:

- Legal analysis, Policy briefings, Advocacy tools

Training and Professional Development Resources

Continuous learning strengthens safe practice.

1. International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation

Provides:

- Migration and labour mobility courses, Social protection training, Integration policy workshops

Community and Grassroots Organizations

Local NGOs and migrant-led organizations are often the most responsive to immediate needs.

Professionals should:

- Build partnerships with migrant community leaders, Engage diaspora associations, Maintain updated referral directories, Include migrant voices in program design. Community partnerships enhance cultural legitimacy and trust.

Support for Professionals (Self-Care & Supervision)

In addition to participant-focused resources, facilitators should know where to seek support for themselves.

1 Professional Supervision Networks

Identify:

- Trauma-informed supervisors, Peer consultation groups, Interdisciplinary case review forums

2 Occupational Wellbeing Services

Organizations should provide:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), Access to therapy reimbursement, Burnout prevention workshops, Self-care resources ensure long-term sustainability of programs like SAFE.

Ethical Use of Resources

When referring migrants:

- Ensure informed consent, Protect confidentiality, Avoid over-referral without follow-up, Confirm accessibility (language, cost, documentation requirements), Resource referral must strengthen autonomy, not create dependency.

Contact information of International and national (Romania) resources

International and European Resources

- **UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency**
 - Provides: refugee protection, legal guidance, mental health & psychosocial support
 - Website: www.unhcr.org
 - Help portal: help.unhcr.org
 - Email: belbr@unhcr.org
 - Phone: +32 2 627 59 99
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**
 - Provides: migration governance, integration, anti-trafficking, voluntary return
 - Website: www.iom.int
 - Email: info@iom.int
 - Phone: +41 22 717 9111
 - Regional Europe contact: rovienna@iom.int
- **European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)**
 - Provides: legal advice, asylum updates, AIDA database
 - Website: www.ecre.org
 - Email: info@ecre.org
 - Phone: +32 (0)2 329 00 40
- **Council of Europe – Division on Migration and Refugees**
 - Provides: human rights guidance, anti-discrimination tools, adult migrant education standards
 - Website: www.coe.int/migration
 - Email: migration@coe.int

- o Phone: +33 (0)3 88 41 28 06

Country-Specific Resources - Romania

I. Public Institutions

- **General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI) (National institution)**
 - o Website: <https://igi.mai.gov.ro>
 - o Phone: +40 21 410 75 13
 - o Role: Government body managing asylum procedures, temporary protection, residency permits and coordinating reception services across Romania.
- **General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI) (National public institution)**
 - o Website: <https://igi.mai.gov.ro>
 - o Phone: +40 21 410 75 13
 - o Role: Central public administration institution under the Ministry of Internal Affairs responsible for implementing Romanian migration and asylum policy, including asylum procedures, temporary protection, residency permits, and integration support.
- **Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministerul Afacerilor Interne) (National ministry)**
 - o Website: <https://www.mai.gov.ro>
 - o Phone: +40 21 316 14 60
 - o Role: Government ministry overseeing public order, migration policy, asylum governance, immigration enforcement and coordination of national migration responses (including IGI).
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerul Afacerilor Externe) (National ministry)**
 - o Website: <https://www.mae.ro>
 - o Phone: +40 21 316 30 00
 - o Role: Handles foreign policy, diplomatic missions abroad, and consular protection, including visa and travel documentation which intersects with migration pathways.
- **National Council for Combating Discrimination (Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării) (Government agency)**
 - o Website: <http://www.cncd.org.ro>
 - o Phone: +40 21 315 37 10
 - o Address: Piața Valter Mărăcineanu nr. 1, Sector 1, București 010155, Romania
 - o Role: Independent public body that applies Romanian and EU anti-discrimination laws and

oversees the National Anti-Discrimination Plan to protect migrants, refugees, minorities and all persons from discrimination.

- **Directorate-General for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC)** (*County public institution*)

- o Examples vary by county (e.g., DGASPC București, DGASPC Constanța)
- o Role: Local social welfare authority responsible for social protection services for vulnerable individuals, including refugees and migrants, and coordination of child protection cases.

- **County Agencies for Employment (Agenția Județeană pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă – AJOFM)** (*Public institution at county level*)

- o Example in Constanța: AJOFM Constanța, Bd. Tomis nr. 51, Constanța
- o Role: Provides information and support for job seekers, including migrants, access to labour market services, vocational training referrals, and employer matching.

- **Public Health Directorates (Direcția de Sănătate Publică – DSP)** (*County public institution*)

- o Role: County public health authorities responsible for public health measures, vaccinations, information on healthcare access for migrants and refugees, disease prevention, and community health planning.

