



Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group (IREWG)

Meeting Details	
Date	29 February 2024
Time	10:00-11:30am
Chair	Mrs. Valentina Olaru, State Secretary, MER Dr. Ivan Duminica, Head of the Policy Service for Interethnic Relations, Ministry of Education and Research, MER, Co-Chairs: Loujine Khoury, Education Specialist, UNICEF Katie Lampe, Child Protection Officer, UNHCR
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Agenda	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. MER Updates: The enrollment numbers of Ukrainian children for the school year 2023/2024 in preschools and general education disaggregated by school level, sex, and directorate.2. Updates on the draft concept note developed with the Roma Task Force for the inclusion of Roma Refugee Children in education.3. Validation of the REWG Workplan for 20244. Updated mapping for partners delivering Romanian language classes.5. Partners Presentation6. AOB	
Information collection and relevant links	
Activity Info Platform: https://www.activityinfo.org	
Participants	



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| - Ms. Valentina Olaru- MER | - Felicia BULAT - REACH/IMPACT | - Ion Duminica, Roma TF/ Roma Voices Coalition |
| - Dr. Ivan Duminica – MER | - Marcel Straton- Lumos | - Nina Cusnir, Tarna Rom |
| - Katie Lampe - UNHCR | - Ala Gheorghita- Caritas Austria | - Marin Alla, Tarna Rom/Roma TF |
| - Loujine Khoury – UNICEF | - Mihaela Lavrov - Peace Winds | - Robyn Prinz, US Embassy |
| - Mihail Platida – UNICEF | - Andrei Esanu- Federatia Familiilor | - Normand Levesque, Libraries Without Borders |
| - Diana Alexei- Chisinau Municipality | - Natalia Balta, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation | - Dmitri Surovtov, People in Need |
| - Martin Kunze - Judge Ein Welt | - Catarev Cristina, IGM | - Laure Jansbury, People in Need |
| - Djavid Paknehad- CCR | - Baris Altindag- IRC | - Lucy Strickland, Plan International |
| - Maher Daboul – NRC | - Vera Gurievski, World Vision | |
| - Ana Moraru, UNDP | - Cristina Savin, NRC | |
| - Berfu Nisan Gur, WeWorld | - Valentina Ghenciu, Lumos | |

Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
Welcome, Endorsement of the previous meeting minutes, Agenda	Mrs Olaru, MER State Secretary , welcomed meeting attendees in her role as chair and presented the meeting agenda.	Agenda agreed
1. MER updates	<p>MER State Secretary provided opening updates from MER, including requesting support from partners for students in 9th and 12th grades who are preparing for exams, and with summer camp activities.</p> <p>Dr. Duminica (MER) then provided updated school enrollment statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 632 refugee children are enrolled in 210 preschools • 1632 refugee children are enrolled in 267 schools (11% study in Romanian, and 89% in Russian) • 55 children are attending in-school EduTech Labs <p>MER shared an overview of the number of children enrolled in schools with medical certificates and vaccination records. In a few raions, children don't have them, which can pose a risk to public health.</p>	



<p>MER noted, in regard to statistics about Roma children enrolled in schools, that on 19 February MER requested data from all education departments. The data received so far shows that there are 16 refugee children enrolled in Glodeni, 7 in Chisinau, 2 in Cahul, and 2 in Ungheni.</p> <p>UNHCR co-chair asked if MER could share additional details about the recent meeting conducted with school principals in regard to 9th and 12th grade exams and how partners can support.</p> <p>MER confirmed that this meeting recently took place. There are 3 refugee students enrolled in 12th grade, who are fully integrated in the schools, and are expected to pass the final exams. In 9th grade, there are around 100 refugee children, in both Russian-language and Romanian-language schools. Some of these students are well integrated and have benefited from extensive language and academic support from schools, teachers, and parents. However, there is a group of students who have not been interested in accessing this additional support. There is a concern that between 30-50% of the 9th grade refugee students will not be prepared to pass the exams at the end of the school year.</p> <p>MER stated that in their discussion with school principals, they talked about two plans. Plan A will be to provide students additional extensive support for the period from March-May, to help them prepare for their exams. A meeting will also be conducted on 15 March by MER with parents and student representatives to get feedback and share MER's message about the importance of utilizing existing resources to study. MER and schools are also very interested in additional partner support, especially in regard to Romanian language, to help students prepare. Plan B will be discussed after the exam completion. In the situation where some students do not pass, MER will evaluate what can be done to facilitate their continued educational access.</p> <p>UNICEF co-chair mentioned that a renewed mapping of available Romanian classes will be conducted soon by the EWG.</p> <p>NRC asked questions related to health certifications, what kinds of support are offered through EduTech Labs, and a clarification on the statistics on Roma children enrolled in schools.</p> <p>MER responded with several clarifications. Up until now, all parents who requested for their children to be enrolled in Moldovan schools have been facilitated to do so, with significant flexibility given in some cases, for example, relying on a parent's written declaration to determine the child's grade level. In regards the budget, data from the current school year will only be reflected in the 2025 budget, which makes it difficult in some ways to support rising enrollment rates, given the delay in the budget for accounting for additional students. As for EduTech Labs, schools do not have the capacity to assign specific teaching staff to the labs, but auxiliary staff can support. Children studying in EduTech Labs</p>	<p>The list of schools with 9th and 12th grade students enrolled will be shared with EWG partners so they can evaluate if they can provide additional support.</p>
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are not included in official school budgets, as they are not officially enrolled. In regard to health certificates, and some parents not wanting their children to be vaccinated, this was an issue identified primarily within the Roma community. Another challenge affecting the Roma community is that some parents did not want to take their children to the psycho-pedagogical center for an evaluation of their academic level, as some parents misunderstood the purpose of this assessment. MER is working to resolve this issue.

