



Protection Working Group

Meeting Details	
Date	<i>21 November 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, Senior Protection Assistant, UNHCR</i>
Email	painter@unhcr.org , carolina.cazaciuc@ombudsman.md , sager@unhcr.org , sivkovas@unhcr.org
Agenda	



Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Welcome & Review of Agenda

1. Introductions/Review of Agenda
2. Situational Updates
3. Updates
 - a. Protection Advisory Group (PAG)
 - b. RRP 2024
 - c. RAC Consolidation
 - d. 2024 Capacity Building Survey
4. Overview of revised Temporary Protection (TP) Monitoring Tool
5. REACH Presentation TP Assessment
6. AoB



Participants			
<i>Andrew Painter, UNHCR</i>	<i>Daniele Pedretti, HelpAge</i>	<i>Kunze Martin, Youth One World</i>	<i>Bianca Miccione, ACTED</i>
<i>Alberto Tonon, UNHCR</i>	<i>Ines Arnautovic, DRC</i>	<i>Jude Halaseh, NRC</i>	<i>Christina Khouri, INTERSOS</i>
<i>Carolina Cazaciuc, Ombudsperson Office</i>	<i>Scarlett Hawkins, NRC</i>	<i>Peter Fenoy, HEKS/ EPER</i>	<i>Fede Bagolin, WeWorld</i>
<i>Aprada Ersilia, IOM</i>	<i>Diana Alexei, Primaria</i>	<i>Joanna Jaworska, Reach Initiative</i>	
<i>Evghenia Hiora, UN Women</i>	<i>Myriem El Khatib, ICRC</i>		
<i>Maryna Bozkurt, OHCHR</i>			
<i>Svetlana Jioara, CDA</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 & INTEROS)</p> <p><i>Svetlana Jiora, CDA/LCA</i> svetlana.jioara@cda.md</p> <p>Christina Khouri, <i>INTEROS</i> fieldoff.chisinau.moldova@intersos.org</p>	<p>CDA</p> <p>At Palanca BCP during the reporting period, there were 33 asylum seekers (AS), with 19 crossing the border illegally. Among them, eight were Ukrainian citizens overstaying their allowed period, necessitating asylum claims to re-enter Moldova. The traffic flow was moderate for cars, with an average number of pedestrians moving in both directions. Regular uninterrupted bus services included eight organized by NGO Gloria, transporting 119 refugees, most bound for Romania or Germany.</p> <p>Third-country nationals (TCNs) underwent strict scrutiny; those failing to justify their Moldova travel purpose were denied passage. Some were from Russia, Armenia, and Turkmenistan. A single Chinese citizen, unable to enter Moldova, was handed over to the IGM. No TCNs sought asylum.</p> <p>A few individuals were fined 600 lei for exceeding the permitted 90-day stay in Moldova.</p> <p>Nine (9) Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) cases were reported and referred to the Guardianship Authorities (GA). One case from Tudora BCP was transferred for assessment at Palanca BCP.</p> <p>Most Ukrainians arrived from Odesa, Odesa region, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kherson. Some, returning since the war's start, aim to register for Temporary Protection (TP).</p> <p>IGM issued a letter to the Border Police, specifying that TP holders exceeding 45 days abroad won't lose their status.</p> <p>Returning Ukrainians from Europe mainly hail from Odesa, Odesa region, and Kyiv, visiting Ukraine to check belongings or obtain documentation.</p>	
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At **Otaci BCP**, no asylum claims were filed. Some individuals crossed the green border illegally, documented, and allowed to continue, many heading to Romania or other EU countries.

Throughout the period, only one UASC was identified at the BCP; the guardianship authority intervened. TCNs underwent strict checks, denying entry to those failing to justify their Moldova travel. Some Ukrainians were fined for overdue vignettes. Arrivals, mainly from Vinnitsa, Vinnitsa region, Zhytomyr, and Kyiv, were primarily departing to the EU (Romania, Germany). Pedestrian movement was observed toward Mogilev-Podolsk.

