



Protection Working Group

Meeting Details	
Date	<i>19 October 2023</i>
Time	<i>10.00 am – 12.00 am (hybrid)</i>
Chair	<i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR, Sector Coordinator</i> <i>Carolina Cazaciuc, Coordinator on Refugee Rights, Ombudsperson Office, Co-Chair</i>
Reporting	<i>Sara Sivkova, Generic Affiliate in Protection, UNHCR</i>
Email	painter@unhcr.org , carolina.cazaciuc@ombudsman.md , sager@unhcr.org , sivkovas@unhcr.org
Agenda	



Welcome & Review of Agenda

1. Introductions/Review of Agenda (10:00-10:05)
2. Situational Updates (10:05 – 10:25)
3. Updates (10:25 – 11:00)
 - a. RRP 2024 planning
 - b. RAC Consolidation
 - c. Informal RAC Assessment
4. Presentation on *Assessment on the implementation of TP* (CDA/UNDP) (11:00 – 11:25)
5. Discussion on Data Disaggregation (11:25 – 11:50)
6. AOB (11:50 – 12:00)



Participants			
<i>Andrew Painter, UNHCR</i>	<i>Martina Gastaldello, OHCHR</i>	<i>Veronica Cangea-Cibotaru, UNDP</i>	<i>Sergiu Gogu, SEBN MD</i>
<i>Sean Sager, UNHCR</i>	<i>Krassimir Yankov, OHCHR</i>	<i>Svetlana Jiora, CDA</i>	<i>Dilnoza Nicolescu, Caritas</i>
<i>Sara Sivkova, UNHCR</i>	<i>Gianna Zoukidou, OHCHR</i>	<i>Oleg Palii, CDA</i>	<i>Rebecca Oswago, Mediciens du</i>
<i>Alberto Tonon, UNHCR</i>	<i>Bianca Miccione, ACTED</i>	<i>Andrei Hincu, CARE & SERA</i>	<i>Monde</i>
<i>Dina Zamfirova, UNHCR</i>	<i>Evghenia Hiora, UN Women</i>	<i>Ana Ursachi, REACH Initiative</i>	<i>Sarah Alawemleh, HIAS</i>
<i>Carolina Cazaciuc,</i>	<i>Natalia Griu, UNFPA</i>	<i>Kunze Martin, Youth One World</i>	<i>Cassey O'Neill, CWS</i>
<i>Ombudsperson Office</i>	<i>Alina Sava, INTERSOS</i>	<i>Alma Tabakovic, DRC</i>	<i>Myriem El-Khatib, ICRC</i>
<i>Victor Morari, Ombudsperson</i>	<i>Christina Khouri,</i>	<i>Verica Recevic, DRC</i>	<i>Moldova</i>
<i>Office</i>	<i>INTERSOS</i>	<i>Ines Arnautovi, DRC</i>	<i>Daniele Pedretti, HelpAge</i>
<i>Apreda Ersilia, IOM</i>	<i>Teodora Zafiu, UNDP</i>	<i>Scarlett Hawkins, NRC</i>	
<i>Sergiu Zubco, IOM</i>			



Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
<p>Agenda Point 1</p> <p>Welcome & Review of Agenda</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>The PWG co-chair welcomed participants, thanked them for their presence, and encouraged them to attend in person for future meetings, in order to have more engaging discussions. He presented the agenda, and no objections were raised.</p> <p>If any modifications are necessary to minutes of the PWG, please contact: sivkovas@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Agenda presented and agreed</p>



<p>Agenda Point 2 Situational Updates (CDA & INTERSOS)</p> <p><i>Svetlana Jiora, CDA/LCA</i> svetlana.jioara@cda.md</p> <p><i>Alina Sava, Protection Officer, INTERSOS</i> fieldoff.chisinau.moldova@intersos.org</p>	<p>CDA</p> <p>During the reporting period at Palanca BCP, there were 65 asylum seekers (AS), of which 30 crossed the green border illegally. Those crossing illegally were brought to Palanca BCP and claimed asylum. The flow of cars and pedestrians was medium to intense in both directions. Regular buses continued to run without interruption, seven (7) humanitarian buses were organized by NGO Gloria with 103 refugees, and they continued to Romania (Bucharest, Constanta).</p> <p>Ukrainian Intelligence Service (SBU) was present at the BCP and there were cases of Ukrainian border guards forcibly transporting male refugees to the Maiaki checkpoint in their service vehicles.</p> <p>There were 14 cases of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), all of which were referred to the Guardianship Authorities (GA).</p> <p>Most of the Ukrainians coming to Moldova came from Odesa, Odesa region, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kherson. Many individuals cited the recent bombing in Odesa as the main reason for their departure. Some individuals entered Moldova for the first time since the start of the war and intend to register for Temporary Protection (TP).</p> <p>Ukrainians returning to Ukraine are mostly from Odesa, Odesa region, and Kyiv coming back from different European countries where they benefit from TP, coming to Ukraine to check on their belonging.</p>	
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Third-country nationals (TCNs) underwent rigorous checks, and those unable to prove the purpose of their travel to Moldova were not allowed to proceed on their journey.

