

# OPEN RELIEF

## NEWSLETTER

Issue #3 | October 2026 | *Capacity-building edition*

### Zagreb: partners train each other

*Capacity Building for Partners | Zagreb, Croatia | 30 September – 1 October 2026*



Before partners train others, they train each other. On 30 September and 1 October, the three OPEN RELIEF partners met in Zagreb, Croatia, for a capacity-building exchange hosted by our coordinator, IM INDUSTRIES, with the new manual as their training material. Each partner brought expertise shaped by a different crisis context: KNUTD from frugal, citizen-led innovation under war in Ukraine, IM INDUSTRIES from Croatia's earthquake recovery, and LATRA from Greece's frontline refugee response. Alongside the training, our mid-term partner meeting gave the consortium time to review progress, coordinate responsibilities, and plan the next phase of the project. A big thank you to IM INDUSTRIES for hosting us!

**2** days   **3** partners   **3** real-world cases   **4** hands-on exercises

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### Three cases from three crisis contexts

Each partner opened with a real case from its own context, showing what worked and what still needs to change.

- ▶ **IM INDUSTRIES: volunteer networks after the Zagreb and Petrinja earthquakes.** First-time volunteers organised food, clothing, transport and practical help through WhatsApp while the formal response felt slow. Solidarity filled urgent gaps – but also led to duplicate or unverified requests, unclear tasks, unsafe volunteering, and weak handover to professional services.
- ▶ **KNUTD: furnishing a community shelter in Kyiv.** Community shelters in Kyiv are often poorly equipped, which can make them unsuitable or even inaccessible for people with disabilities and children. One shelter was fitted with plywood furniture cut on CNC machines: more comfortable, more accessible, and easy to reproduce. The lesson: fixed-size designs are hard to adapt, so solutions must start from research with the people who will use them.
- ▶ **LATRA: multilingual information on Lesbos.** Early in the refugee response, LATRA designed an information leaflet in five languages, combining text, visuals and QR codes, so newly arrived people could find hospitals, reception centres and NGOs on paper or on a phone. Treating language, technology and access together made the information usable for far more people.

### From cases to hands-on practice

Each partner then led a practical exercise from its learning module, so the others could experience the method rather than just hear about it.

**Civic engagement with IM INDUSTRIES.** After days of extreme heat, a summer storm floods a Zagreb neighbourhood, brings down trees and cuts the power. Messages pour in on WhatsApp and Signal: an older person living alone, migrant workers with limited Croatian, damaged roofs, a rumour that the reception point has closed. Teams turned this stream of messages into a community action plan: mapping who was affected, verifying and prioritising requests, matching safe tasks to volunteers and marking what had to go to professional services.

**Frugal innovation with KNUTD.** Teams furnished a 6 × 10 m room that must shelter 40 people – adults, older people, children, people with reduced mobility and people who need privacy – while keeping entrances and circulation clear. Starting from needs and available resources rather than a furniture catalogue, they sketched modular systems that combine wooden boards with plastic boxes or books, plus a separate private zone.

**Inclusive and humanitarian design with LATRA.** In the 72-Hour Design Challenge, 200 people arrive at a temporary reception centre: families with children, older people, people with disabilities and speakers of many languages, with limited staff, intermittent power and unreliable internet. Each team chose one essential need and designed a practical response, then put it to the module's simple test: would it still work without internet, or for someone who cannot read the main language?

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### What's next?

Zagreb is the first link in a chain of knowledge transfer. In the coming months, we will be working on:

- ▶ **In-house training** – each partner staff member trained in Zagreb will pass the methods on to at least four colleagues, using a short 60–90-minute version of each module.

- ▶ **Local workshops** – through at least nine workshops in Croatia, Greece and Ukraine, partner trainers will train 60+ creatives, humanitarian practitioners, civil-protection professionals, mental-health NGOs and community representatives. Open calls to take part will be shared on our channels.
- ▶ **Co-design with communities** – the same methods will guide mapping, co-design, prototyping and testing as the project develops its 11 open-source preparedness designs.
- ▶ **An open resource** – the Methodology & Learning Modules will be published as a free resource on [openrelief.site](https://openrelief.site), in English, Croatian, Ukrainian and Greek.

More updates on activities, partnerships and results will be shared in the next issue. Stay tuned!

## What is OPEN RELIEF?

OPEN RELIEF addresses a pressing gap in current emergency preparedness approaches. While Europe is placing increasing attention on 72-hour survival planning, many existing tools remain single-use, difficult to repair, and poorly adapted to the cultural, practical, and emotional needs of the people who rely on them.

Our project responds by placing cultural and creative sector (CCS) professionals at the centre of preparedness innovation, connecting them with humanitarian actors and communities in participatory co-creation processes. Over 24 months, we will:

- ▶ **Co-develop 11 open-source preparedness solutions**, including water filters, modular shelters, repairable tools, and digital guidance resources
- ▶ **Train and engage 150 artists, 100 humanitarian workers, and 300 community members** in humanitarian design, frugal innovation, and crisis literacy
- ▶ **Publish all results as open-source**, freely shareable and locally adaptable, reaching **1,000+ organisations** across Europe and Ukraine
- ▶ **Launch a multilingual awareness campaign** reaching **500,000+ citizens**

## Meet the consortium



**IM INDUSTRIES** | Coordinator | Croatia

Leading project coordination, capacity building, and participatory design residencies for marginalised communities.

**KNUTD – Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design**

| Beneficiary | Ukraine

Bringing expertise in digital fabrication, engineering design, and frugal innovation from Ukraine's conflict-affected context.



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**LATRA EE** | Beneficiary | Greece

Leading communication, dissemination, and managing hybrid hubs for participatory design with refugees and displaced creatives.

## Stay connected

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Follow our journey and be the first to hear about open calls, events, and new resources:

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**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/open-relief](https://linkedin.com/company/open-relief)

**Website:** [openrelief.site](https://openrelief.site)