INTERSOS

INTERSOS reported on Palanca Bus Hub, noting no significant arrivals during the period, with six days registering no arrivals. Most were Ukrainians from neighboring regions like Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kirovograd, Sumy, and Kharkiv. Many opted for Romania (Constanta, Bucharest), while some stayed in Moldova. Fewer went to Germany, France, Nepal, or Canada.

Vulnerable cases included lone women with multiple children, elderly with severe medical conditions. Fewer Roma community members arrived. A few men crossed irregularly, fearing registration due to possible return to UA.

Refugees expressed declining morale, citing war impacts, supply concerns, and winter-related worries. Reports highlighted economic struggles in UA.

Arrivals from **Odesa** noted to hear sirens and explosions on a daily basis. The bombings had intensified, and residential areas were hit. Those leaving Odesa expressed concerns with winter conditions, power cuts and concerns about the Russian army attacking from the seaside. It was reported that people with disabilities and serious medical conditions are recruited by force into the army.



Arrivals from **Mykolaiv** remarked hearing sirens and explosions daily and reported limited access to drinking water. Only schools with bomb shelters remain open and the rest of the children are taught online. Food prices are high and there are a lack of job opportunities.

Arrivals from **Kherson** noted that there were many casualties due to mines and bombing. Missiles have hit schools and hospitals. It was reported that phosphorus missiles were used, increasing the radiation levels and often causing disconnection from electricity and water.

Arrivals from **Zaporizhzhia** stressed a lack of jobs and low salaries, disconnection from electricity and lack of drinking water.

Arrivals from **Dnipropetrovsk** warned that the fighting near the nuclear plant has intensified and that there has been radiation contamination of plants and livestock. As a result, some people left for treatment in EU countries. Men avoid going to the streets to steer clear of conscription. A shortage of organizations is providing hygiene packages and food.

Arrivals from **Kirovograd** also reported a lack of humanitarian support and that many persons were leaving for Romania in hopes of finding jobs and obtain government support.

Arrivals from **Sumy** noted that, despite the liberation, there were Russian soldiers coming to the village shooting at the UA troops in the area as well as power and water shortages.

Arrivals from **Kharkiv** stressed intensified bombing in the area.



<p>Agenda Point 3</p> <p>Updates</p> <p>PAG</p> <p>RRP 2024</p> <p>RAC Consolidation</p> <p>2024 Capacity Building Survey</p> <p>Sean Sager, Protection Officer, UNHCR</p> <p>sager@unhcr.org</p> <p>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>UNHCR provided information on the Protection Advocacy Group (PAG) renewal.</p> <p>Last week, the co-chair issued a notification about the 2024 PAG membership application, along with the PAG Terms of Reference (TOR). The PAG serves as a smaller group within selected PWG partners, focusing on strategies, advocacy, document reviews, and work plans. Presently, it comprises 8 members (CDA, DRC, NRC, HelpAge, UNICEF, OHCHR) and 2 co-chairs (UNHCR, Ombudsman Office). Typically, PAG meetings precede PWG meetings by a week.</p> <p>The application involves two questions, each with a 150-word limit, addressing the organization’s ongoing activities and proposed PWG priorities for 2024. Current PAG members can reapply, and national partners are strongly encouraged to participate. The submission deadline is November 30th, with a dedicated meeting for national NGOs on December 7th to clarify membership details.</p> <p>A separate call will be made for PWG members to join the selection panel for reviewing PAG membership applications. Applicants for PAG membership cannot apply for the selection panel.</p> <p>UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the RRP 2024</p> <p>The RRP is an inter-agency planning, coordination, and fundraising tool for the refugee response in Moldova.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the application to PAG, an invitation for local NGOs for the PAG overview session and the call for selection committee membership.</p>
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During October and November, UNHCR went through the RRP planning submissions of the partners for 2024. The partners were required to submit their activities overview, target population, indicators, and budgeting. The protection unit filtered the submissions and handed them over for further validation to the inter-agency team. The inter-agency team will be reaching out to partners if further clarification was necessary. The narrative was shared with the government, which will share their feedback. It is expected that the final version will be released in January 2024.

UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the Consolidation of RACs

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) initiated the RAC Consolidation process, aiming to close nearly 20 Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) by the end of 2023. These closures are organized based on assigned groups A, B, C, D, and E.

As of November, RACs from Groups A, B, and C were in the closure process. The decision was made to keep the Copceac RAC open. Currently, 8 RACs have been closed, with 2 more (Anenii Noi, Nisporeni) in the closing process. Specific closure dates for the remaining two RACs are pending. UNHCR and rental assistance partners are actively monitoring and providing alternatives for residents.

At RAC Hotel Zarea, some residents opted to stay without formal arrangements with the hotel. The ministry advised that if residents choose to stay, they must sign a declaration acknowledging their residence in unaccredited accommodation. UNHCR continues to monitor this situation closely.

The RAC Consolidation process is temporarily paused while ongoing consolidation in previous groups continues. Discussions with MLSP are ongoing



to delay closure for certain RACs (Congaz and Ungheni) in Groups D and E due to a high number of remaining residents. The Ministry plans to update the list of RACs for consolidation, keeping some centers open. Upon the issuance of the official list, UNHCR will coordinate the next phase of consolidation with partners.

Lessons learned and upcoming steps:

UNHCR will advocate for MLSP to provide an official closure letter during initial visits. RAC managers should be better informed for future visits, ensuring clarity on the consolidation process and resident relocation alternatives.

New information materials developed by AAP will be distributed during visits to inform residents about RAC consolidation.

HelpAge updated on the monitoring tool for evaluating the RAC Consolidation, currently involving 25 participants, mainly from Hotel Zarea and Dumbrava Alba. More respondents are waited for final conclusions. Preliminary results show residents were informed about the process but dissatisfied with post-assistance.

Comments & Discussions:

NRC suggested for the information campaign to clarify that TP holders are not entitled to stay in the RAC to be closed as they come across rumours that claim the opposite. UNHCR dispelled this notion by explaining that the presence or absence of TP card with the residents does not make any difference in the relocation of in the RACs to be closed.