New trends were observed in an increased number of asylum claims from Ukrainians who exceeded their legal stay in Moldova when from visiting Ukraine and an increasing number of Ukrainians subjected to paying fines of 600 lei for exceeding their legal stay in Moldova.

At Otaci BCP, only one (1) asylum claim was reported and an increased number of persons crossed the green border illegally. Those crossing illegally came voluntarily to border police to be documented and were permitted to continue their journey. Most of these individuals noted to continue to EU countries, and some intended to fly to Canada or the US.

Throughout the reporting period, only two (2) UASCs were identified at BCP, in both instances the legal guardian was contacted and came to receive them. TCNs underwent rigorous checks, and those unable to prove the purpose of their travel to Moldova were denied entry. Arrivals to Moldova primarily originated from Vinnitsa, Vinnitsa region, Zhytomyr, and Kyiv, mostly leaving to the EU countries (Romania, Germany). Pendular movement of pedestrians was observed in the direction of Mogilev-Podolsk.

INTERSOS provided additional updates on the situation at the **Palanca Bus Hub**. During the reporting period, no significant number of arrivals was reported and in 9 days without no arrivals were recorded. Most of the arrivals were Ukrainians coming from the neighboring regions of Odesa and Mykolaiv, and fewer came from Kherson, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Dnipro, Kyiv, and Zhytomyr. Most of them chose to continue to Romania (Constanta and



Bucharest) and some decided to stay in Moldova (Chisinau, Congaz, Popeasca, Carpini, and Balteca). A smaller number of refugees continued to EU countries Germany, Austria, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Vulnerable cases included women travelling alone with numerous children, people with physical disabilities and serious medical conditions. Refugees from the Roma community were arriving in larger groups. A handful of men crossing the border irregularly was observed, staying for one day at the tent area near Bus Hub before being allowed to continue on their journey.

INTERSOS reported on the situation of arrivals from various cities in Ukraine:

Arrivals from **Odesa** noted to have left the area due to the intensification of the bombing. The shops and state institutions remained operational. Several refugees warned that empty houses in Odesa were being looted.

Arrivals from **Mykolaiv** remarked limited access to drinking water and that residents need to go to special checkpoints to receive water. Schools and kindergartens remain open however, education is often disrupted due to sirens and alarms when students need to evacuate to shelters.

Arrivals from **Kherson** noted that only a small number of residents remained in the region. They informed about rumors that encouraged them to leave the country until 28th October due to expected attacks on the area and that humanitarian buses would no longer be available.

The general trend was reported that in several regions of Ukraine, power shortages, and cuts to water and heating systems were observed. This trend alongside the upcoming winter weather raises the concerns of arriving



refugees, who noted that more refugees may come during the winter season due to high expenses and unstable heating systems. Some rumors were circulated about Russian hackers attacking the power facilities.

Comments & Discussions:

UNHCR reassured that people coming to register for TP at IGM offices would not be fined for lacking legal status. UNHCR confirmed that some individuals who exceeded the legal stay were fined 600 lei during re-entering the territory of Moldova. UNHCR is advocating to obtain the statistics on a number of denials for entering Moldova from the Border Police. CDA continues to monitor the situation at the border crossing points and provides legal support and counselling.

UNHCR inquired about persons who pre-enroll for TP while in Ukraine to avoid being fined or restricted by the Border police when returning to Moldova. CDA currently have no information about such individuals however, CDA confirmed that there were instances of persons being denied entering the territory of Moldova. Those individuals either decided to remain in Ukraine or decided to claim asylum to be allowed to enter.

UNHCR asked about Ukrainian men at the Palanca Bus Hub temporarily accommodated at the tent camp before being allowed to continue. INTERSOS convened that those individuals stay in the tent camp only for a few days to obtain their documentation back after being checked.

UNHCR inquired about persons registering for asylum to be allowed to enter and exit Moldova. CDA explained that these individuals are documented at Palanca BCP and then in most cases leave for EU countries, lesser occurrence was registered at North in Otaci BCP.