- **County School Inspectorates (Inspectoratul Școlar Județean – ISJ)** (*Education authority*)

- o Role: Manages public education provision at county level, including enrolment support and educational inclusion for refugee and migrant children.

- **National Centre for Recognition and Validation of Diplomas (Centrul Național pentru Recunoașterea și Echivalarea Diplomelor)** (*Public institution*)

- o Website: <https://cnred.edu.ro>
- o Role: Official body for diploma recognition and validation, facilitating access to employment and further education for migrants and refugees.

Public Institutions with Indirect but Relevant Roles

- **National Agency for Employment (Agenția Națională pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă – ANOFM)** (*National public institution*)

- o Website: <https://anofm.ro>
- o Role: Oversees employment policies, job matching programs and labour market integration services across Romania (relevant for migrant job seekers).

- **Prefectures (Instituția Prefectului)** (*County-level public administration*)

- o Role: Government representatives in each county coordinating public order, interinstitutional cooperation, civil protection and local implementation of national migration and integration policies. Often key in operational coordination of services for refugees and migrants.

Other National Public Bodies (Broader Governance)

These institutions are not exclusively migration-focused, but may intersect with protection, rights, or governance affecting refugees and migrants:

- **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Ministerul Muncii și Protecției Sociale)**

- o Website: <https://mmuncii.ro>

- o Role: National ministry responsible for labour policies, social inclusion, welfare programmes and benefits available to vulnerable populations, including refugees and migrants.

- **Ministry of Education (Ministerul Educației)**

- o Website: <https://www.edu.ro>

- o Role: Governs national education policy, including school enrolment and educational support for migrant and refugee children.

- **Ministry of Health (Ministerul Sănătății)**

- o Website: <https://www.ms.ro>

- o Role: Oversees public health policy and access to healthcare, essential for refugee and migrant wellbeing.

II. NGOs

- **Consiliul Național Român pentru Refugiați (CNRR)** (*National NGO*)

- o Website: <https://www.cnrr.ro>

- o Address: Strada Viesparilor nr. 19, etaj 2, Sector 2, București 020483, Romania

- o Phone: +40 21 312 62 10

- o Email: office@cnrr.ro

- o Additional phone (Call center/Asylum support): +40 730 073 170

- o Services: Free legal counselling for refugees, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection; rights information, integration support, advocacy and liaison with authorities. Regional assistance hubs also exist in cities like Constanța, Suceava and Iași.

- **ARCA – Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants** (*National NGO*)
 - o Website: <https://www.arca.org.ro>
 - o Address: Strada Austrului nr. 23, Sector 2, București 11366, Romania
 - o Phone: +40 21 252 73 57 / +40 21 252 08 15
 - o Email: office@arca.org.ro
 - o Role: Supports refugees and migrants with social counselling, access to education and language courses, employment support, advocacy and integration activities.

- **AIDRom – Asociația Ecumenică a Bisericilor din România** (*National NGO*)
 - o Website: <https://www.aidrom.ro>
 - o Address: Strada Ilarie Chendi nr. 14, Sector 2, București, Romania
 - o Phone: +40 21 212 48 68
 - o Email: aidrom@gmail.com
 - o Role: Provides social, psychological and legal support, emergency aid, vocational counselling, and operates multifunctional centres for refugees and migrants in cities like Bucharest, Iași and Timișoara.

- **AEMI – European Alliance for Migration** (*National NGO*)
 - o Website: <https://aemi.ro>
 - o Address: Bd. Mareșal Alexandru Averescu nr. 7, Sector 1, București 011454, Romania
 - o Phone: (+40) 314 123 236 / (+40) 737 231 132
 - o Email: voice@aemi.ro
 - o Role: Advocates for migrant rights, inclusion and social justice; offers community engagement, language support, education access, health information and integration services.

- **Migrant Integration Center Brașov** (*Local NGO*)
 - o Website: <http://www.migrantbrasov.ro>
 - o Address: Mihail Kogălniceanu nr. 17, Bloc C4, Ap. 8-9, Brașov 500028, Romania
 - o Phone: +40 766 282 090
 - o Emails: contact@migrantbrasov.ro / astrid2001ro@yahoo.com
 - o Role: Provides Romanian language courses, legal information (residence, work rights), referrals, mediation, cultural orientation and community activities.

