

**“If there were no barriers, if there were no such difficulties, life would be so much easier, and you wouldn’t have to put on a superhero costume every day to do simple things.” – The story of Iva and her son**

### **Introduction of Iva and her hearing disability**

Iva's world had been growing quieter since childhood. At 18, she faced the devastating news that she would eventually lose her hearing completely. In a country where disabilities were often ignored, Iva found herself alone with her fears, her dreams of becoming a singer or actress slipping away. "I feel responsible for having to struggle with this, but there is nothing I can do to get disability."

### **Immediate effect of the war in Ukraine on Iva´s life**

As the war erupted around her, Iva felt the ground beneath her shift dramatically. Living in a military dormitory, she had found a semblance of safety, but anxiety consumed her thoughts. Her son, nearly 16, lived in a fragile building nearby, and the sound of distant explosions sent waves of panic through her. She knew she had to get him to safety.

### **The story of Iva and her son fleeing Ukraine**

When the moment came to flee, Iva had only ten minutes to gather their lives into a few bags to embark on a harrowing journey with her son. At the train station, chaos reigned. Iva couldn't hear announcements or understand what was happening around her. Her son became her ears, her lifeline in the tumultuous crowd. As they approached the platform after an agonizing 24 hours of waiting, they were met with resistance; her son was initially denied entry. Iva pleaded with the conductor, desperation in her voice: "I can´t hear anything and I just can´t go without him", she cried out, and after a while, the conductor gave in. As the train began to move, a wave of relief washed over her, knowing they would escape. Their destination was Lviv, a brief respite before facing the unknown challenges of crossing borders and adapting to life in a foreign land.

### **Iva´s arrival in Germany and lifechanging developments**

Choosing Germany as her refuge, Iva faced the daunting challenge of navigating new circumstances. While unexpected kindness met her, the language barrier deepened her isolation. But she knew that without a cochlear implant, she could not reclaim her life. In Berlin, new hope was found when Iva received a cochlear implant, marking the beginning of a new chapter in a foreign land.

## Current life of Iva in Germany as a disabled person

Now, almost two years later, Iva continues to navigate life as a person with a disability, and still grapples with guilt and conflicting emotions of leaving her homeland and people who stayed behind. As a person with a hearing disability, Iva yearns for a life with fewer barriers, where even simple tasks don't become monumental challenges. Even with her cochlear implant, Iva's struggle to communicate persists, reminding us that her journey towards full integration and connection continues, requiring ongoing support and understanding. "If there were no barriers, if there were no such difficulties, life would be so much easier, and you wouldn't have to put on a superhero costume every day to do simple things."