	<p>UNHCR informed that there was an increase in interviewing the persons crossing illegally to Moldova who were being questioned about their point of entry. Those individuals who were not documented when entering on the green border illegally were in most cases intercepted when leaving the country at the border with Romania.</p>	
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<p>Agenda Point 3</p> <p>Updates</p> <p><i>RRP 2024</i></p> <p><i>RAC Consolidation</i></p> <p><i>Informal RAC Assessment</i></p> <p><i>Sean Sager, Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>sager@unhcr.org</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the RRP 2024</p> <p>On the 4th of October, the Protection Sector held the 2024 Refugee Response Plan (RRP) Consultation with the Protection Sector partners, including the UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs and government counterparts (72 in-person and 32 online participants). The RRP is an inter-agency planning, coordination, and fundraising tool for the refugee response in Moldova. The workshop aimed to validate the objectives, activities and indicators for the 2024 RRP.</p> <p><u>The 2024 Protection Sector Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure effective access to the territory and to international protection (including temporary protection) and associated rights, on a non-discriminatory basis.2. Reinforce social cohesion among refugee and host communities through targeted interventions.3. Ensure that refugees with specific needs, including those who are particularly vulnerable and from marginalized groups, benefit from targeted support and promote their inclusion in relevant government services <p><u>The 2024 Sectors Activities:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Protection Assistance and Case Management2. Training and Capacity Building3. Assessment (including Protection and Border Monitoring)	<p>UNHCR will share the presentation with the PWG members on Shared drive.</p>
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4. Awareness Raising
5. MHPSS
6. Social Cohesion and Community Support

The activities for 2024 puts more emphasis on the social inclusion and integration topic.

In November, the process of detailed planning will commence when the deduplication and gaps identification of activities will take place among Sectors and RRP Partners. On 30 November, the draft RRP 2024 will be initiated, and its final version should be released by January 2024.

UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the Consolidation of RACs

The RAC Consolidation process was launched by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), that intends to close around 20 Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) by the end of 2023. The RACs are being closed based on the groups they were assigned to – groups A, B, C, D and E. Each group has around two-month to relocate the residents to another location before the RAC is officially closed.

In October, the RACs from Group A, B and C were in the process of closure. 7 RACs have already closed, with another 4 RACs being in the process of closing (Hotel Zarea, Dumbrava Alba, Anenii Noi, Nisporeni), and one remains open in Copceac.

Around 34 households / 67 individuals, residents of RACs to be consolidated, applied for the rental assistance program provided by CCR, IOM or ACTED. 16 households / 28 individuals were relocated to another RACs. 4 households /14 individuals departed from Moldova (to Norway or returned to Ukraine).



The Relocation Case Managers who have been facilitating this process were compiling the intention survey of the RAC residents. This surveying took place at 6 RACs with the participation of around 64 households / 194 individuals. Most individuals have stated to prefer to be relocated to another RAC other than enter the rental assistance program due to concerns about the sustainability criteria or being accustomed to the RAC and the community. The profile and intentions survey focused on the impact of the relocation on the enrolment of children in schools and employment.

The next steps in the RAC Consolidation process:

- The visits to RACs in Group D and E are currently on hold until further notice.
- The Relocation Technical Group will keep on holding regular meetings.
- Information campaign in coordination with AAP Task Force (leaflets for persons in relocation, providing information about possible services, legal support and assistance).
- Monitoring exercises will be in place from next week (inquiring about the relocation process experience).

The monitoring exercise is facilitated by NCUM to ensure that the SOPs are being followed and what is the feedback for the next visits.

UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the Informal RAC Assessment

PWG in cooperation with the Basic Needs Working Group are conducting the Mapping of informal RACs. This exercise aimed to ensure that RCF partners have a clear understanding of where Ukrainian refugees and other displaced persons from Ukraine are residing and what services are available for them.

Around 15 informal RACs were identified on the territory of Moldova. The assessment of informal RAC was initiated in cooperation with partners from



the Protection, Shelter and Basic Needs groups. 10 informal RACs were visited. Around 166 individuals, 68 females, and 20 males, out of them 1 person with disabilities and 33 children were reached during these visits.

The intention was to use the TP sessions for the residents of the informal RACs as an opening to enter and assess the Protection and Shelter aspect of the informal RACs. No major protection concerns were identified, the only protection cases encompassed children not being enrolled at school or lack of child-friendly spaces. Some residents showed interest in gaining employment. No major concerns regarding the infrastructure were identified.

The next steps will be to start protection monitoring visits in informal RACs to be conducted by UNHCR implementing partners using the Kobo form tool. The protection monitoring should start in the next few weeks.

Gender-based Violence Sub-Working Group expressed interest in starting additional assessments in informal RACs.

Comments & Discussions

OHCHR stressed to have come across some concerns regarding the cash for rent, especially in the North of the country where many cases of vulnerability were identified during protection monitoring. The main concern remains the employment and social protection for vulnerable groups. NRC supported the notion with findings from their monitoring. Many beneficiaries are reluctant to apply for rental assistance programs stating difficulties with finding appropriate housing or financial sustainability.

