

## Bulgaria Inter-Agency Meeting Minutes – Sectoral discussion on Education

<b>Date</b>	28 February 2023	<b>Location</b>	Hybrid – in person at UNHCR premises and online on Teams
<b>Chair &amp; Co chair</b>	UNHCR	<b>Note taking / minutes</b>	Aleksandra Vicheva-UNHCR
<b>Participating organizations and members</b>	<b>UNHCR</b> (Hayoung Kim, Petya Karayaneva, Radoslava Mechkyurova); <b>UNICEF</b> (Carole Vignaud, Maria Yankova; Lyuba Batenbergska, Nina Sorokopud); <b>BRC</b> (Dr. Sofia Stoimenova); <b>FAR</b> (Nadia Denkova); <b>WHO</b> (Michail Okoliyski, Andrea Paiato); <b>USRF</b> (Natalia Ellis); <b>Energy</b> (Ruzha Doncheva, Galya Georgieva); <b>Reachout Foundation</b> (Kristina Gologanova); <b>Aid for Ukraine</b> (Yulianna Kulyukina); <b>CRW</b> (Nina Charles); <b>Situation Centre Open Doors</b> (Ioana Bestuic, Radina Dimitrova); <b>BCRM</b> (Vladimir Milev); <b>EducAart</b> (Vyara Mihailova); <b>Junior Achievement</b> (Irina Ilieva); <b>Ministry of Education and Science</b> (Aneliya Yotova) and other <b>participants from Education Working Group</b> ;		
<b>Agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSNA Education key findings and recommendations</li> <li>• Presentation by Ministry of Education and Sciences: 2023 priorities</li> <li>• UNHCR presentation on response in education</li> <li>• UNICEF presentation on response in education</li> <li>• Education WG priorities</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>		
<b>Agenda Point</b>	<b>Description of Activities/Challenge</b>	<b>Agreed Decisions / Follow-Up Actions</b>	
<b>MSNA Education key findings and recommendations</b>	<p>Presentation was delivered by UNHCR Inter-Agency Coordination Officer, summarizing the key preliminary findings of the MSNA on education. Re the question on reasons of non-enrolment of children in schools, this question was posed to all respondents who reported that not every child in their household was enrolled in formal education in Bulgaria. Out of the sub-sample of those with children going to Bulgarian school, the question was only asked to those who reported that not every child in their household was enrolled in formal Bulgarian education. Presentation is attached to the email.</p>		
<b>Presentation by Ministry of Education and Sciences: 2023 priorities</b>	<p>Ms. Yotova pointed out that the Bulgarian education system has been very much transparent in terms of the integration of Ukrainian children, on the web sites of the Ministry and regional education directorates all the names of the relevant experts, procedures and information are available since the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022. A year ago, the enrolment of UKR children went through the regional directorates, as the refugees did not have specific documents; all the information on the processes has been available on the info portals, NGOs were also informed so that they could assist UKR families. All the applications were submitted through a special system, where all phases of the application process could be tracked. The respective Ukrainian laws on education have been translated and distributed to the education specialists for better understanding on the education levels of the</p>		