UNICEF co-chair added that UNICEF is working with MER to develop a costing formula that takes into account the additional expenses related to refugee children. She noted that EduTech Labs also offer non-formal education after school hours, including language and catch-up classes. In regard to Roma children, she noted that there was a discussion with one school yesterday, to discuss how to integrate a group of Roma children who live nearby.

CCR provided an update on their education activities. CCR has been active in Moldova for 25 years. CCR mentioned that they feel that the education situation for refugee children has improved since 2022. They have had discussions with parents and grandparents and can see that many problems have been solved. CCR has helped work on school and university integration of refugee children and mentioned that some Ukrainian students have received scholarships to attend university. In regard to Romanian language classes, CCR has cooperated with Ion Creanga University since 2011, providing Romanian language classes there, and at other locations around the country, including in Causeni and Anenii Noi. Last year, in response to feedback from parents, CCR decided to implement a pilot project, in partnership with UNHCR, to offer Romanian language classes in 5 schools in Chisinau. They have also developed e-learning courses for Romanian. CCR also conducts other activities to support refugee children's integration.

MER noted that they have collaborated with CCR in the past and are aware of the positive work they are doing.

Youth One World asked a question about the mapping of children who are not enrolled in schools and noted that school enrollment rates continue to be very low. He noted that a recent advocacy letter from international NGOs noted that language acquisition and school attendance are preconditions for integration.

MER noted that they asked MLSP for data on refugee children and received information about 570 children who do not study in Moldovan schools. They believe that some study in EduTech Labs, and others study online from home.



	<p>MER further noted that it might be that some children recorded to be in Moldova, actually live in Ukraine and come sometimes to Moldova to receive assistance. She noted that despite many awareness raising campaigns, they have not noticed high numbers of children coming to enroll in Moldovan schools.</p> <p>Mr. Ion Duminica, of the Roma Voices Coalition, noted that an additional challenge is that some Roma parents choose not to enroll their children in school, and MER lacks a mechanism to oblige parents to do so.</p> <p>UNICEF co-chair noted that the Education WG is very aware of the low enrollment rate in Moldovan schools. She noted that the enrollment rate is slowly increasing, and that MER's Instruction last year removed many barriers. Now what is needed is for EWG partners to implement the 2024 RRP activities, including supporting school enrollment and outreach.</p>	
2. Updates on the draft EWG/Roma TF concept note	<p>UNHCR co-chair shared an update on the concept note that is being developed jointly by the EWG and Roma Task Force, to further collaborate on the school inclusion of Roma children. The concept note is currently being finalized, and then will be shared with MER for endorsement. The EWG will soon convene a meeting of all partners working with Roma children in the education sector, to ensure harmonization of activities.</p> <p>MER gave an update on the recent meeting at Vasile Lupu school to discuss the inclusion of children from the T6 RAC. Three challenges were identified which are being followed up on: vaccinations, transportation, and assessments for children's educational level.</p>	Concept note will be shared with EWG members once finalized.
3. Validation of the 2024 REWG workplan	<p>The UNICEF co-chair presented again the EWG work plan and encouraged partners to share feedback, as so far only one partner has done so.</p>	Partners to share feedback on workplan.
4. Romanian language class mapping	<p>The UNICEF co-chair noted that the EWG would like to update the mapping of Romanian classes done last year, as it was incomplete, and also, some partners may have changed their activities in 2024. A mapping tool will be shared with partners soon.</p>	Co-chairs to share Romanian language mapping tool, and partners to fill it in.
5. Partners Presentation	<p>Judge Ein Welt/Youth One World gave a presentation on their recent activities in the education sector. Please see attached presentation for more details.</p>	Presentation to be shared with EWG partners.



<p>6. AoB</p>	<p>UNICEF co-chair provided a short update on the ActivityInfo dashboard. It will be presented in more detail at the next meeting.</p> <p>UNHCR co-chair mentioned that Temporary Protection was renewed. Partners can contact the PWG for more information.</p>	
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