



Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group (IREWG)

Meeting Details		
Date	9 th December 2024	
Time	13:00-14:30	
Chair	Chair: Dr. Ivan Duminica, Head of the Policy Service for Interethnic Relations, Ministry of Education and Research (MER) Co- chairs: Katie Lampe, Child Protection Officer, UNHCR; Loujine Khoury, Education Specialist, UNICEF	
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Agenda		
Agenda Point	Time	Focal Point
1. MER updates regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The enrollment numbers of Ukrainian children for the 2024/2025 school year in preschools and general education.• Updates from MER on the visit to Nisporeni RAC and Mircea Eliade Lyceum.	13:00 - 13:25	MER
2. Presentation of the costing of the Roadmap and Action Plan for the full integration of refugee children in the education system in Moldova by 2026.	13:25-14:05	UNICEF CONSULTANT
3. Presentation from NCUM on Back-to- School Campaign and total reach.	14:05 - 14:15	NCUM
4. AoB (RRP 2025-2026 Education submissions, Mapping of Romanian language classes)	14:15 - 14:30	UNICEF and UNHCR
Information collection and relevant links		
Activity Info Platform: https://www.activityinfo.org		
Participants		



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Ivan Duminica - MER • Katie Lampe- UNHCR • Loujine Khoury – UNICEF • Iuliana Straton - UNICEF • Marcel Spataru – UNICEF consultant • Diana Alexei- Chisinau Municipality • Mary Ombaka- UNHCR • Andrea Vremis – MER • Djavid Paknehad – CCR • Laurel Jansory – People in Need • Tatiana Zaloi – Terres Des Hommes • Natalia Balta – Pestalozzi Children’s Foundation • Sorina Pinzaru – OHCHR • Ana Macovenco – World Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimitri Suroutou– People in Need • Vlad Oleatovschi - WeWorld • Olesia Cazasu – NCUM • Irene Amoroso – WeWorld • Olha Stus– Female Support Force • Irina Basiul – NCUM • Marcel Straton – Lumos • Tatiana Tusca - CRS • Olga Pinzari - CRS • Liban Roman - CCR • Vera Gurievschi, World Vision • Felicia Bulat – IMPACT/REACH • Mariana Delemarschii – Amici de Bambini • Hanne Heidinger - UNHCR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nina Cusnir – Tarna Rom • Maria Pislaras - CCR • Olga Moroza – Pestalozzi Children’s Foundation • Maher Daboul – NRC • Yuliia Zenchenko – Female Support Force • Valentina Ghenciu – Lumos Foundation • Alexandrina Trofin- Amici Bambini • Cristina Savin - NRC • Carolina Scifos – UNHCR • Dumitru Drumea – Speranta 87 |
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Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
Welcome and presentation of agenda	MER chair, Dr. Duminica, opened the meeting and thanked members who had attended both in person and online. He invited the co-chairs who highlighted the agenda of the meeting before giving the floor back to the chair to share the latest updates regarding enrollment of refugee children.	
1. MER Updates	1. Update from MER <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment Data for Ukrainian children enrolled in Moldovan schools. 	



The chair noted that MER continued to support Ukrainian children’s integration into the Moldovan national education system. He gave an update of the enrolment data of refugee children in Moldovan schools as of December 2024:

- Kindergarten: 835 (423 girls, 412 boys)- this represents an increase of 82 children in the past month.
- School: 2479 (1211 girls, 1266 boys)- this represents an increase of 89 children in the past month.
 - Of these 86% study in schools that teach in Russian, and 14% study in schools that teach in Romanian.
 - Grades 1-4: 1150 children
 - Grades 5-9: 1218 children
 - Grades 10-12: 109 children
- Total: 3314

The increase in enrolment was attributed to the desire by more refugee parents to see their children enrolled in school and to move away from online learning. Improved infrastructure at Taras Shevchenko gymnasium was also noted as a contributing factor. The chair emphasized the need to unite efforts in ensuring that children study the Romanian language, which remains the current biggest challenge to enrolment of refugee children in Moldovan schools.

The chair noted that MER continues to support Ukrainian teachers who are interested in teaching in Moldovan schools by encouraging them to provide their documents and helping them with recognizing their certificates.

He also noted that currently 13 children from Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon have been enrolled in Moldovan schools, and specific language support is needed for them. Schools and the number of children enrolled were provided in the MER presentation.



