



BULGARIA
MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT
TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (MHPSS TWG)
TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

As of 15 February, 50,373 Ukrainian refugees remained in Bulgaria¹. The 86% of this population is composed of women (50%) and children (36%)².

The national accommodation policy, which currently benefits some 10,000 refugees from Ukraine, is ongoing, with the majority of people accommodated in the coastal areas of Burgas and Varna (nearly 55%).³

Additionally, a total of 20,407 asylum applications were filed in Bulgaria in 2022, with the majority of applicants from Syria, Afghanistan, Morocco and Iraq (62% children, accompanied and unaccompanied).⁴

With the overall goal of reducing suffering and improving the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria, a single cross-sectoral MHPSS Technical Working Group (MHPSS TWG) was established on December 2022, in line with the IASC guidelines for MHPSS in emergency settings and the global MHPSS Minimum Service Package.

DEFINITIONS OF MHPSS

The composite term *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support* describe any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental disorders.

It serves to unite as broad a group of actors as possible and underscores the need for diverse, complementary approaches in providing appropriate supports (IASC).⁵

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Human rights, equity and non-discrimination
- Participation and community engagement
- Do no harm
- Building on available resources and capacities
- Integrated support systems
- Multi-layered support
- Accountability to Affected Populations
- Person-centred approach

MAIN OBJECTIVES

1. Provide and promote a predictable, accessible, transparent and inclusive space for all agencies and various stakeholders implementing or interested in emergency MHPSS to network, share data and

¹ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

² <https://reporting.unhcr.org/ukraine-regional-refugee-response-plan>

³ Ibid.

⁴ 2022, MoH, WHO at al. - Refugee Health: Assessment of the Health System's Needs within the context of the crisis in Ukraine in Bulgaria

⁵ 2007 - IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings



information and have technical discussions around activities, common issues, gaps and needs, based on self-identified priorities

2. Identify, promote and strengthen safe ethical high quality MHPSS interventions that are IASC compliant, accessible and tailored to the specific needs of all asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Bulgaria, particularly to those at heightened risk, irrespective of legal status, age, gender, sexual orientation, faith and ethnicity
3. Pursue and encourage the engagement, participation and leadership of Government Line Ministries and local NGOs in order to foster and strengthen local ownership and continuity of the platform
4. Promote sustainability of emergency MHPSS interventions in Bulgaria through advocacy, monitoring and sharing fund opportunities, and protection of workforce well-being
5. Advocate for and contribute to structural reforms in the field of MHPSS in Bulgaria

SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

1. **General Coordination**
2. **Analysis, Assessments and Information Management**
3. **Technical Support and Capacity Building**
4. **Advocacy and Policy Making**

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Co-chairmanship

The co-chairmanship of the MHPSS TWG should be shared between one hosting UN agency and one local stakeholder (Line Ministry or NGO), at very minimum.

At the time of the present first version of the ToRs, the World Health Organization is the hosting UN agency and the slot allotted to the local stakeholder is vacant.

2. Membership

The membership to the MHPSS TWG is opened and inclusive.

MEETINGS

The MHPSS TWG meetings are based in Sofia, held in person and online with bi-weekly frequency.

The language of the meetings shall be English.

The venue of the meetings shall be agreed by members, based on availability. In the first quarter of 2023, the meetings are held at the UNHCR conference room.

This ToRs shall be revised twice a year.