

Biography – Mariia Korolchuk

Mariia Korolchuk is a Ukrainian business executive, humanitarian professional, community leader, and expert in international expansion, refugee integration, logistics, and organizational resilience. A Ukrainian refugee herself and a mother of three daughters, she combines first-hand experience of displacement with extensive leadership experience across the private, humanitarian, and civil society sectors.

Today, Mariia works at the intersection of business development, international market entry, operations, and cross-border strategy. She has been directly involved in bringing Ukrainian businesses and brands into the Romanian and Bulgarian markets and supporting their expansion within the European Union.

In the private sector, Mariia has held senior commercial, operational, and business development positions in Romania. She previously served as Commercial Director at ROSHEN Retail, contributing to the development of the Ukrainian brand's presence in the Romanian market. She later joined Very Nice Retail, a retail business associated with the Ukrainian Global Spirits group, where her responsibilities have expanded across commercial management, operations, and business development. Her work covers both the Romanian and Bulgarian markets and includes retail network development, commercial strategy, new-location launches, supplier and partner negotiations, operational restructuring, product portfolio development, and market expansion.

Beyond her executive role, Mariia works on business development and market-entry projects for companies seeking to expand into Romania and other European markets. Her expertise includes adapting business models to new markets, identifying commercial opportunities and local partnerships, developing distribution and retail strategies, navigating operational and regulatory challenges, and building the structures required for sustainable international growth. Her particular strength lies in connecting Ukrainian businesses with opportunities in the European market and translating expansion ambitions into practical operational strategies.

Before the full-scale war in Ukraine, Mariia was the CEO of Tranzit Servis LLC, where she built and managed a business focused on multimodal logistics, customs clearance, international trade, and freight forwarding. The company's operations were built around a multimodal terminal in the Odesa region and covered complex import and export logistics, with a particular specialization in railway forwarding, alongside road, sea, and multimodal transportation solutions. This experience gave Mariia extensive expertise in supply chains, customs procedures, cross-border trade, crisis management, and the coordination of complex logistics projects. The business received recognition in Ukraine on several occasions in the fields of importing and freight forwarding.

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Mariia redirected a substantial part of her professional experience toward humanitarian response and the integration of displaced Ukrainians. Since 2022, she has designed, coordinated, and implemented programs aimed at empowering refugees, strengthening community resilience, and creating sustainable pathways toward social and economic integration in Romania.

Her humanitarian portfolio includes case management for vulnerable individuals, trauma-informed gender-based violence (GBV) programming, youth empowerment, vocational and language training, livelihood initiatives, community mobilization, and national and international advocacy.

Mariia served as Empowerment Coordinator & GBV Officer with HIAS Romania until March 2025 and previously worked as a Community Mobilizer with JRS Romania, Program monitor for CORE Organized Relief Effort, developing initiatives to strengthen resilience, inclusion, and economic participation among refugees from Ukraine and other displaced communities.

She also coordinated one of the early initiatives facilitating the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Romanian public healthcare system and managed women's empowerment, civic participation, and civil rights education projects in cooperation with organizations including Funky Citizens and Fundația Comunitară Prahova.

In Romania, Mariia also co-founded Association MALVA, a Ukrainian refugee women-led community-based NGO established in Bucharest in response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. As Vice President and Co-founder, she helped develop MALVA as a platform providing safe spaces, empowerment programs, integration support, educational and cultural initiatives, and community-based assistance for displaced Ukrainian women and children.

Under its leadership team, MALVA has cooperated with international and local partners including UNHCR, UNICEF, HIAS, VOICE, CORE Response, and other civil society organizations. The association has become an important platform for representing community needs and strengthening the resilience and participation of displaced Ukrainian families in Romania.

Although Mariia expanded her professional focus back into the private sector in 2025, she continues to serve as MALVA's Vice President and remains closely involved in Ukrainian community issues. Her work increasingly examines the connection between migration, economic integration, public narratives, propaganda, political change, and the future reintegration of Ukrainians returning home. She is particularly interested in how policies and narratives within host countries affect displaced Ukrainians and how experience gained abroad can contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction and future economic development.

Mariia is also an active participant in international policy and humanitarian forums. She has been invited as an expert and speaker to events including MEGAPHONE 2023 and 2024, *Unity and Resilience*, *Activism in Times of Policrisis*, the UN Women Expert Group Meeting “Integrating Human Security and Intersectional Lens into the Triple Nexus,” and the 570th Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) alongside European leaders and policymakers.

In January 2025, she represented MALVA in Kyiv during the launch of the UN Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan for 2025. She has also participated in podcasts, conferences, and panel discussions in the United Kingdom and across Europe, speaking about refugee integration, gender-based violence, women's leadership, community resilience, and the experience of Ukrainians displaced by war.

Education and capacity building are another important part of her work. Mariia co-authored one of the first A1–A2 Romanian-language learning manuals specifically designed for refugees, developed storytelling programs as tools for coping and social integration among displaced young people, and created tailored English and Business English programs for Ukrainian and African beneficiaries in Romania. She has also designed initiatives using art and culture to counter disinformation and developed livelihood and economic empowerment concepts for migrant and refugee women.

Across both the humanitarian and business sectors, Mariia's work is characterized by an ability to operate in environments of uncertainty and rapid change. From managing multimodal logistics and international trade in Ukraine to building refugee-response programs, developing retail businesses in Romania and Bulgaria, and helping companies enter European markets, her career has consistently focused on transforming complex challenges into practical, sustainable systems.

Fluent in Ukrainian, Russian, and English, conversant in French and Spanish, and actively advancing her Romanian, Mariia brings a strong cross-cultural and international perspective to her work.

Her core areas of expertise include international business development, market entry, commercial strategy, retail operations, multimodal logistics, project and crisis management, refugee integration, advocacy, community development, and cross-sector partnerships. Across these fields, her focus remains the same: creating resilient systems, connecting people and opportunities across borders, and building sustainable pathways for businesses and communities affected by profound change.