

Geneva

Integration of URM – 2026



Context

A traumatic journey

Each year, hundreds of unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) aged 15 to 18 arrive in Switzerland alone. They **flee major crises, leave their families behind,** and travel **thousands of kilometers over months or even years** by land and sea.

Extremely vulnerable, they endure traumatic experiences and, upon arrival, **face deep social isolation and the challenge of rebuilding their lives** in a new society.

A complex integration process

URM are placed in existing reception structures that are often **overcrowded, under-resourced,** and facing **significant challenges** in providing adequate **social support,** as URM represent only

one part of their wider responsibilities.

It is therefore essential for local organizations and citizens to **complement these public systems** in specific areas, always in **close collaboration** with state services.

Integration is the **cornerstone of these young people's future.**

Already fragile and **socially isolated,** many have experienced **long interruptions in schooling** and find themselves significantly **out of sync** with their host society. Some face **prejudice** or even **rejection** from the local population, which deepens their isolation and widens social divides. Building connections is essential to **creating a shared and hopeful future.**



Context



Listening to their needs

Our discussions with the youths clearly highlighted their wishes :

- To **step outside the institutional setting**
- To **practice French** beyond the classroom
- To discover local **culture and heritage**
- To explore a **craft, a profession, or an activity**

A positive integration

Integration through **genuine exchange with the local population is essential**, both for the youths to open up to their host country and for the host country to open up to them.

This mutually beneficial approach also **raises awareness among local communities** about the key issues of successful integration, fostering outcomes that strengthen Swiss society as well as the newcomers.



Our activities

Professional integration & community connections

As part of its work with unaccompanied refugee minors, Van for Life has developed an integration program built around two complementary pillars.

Socio-professional integration

The goal is to support the youths as they **shape their future** by facilitating their access to the world of work. This approach provides URM with **concrete guidance, realistic prospects**, and a **first meaningful professional experience** in Switzerland, beneficial both for them and for the wider community.

Key points :

- Organization of discovery visits with local partner companies
- Support in finding internships and apprenticeships
- Assistance with administrative procedures
- Professional orientation and career guidance

Building connections with the local Community

Van for Life **fosters strong and lasting social ties** through a network of host families and committed local residents. These encounters help the youths **better understand local culture, practice French** in a supportive environment, and receive **essential human support** for their integration. This pillar **strengthens their sense of belonging while promoting a harmonious inclusion** within the Geneva community.

Key points :

- Recruiting volunteer individuals and host families
- Organizing an initial meeting
- Ongoing follow-up of the relationship between the youth and the host
- Administrative monitoring and coordination with the relevant authorities

Our activities

Discovering Switzerland and meeting its people



Discovery Outings

- Groups of **6-7 youths**, 1 educator & 1 guide/driver
- **Discovery outings**, nature, heritage, culture, sports events, or **professional** environments
- **Swiss** Romandie
- **Van For Life** vehicle / **Twice** a month



“One-day Hosts” Outings

- Groups of **15-20 youths**, 15-20 volunteer “hosts” 3 educators, 1 driver
- **Discovery outings**, nature, heritage, culture, sports events, or **professional** environments
- **Swiss** Romandie
- Coach bus / **Once** a month



How to participate

Every contribution counts! **Interaction with the local community**, (young and adult) is **at the heart of our approach**. There are **several ways to take part**, in whichever way suits you best:

Host a discovery outing

For one day, **help young people discover** a place, an activity, a profession, or a sport **you care about**. This can be done **privately** or as a **company**.

Become a “One-day Host”

During a **themed group outing**, you form a **one-to-one pairing** with a young refugee and take on the **role of host**. Just as you would welcome a friend visiting from afar.

Financial Sponsorship

Help us **fund an outing!** This can be through **free entries**, covering the **costs of a specific day**, or any contribution that fits you. **A detailed list and budget** are available on our website.

Financial Support

You can also make a **direct donation** to Van For Life, in **any amount**, by specifying “URM Project”.