- **JRS Romania – Jesuit Refugee Service Romania** (*National NGO*)
 - o Website: <https://jrsromania.org>
 - o Address: Strada Maior Ilie Opriș 54, Sector 4, București 041378, Romania
 - o Phone: +40 744 405 657 / +40 732 129 238

- o Email: jrsromania@gmail.com
- o Role: Long-standing NGO offering educational support, language training, livelihoods services, legal aid, psychosocial care, community integration and advocacy for refugees and forcibly displaced persons.

- **Coaliția pentru Drepturile Migranților și Integrarea Refugiaților (CDMiR) (National coalition)**

- o Website:
<https://www.cnrr.ro/ro/projects-cdmir4ucraina-cresterea-gradului-de-constientizare-privind-drepturile-omului-si-tratament-egal-pentru-refugiatii-ucraineni-din-romania-4>

- o Role: Coalition of ~23 Romanian NGOs working on advocacy, rights protection, social inclusion, and awareness-raising for migrants and refugees.

- **Asociația CONECT – Social Services & Migration Links (National NGO)**

- o Website: <https://www.asociatiaconect.ro>
- o Address: Calea Moșilor nr. 284, Bl. 22A, Sc. 2, Et. 8, Ap. 47, Sector 2, București, Romania
- o Phone: +40 21 210 71 60
- o Email: office@asociatiaconect.ro
- o Role: Provides referral information and links to migration, labour and social rights organisations; connects users to legal, educational and integration support networks.

- **Dopomoha – Information Platform for Refugees (Digital resource)**

- o Website: <https://dopomoha.ro>
- o Role: Multilingual platform with verified information on procedures, rights, asylum, protection, and services in Romania; available in Ukrainian, Romanian, English and Russian. Developed by Code for Romania with international partners.

- **CATTIA Community Center – Brașov (Local support centre)**

- o Address: Strada Institutului nr. 35, Brașov
- o Services: Reception, basic needs support (food, information, transport) and counselling for refugees arriving in Brașov.

- **National Anti-Trafficking Hotline (for all Romania) (Referral service)**

- o Phone: 0800 800 678 / 021 313 3100
- o Role: Confidential support for victims and survivors of human trafficking, including migrants and refugees.

Constanța County – Local Resources & Contacts

- **ROUA Center – Novapolis Association (Constanța) (Local NGO)**

- o Address: Bulevardul Mamaia nr. 141, et. 1, Constanța

- o Phone: +40 771 516 508

- o Email: centerroua@gmail.com

- o Website: <https://novapolis.ro/en/roua/>

- o Role: Provides integrated support for Ukrainian refugees and third-country nationals (TCNs) in the South-East region. Services include social counselling, legal information, psychosocial support, Romanian language and cultural orientation, employment inclusion support, capacity development, recreational and educational activities, and risk prevention.

- **JRS Romania – Regional Integration Center (Constanța) (Local/National NGO)**

- o Address: Bulevardul Mamaia, nr. 13, Constanța, Romania

- o Phone: 0738 719 233; 0738 719 235

- o Email: jrsromania@gmail.com

- o Website: <https://jrsromania.org>

- o Role: Part of a national integration programme supporting refugees and foreigners with legal, social, material, psychological assistance, Romanian language courses, cultural orientation, and referrals tailored to local needs.

- **CNRR (Consiliul Național Român pentru Refugiați) – Constanța Assistance Hub (National NGO with local presence)**

- o Address: Bulevardul I.C. Brătianu nr. 5, Parter, Constanța, Romania

- o Phone (local contact): 0736 830 847

- o Email (local contact): serban@cnrr.ro

- o Role: The Romanian National Council for Refugees operates an assistance hub in Constanța providing legal counselling, rights information, and referrals for asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people in the region.

- **AIDRom – Social and Integration Support (Constanța) (NGO with national reach)**

- o Address: Contact via central office and local activities (Consiliul Național Român pentru Refugiați and community networks can provide direct referrals in Constanța)

- o Phone: +40 21 212 48 68 (Bucharest office)

- o Email: office@aidrom.ro

- o Role: Offers social support, counselling, legal information, access to education and labour market, and cultural integration assistance—community engagement partners often deliver local services in Constanța.

- **ADAPTO – Association for Promoting Equality Among Youth (Constanța) (Local NGO)**

- o Address: Str. Pescarilor 28, Bl. BM9B, Ap. 14, Constanța, Romania

- o Website: <http://www.adapto.ro>
- o Phone: +40 722 754 835
- o Role: Works on promoting equality, tolerance, intercultural dialogue, anti-racism and inclusion through youth activities and campaigns (including against discrimination and for diversity), which are important social supports for migrant and refugee youth.

Emergency Contacts

- Universal EU Emergency Number: 112
- EU Trafficking Support Hotline: 116 006

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