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	<p>Ukrainian children. In April 2022 a seminar was conducted for education experts in order to clarify the issues on the enrolment of UKR children in schools and to train the teachers at schools. 84 children have been enrolled in the kindergartens and pre-schools as well as 439 children in schools. Bulgarian language classes were provided for all of them. During the previous school year, second term, 296 students received Bulgarian language classes. Since September (beginning of 2022-2023 school year) admission of children has been made possible based on documents from Ukraine. The numbers increased - 512 children were enrolled in kindergartens and pre-school and 1,739 in schools.</p> <p>In 2023, the Ministry is focused on providing additional qualification services for pedagogy specialists, also on providing another textbook on Bulgarian as a foreign language, aimed for students from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The Ministry is also discussing implementing EU funded programs, in order to provide for additional BG language classes for support to refugee children. The Ministry will work on enrolling children in schools nearby their places of living. Only in few cases children were enrolled in a lower grade, with the consent of their parents. The enrolment of every Ukrainian child is a result of joint efforts of the work of the Ministry, schools, and NGOs. Ministry encourages the NGOs to first contact them for any issue that arises, to look for solutions together.</p>	
<p><b>UNHCR presentation on response in education</b></p>	<p>Priority areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee inclusion in and access to education (e.g. including information campaign jointly with UNICEF on school enrolment, vaccinations)</li> <li>• Support to teachers: capacity building on teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language to refugee students, provision of technical guidance at the Academy for Teachers, implemented through EducArt</li> <li>• Provision of language classes for refugee children</li> </ul>	
<p><b>UNICEF presentation on response in education</b></p>	<p>Presentation was delivered by Maria Yankova and Lyuba Batenbergska, outlining the main points on UNICEF response on Education.</p> <p><i>Presentation is attached to the email</i></p>	
<p><b>Education WG priorities</b></p>	<p>The Education Working Group meets monthly with thematic discussions on specific education issues, with participation of the Ministry of Education’s inclusive education directorate. UNICEF/Maria commented that sometimes the Education Working Group discusses bottlenecks that are beyond education, eg. accommodation issue, that makes it hard for the group to plan ahead their interventions. At the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis there was a clear mechanism, the thematic groups were interlinked, and different issues were discussed at the same time in the existing groups. The approach of the Government has changed and now it is not easy to link the education related issues with other subjects for discussion and groups that the Government is leading. Inter-Agency Coordination officer</p>	

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	<p>pointed that these issues can be discussed in the larger I-A refugee coordination forum where the Government will be engaged. Going forward, the key interlinking issues from each of the technical working groups (Protection, MHPSS, Cash, PSEA) can be discussed and addressed in the broader Inter-Agency forum.</p>	
<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the question of USRF/Natalia Ellis whether the <b>teachers have received additional payments for the Bulgarian classes</b>, Ms. Yotova informed that the schools should remunerate the teachers and afterwards the Ministry should transfer the respective amounts to the schools.</li> <li>• On the question of Aid for Ukraine/Youlianna (confirmed by Situation Center Open Doors/Ioana) on where complaints re instances of <b>bullying towards Ukrainian kids</b>, from Bulgarian teachers should be addressed, Ms. Yotova replied that 3 institutions exist – the School Principal, regional directorate, and MoES. Ms Yotova is a contact point and is actively involved. She mentioned that there were not many cases referred to her. <i>USRF/Nata Ellis suggested anonymous online survey for parents regarding bullying and abuse.</i></li> <li>• On the question asked by Energy/Ruzha asked whether at <b>4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Ukrainian children will be having same end-year assessments as Bulgarian children</b>, Ms. Yotova responded that the assessment of all children will be the same, including children with Temporary Protection. Energy/Ruzha commented that UKR children will be discriminated in this way as their level of Bulgarian language is not the same as of the Bulgarian children. Ms. Yotova responded that the assessment should be the same and the assistance to UKR children could be provided before the exams, depending on the specifics of the case. Situation Centre Open Doors/Ioana raised concerns that this could create a challenge for children’s access to education, particularly those in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.</li> <li>• Reachout foundation /Kristina informed about their <b>plan to develop another edition of the Bulgarian language textbook and the textbook</b> will be uploaded on their website soon. It is still available in the office of Reachout and can be sent to the interested teachers (who should bear the delivery expenses, as Reachout does not have funds for delivery). Reachout is planning to organize training sessions and elaborate guidelines on how to use the textbook. Reachout has also planned to apply for a project for adopting an instrument, developed in Finland -kit of cards for parents and social workers, to support the inclusion in the educational system.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Next Meeting</b></p>	<p><b>Inter-Agency Refugee Coordination meeting</b>  <b>Date:</b> 14 March 2023  <b>Location:</b> UNHCR Office 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room and online on teams – hybrid  <b>Time:</b> 10.00-11.00 hrs.</p> <p><b>Education Working Group meeting</b> (focused topic on trauma-informed practices)  <b>Date:</b> 15 March 2023</p>	

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	<b>Location:</b> Online <b>Time:</b> 9.00-10.30	
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