	<p>UNHCR provided updates for the PWG on the 2024 Capacity Building Survey</p> <p>Last year 2022 December a survey was sent to PWG members to inquire on the interest of PWG members about specific topics connected to the protection of refugees in the Republic of Moldova. Based on the result of this survey a series of capacity building sessions and presentations was facilitated.</p> <p>In 2023, a total of 10 PWG Capacity Building sessions were delivered to more than 580 participants. Most of the sessions were held online with a few trainings in a hybrid format. UNHCR will distribute a new survey at the end of 2023 to ask the PWG members about their interest and feedback for the previous capacity building sessions as well as their capability to facilitate training for PWG.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share new the Capacity Building Survey for 2024.</p>
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<p>Agenda Point 4</p> <p>Overview of revised Temporary Protection (TP) Monitoring Tool</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Presentation on the revised Temporary Protection (TP) Monitoring Tool</p> <p>At the end of March 2023, UNHCR in collaboration with partners launched the Survey on Temporary Protection: Intentions and Experiences. This survey followed the experiences of the refugees in Moldova applying for TP, including those who did not apply for TP and their reasoning for it. This interactive tool was used for advocacy purposes with the government in connection to emphasizing the difficulties for vulnerable groups and the proof of residence. The survey was closed on August 30, 2023, and the findings were shared with the PWG members.</p> <p>UNHCR updated the Kobo forms for the next phase of surveying. The edited versions include new questions for access to rights and services (education, healthcare, employment, social assistance) for persons with TP. The edited version also serves to inform the respondents without TP with questions such as “Are you aware that...”, explaining to them the possibility of self-declaration for the proof of residence or explaining that the refugees without legal status will be fined or face difficulties when re-entering Moldova due to overstaying without legal status.</p> <p>The survey will be circulated with PWG to evaluate the questions before being launched. UNHCR encouraged PWG members who wish to be part of the surveying process to indicate their interest in conducting the surveys and to designate a focal point for this activity.</p> <p>Comments & Discussions:</p> <p>UN Women inquired about the possibility of adding more demographic information about the persons in the household to monitor vulnerable groups</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the TP Monitoring Survey with the PWG for comments.</p>
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	<p>like children and persons with disabilities. UNHCR agreed to add questions on the number of persons in the household.</p> <p>NRC suggested adding extra options for barriers to employment - the caregiver duty for either children or the elderly.</p> <p>The Ombudsman Office inquired about how long will be the next survey deployed. UNHCR explained that like the first survey, it may be launched for a few months.</p>	
<p>Agenda Point 5</p> <p>REACH presentation of TP Assessment</p> <p><i>Joanna Jaworska, Impact Initiatives</i></p>	<p>REACH representative provided presentation on the Temporary Protection Assessment Preliminary findings: Qualitative data</p> <p>This assessment aims to understand the impact of Temporary Protection on refugees' living conditions and access to services, in particular healthcare and education as well as employment.</p> <p>Findings from this assessment are intended to support the government and humanitarian efforts and to inform their programming regarding the implementation of the temporary protection measure in Moldova.</p> <p><u>The research questions were:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How, if at all, has refugees' access to basic needs services changed since the provision of TP, including access to education and healthcare?2. How, if at all, has refugees' access to employment changed since benefitting from TP?3. How has the refugee response evolved since the enforcement of TP, if at all?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What challenges are faced by assistance and service providers, if any?4. What is the refugees' level of access to information and awareness about their rights and obligation pertaining to Temporary Protection?	<p>UNHCR to share the presentation with PWG.</p>



	<p>The research methodology encompasses interviews with the population of interest, including the collection of qualitative data on geographical coverage (4 districts - Cahul, Chisinau, Balti, UTA Gagauzia), information about public facilities (providing healthcare and education), public authorities and about NGOs.</p> <p>See more information in the presentation provided by REACH.</p> <p>Comments & Discussions:</p> <p>IOM inquired about how was the assessment coordinated with another ongoing assessments, to avoid assessment fatigue. REACH representative explained that the assessment was coordinated with the Education Working Group and the Health Working Group.</p>	
<p>Agenda Point 6 <i>AoB</i></p>	<p>UNHCR informed about the upcoming Protection Planning Retreat 2024</p> <p>The Protection Planning retreat should take place on January 25, 2024. This meeting will serve for validation of the previous plans and to discuss the implementation of the next year's plan. UNHCR will send the save-the-date invitation.</p> <p>The Age and Disability Task Force is planning training on data disaggregation. The training will focus on explaining why it is important to disaggregate data; how to collect data on disability, age and gender and how to analyze them and reflect them in the implementation of the projects. The training will be held on 6th December. The Age and Disability Task Force will send the application form and invitation.</p> <p>The Ukrainian authorities along with the Inspectorate General for Migration (IGM) facilitated an evacuation flight of Ukrainians and Moldovans from Gaza via Egypt on the 11th of November. IOM and UNHCR were asked to provide</p>	



	<p>assistance to the arrivals. The evacuation was provided for around 160 individuals. Around 80 individuals continued to Ukraine (Odesa, Vinnitsa), around 50 went to RAC Carpineri (now only 15 reside there). The vast majority of the Ukrainians who did not move to Ukraine had the intention to move to EU countries. There is no information about the next evacuation flight at the moment. HelpAge informed that that those UA currently residing in the Carpineri RAC are now looking for employment.</p> <p>IOM announced to be planning an assessment on anti-trafficking.</p> <p>The PWG meeting will not be held in December, the meetings will resume in January.</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.