UNHCR emphasized that many beneficiaries of TP are not included in most of the social assistance benefits. UNHCR representative encouraged PWG members to attend the information session from UNICEF on Social Protection for recipients of TP to be held on 20 October.



	<p>Youth One World inquired about the increased need for shelter during winter. UNHCR informed about existing Contingency RACs (up to 60 additional buildings) that could be mobilized to accommodate refugees in case of unprecedented influx. Simultaneously, IOM, WFP and UNHCR have programs to support vulnerable refugees and host communities during winter.</p> <p>IOM asked about observations of persons with specific needs during the RAC Consolidation process. UNHCR explained that the Relocation Case Managers submit each week a case tracking sheet of households they assist during the relocation process. When a specific vulnerability is identified, the MLSP is informed to find an appropriate accommodation for such individuals. So far only one family was identified as highly vulnerable during the RAC Consolidation process.</p> <p>UNHCR informed about the ongoing discussion with the rental assistance partners about the possibility of multiple families from the Roma population renting housing together.</p>	
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<p>Agenda Point 4</p> <p>Presentation on Assessment on the implementation of TP</p> <p><i>Oleg Palii CDA</i> oleg.palii@cda.md</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i> painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Presentation on Assessment on the implementation of TP</p> <p>CDA in collaboration with UNDP and Germany produced a study on Assessment on the implementation of TP during its first six months.</p> <p>The study encompasses the information on categories of recipients of TP; the pre-registration process; access to justice for TP recipients (specifically the right to free movement, education, labour, social protection and assistance, healthcare and accommodation) and the situation of people with special needs.</p> <p>The methodology was based on collecting data from interviews conducted with 1139 individuals displaced person from Ukraine during 15 FGDs, in discussion with 8 local CDA counsellors.</p> <p>More about the findings and recommendations can be seen in the presentation by CDA.</p> <p>Comments & Discussions</p> <p>UNHCR informed that almost 20 000 persons were registered for TP. The findings and recommendations from the Assessment will contribute to the advocacy during the renewal of TP in March 2024. Significant improvement was made in the TP registration process, especially in access to education, healthcare and self-declaration of proof of residence.</p> <p>OHCHR reacted regarding the gap in data on people with specific needs and encouraged participants to collect more data. OHCHR collects data on a wide range of vulnerable groups during its monthly monitoring. OHCHR supported CDA recommendation to improve access to healthcare for the persons returning to Ukraine for medication and to access healthcare.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the link for assessment and the presentation with PWG members.</p>
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	<p>OHCHR informed to monitor cases of UA refugees with dual nationality in Moldova. OHCHR came across situations when persons were reluctant to disclose their status due to fear of being excluded from receiving humanitarian aid. CDA informed that the nationals of the Republic of Moldova are not eligible for TP even if they are holders of second UA citizenship. The status of those refugees is then checked at the IGM office when their dual citizenship can be detected. IOM informed that in Ukraine it is prohibited to have dual citizenship which may be one of the reasons why a person does not wish to disclose it.</p> <p>UNHCR inquired about the persons who overstay 45-days legal limit for staying outside Moldova. CDA informed that for now there was no case of persons being denied to re-apply for TP due to overstaying the 45-day limit. The Border Police should be informed by an official letter to allow such individuals to re-enter Moldova without obstructions.</p>	
<p>Agenda Point 5 Discussion on Data Disaggregation</p> <p><i>Martina Gastaldello, OHCHR</i></p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Due to time restraints, a separate discussion will be held on 31 October 2023 dedicated to the topic of Data Disaggregation and the introduction of the draft PWG factsheet '<i>Data disaggregation for an evidence-based humanitarian action</i>'.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the invitation for the upcoming Data Disaggregation Discussion and the recording from this session.</p>



<p>Agenda Point 6 <i>AoB</i></p>	<p>The PWG members were informed about the upcoming PWG information sessions on 20th October on the topic of Social Protection for recipients of Temporary Protection facilitated by UNICEF, and another two capacity building sessions in November.</p> <p>The first session on 2nd November on the Trafficking in Human Being (2nd November) and the second on the Children’s Ombudsman mandate to be held on 10th November.</p>	<p>UNHCR to share invitations for the upcoming PWG Capacity Building sessions.</p>
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Information collection and relevant links

Moldova operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe: The Implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive - Six Months On (October 2022)

<https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/unhcr-regional-bureau-europe-implementation-temporary-protection-directive-six-months-october-2022>

If necessary, feel free to add extra rows in the matrix above.