*Together, let's turn their arrival into a **real opportunity for integration and meaningful exchange**. Together, let's create inspiring stories and remind ourselves that **“others” are part of us too!***

Results & impact

The actions **strengthened social and professional integration** by creating opportunities to connect with the local population and access the labour market. They also helped **reduce isolation and support sustainable integration** ; **benefiting both the young people and their host society.**

These activities have been **implemented entirely on a voluntary basis.** **Feedback has been very positive so far**, from the young people themselves as well as from social partners, businesses, and the local population. This strong engagement **confirms the relevance of the project** and reinforces the ambition to further develop these actions, notably through the first financial support secured at the end of 2025.

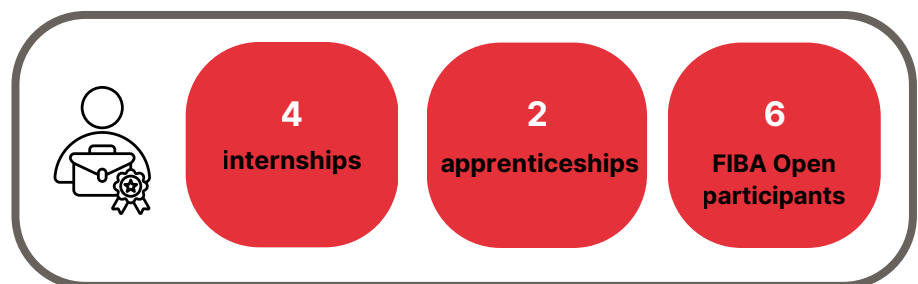
Social integration



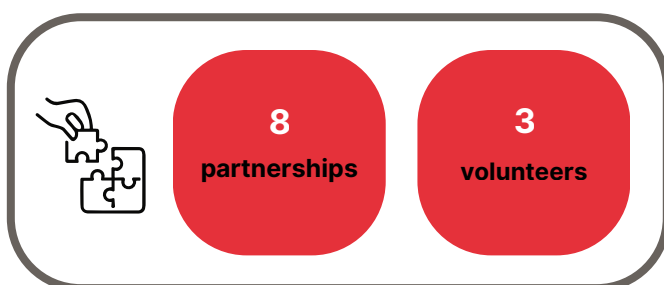
9 host families were identified in 2025, benefiting an equal number of young people. **3 social and team-building activities** were organized. **40 young people** were supported during the **relocation of their accommodation** to Versoix.



Professional integration



From a professional perspective, **4** young people secured **internships**, and **2** entered into **apprenticeships** (3-year programmes). An additional **6** young people were involved in the **organization of the FIBA Open.**



These results were made possible thanks to the commitment of **3 dedicated volunteers (one at 50% and two at 30%)**, as well as the support of our partners: the **Hospice général of Geneva, the International Basketball Federation (FIBA)**, and various local companies.

Outlook

Driving : a key asset

We also aim to develop **new actions** to support a group of URM through a decisive step: **obtaining a category B driver's license**. This license is a **major lever for professional inclusion, integration, and autonomy**, yet it often remains out of reach due to its high cost and administrative complexity. Currently, **no social or professional support structure provides this guidance**, leaving these youths without an adapted solution.

Because **mobility lies at the heart of our mission**, we will launch a **pilot phase** with a group of **10 youths** selected according to clear criteria:

- (i) at least one year of residence in Geneva,
- (ii) sufficient command of French,
- (iii) refugee status with a B permit, and
- (iv) minimum age of 17.

1

Support and follow-up throughout all administrative steps (first-aid course, theory exam, practical test, etc.)

2

Full financial coverage of the entire licensing process

3

Accompanied driving sessions, first with our volunteers, then with professional instructors for final preparation



Social impact : greater autonomy, mobility, and self-confidence for highly vulnerable youths



Economic impact : easier access to employment and increased financial independence

Your support - Our action

Supporting Van For Life means taking real action.

Van For Life was born from a citizen movement, from women and men who **refused to remain spectators in the face of humanitarian emergencies**. Since our first convoys to Ukraine, and through all our expanding operations in other countries where people are suffering, every action has been made possible thanks to this **collective commitment**.

Your support is our strength: it allows us to act quickly, to go where others do not, and to respond where needs are greatest.

Make a donation: every contribution, no matter how small, has a direct impact on those who have lost everything.

Together, we prove that another way of taking action is possible.

We do it for them.

We do it with you.



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