	<p>Following MER’s presentation, CCR thanked MER for their support on several individual cases, noting a specific case of a university student who was able to access reduced tuition fees because of MER intervention.</p> <p>People in Need noted that following the meeting that the REWG study team conducted in Nisporeni on 8th November 2024, some families requested for online education support and 15 children have expressed interest to join, and PiN is exploring how they may be able to support. PiN, with the support of MER and UNICEF, has so far provided support through online learning to 341 children. In addition, 922 Moldovan and refugee children participated in PiN’s after school activities for children.</p> <p>The co-chair noted that starting January 2025, students accessing EduTech labs for online learning will be included alongside enrollment data in Moldovan schools provided by MER.</p>	
<p>2. Presentation on Costing of “Roadmap for Education Inclusion of Refugee Children” document</p>	<p>The co-chair noted that the <i>roadmap for the inclusion of refugee children in the Moldovan Education System by 2026</i>, had been shared with partners for feedback. Based on their inputs, costing was conducted by Marcel Spataru, a UNICEF consultant, and subsequently incorporated into the document. The updated version was then submitted to the MER for review. Currently, the document is undergoing a second review by MER. Therefore, this presentation to the REWG is necessary to provide updates on the process.</p> <p>Marcel Spataru, a UNICEF consultant responsible for the costing of the roadmap, highlighted that Moldova's government education budget does not typically allocate funds specifically for refugee education. Instead, schools receive funding based on overall student enrollment numbers, without differentiating between refugee and Moldovan children. As a result, schools that actively enroll more refugee children receive more funding since the budget is allocated per enrolled child.</p> <p>Spataru noted that of the nine intervention components outlined in the document, five require funding from the government’s education budget, while the remaining four can be supported by various donors. The document was strategically costed to appeal to potential</p>	



donors, maximizing support for the highest projected number of refugee children likely to be integrated into schools.

The roadmap outlines different scenarios for refugee children's school integration. The moderate scenario anticipates that by 2025, 25% of school-age refugee children will be enrolled in Moldovan schools, increasing to 50% in 2026. The maximum scenario envisions full integration of all 25,000 school-age refugee children currently living in the country.

For preschools, costs per child vary significantly across regions. In Chisinau municipality, where kindergartens are overcrowded, the cost per child is approximately 35,000 MDL annually. In some other regions, this cost rises to over 60,000 MDL per child. An average cost was applied to estimate the integration expenses across various regions.

NOTE: *the estimates presented in this session were based on figures initially shared with the MER for their review. Following multiple rounds of revisions and adjustments to the target percentage of children to be reached and the cost estimates have changed from those presented during the meeting. Please see attached updated presentation for more details on the relevant updated costs.*

On various components of learning, the costing was broken down as follows:

- Compensation for additional direct costs of the national education network

This component would address additional costs incurred by schools from enrolling an additional number of students (since the budget is based on enrollment numbers from two years previously).

- Implementation of a supplement to fund recover programs:

The integration of Ukrainian refugee children in Moldovan schools requires considerable educational support, which goes beyond the usual allocation per child. To ensure that these children can catch up with the Moldovan curriculum and succeed in their studies,



	<p>several key components are introduced, each contributing to the need for additional resources. This component addresses these needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accelerated Learning Program <p>Refugee children who have never been to school, especially those of Roma ethnicity, need a specialized Accelerated Education Program (AEP) to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills so they can enrol in a mainstream classroom. This component would introduce this program inside schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catch Up Programme <p>This programme is designed to provide additional instructional hours for refugee children who have fallen behind due to disruptions in the education process. It is estimated that these children would require five hours of catch-up learning per week, compared to the 24 hours offered through mainstream formal education. To effectively implement this initiative, additional teachers would need to be recruited and trained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children with Special Needs <p>The programme calls for staff with specialized training and additional support to the school and children to cover their educational needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Romanian as a second language <p>This programme provides intensive Romanian language courses for non-native speakers, particularly children enrolled in schools that teach in Romanian. It requires the development of an intensive curriculum, recruitment and training of teachers, as well as the provision of additional learning spaces and Romanian language learning materials. These elements have been included in the cost estimation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non- Formal education and extracurricular activities:	
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These funds are allocated to support non-formal education and extracurricular activities aimed at fostering social cohesion, peer-to-peer interaction, and mutual support among children.

- **Rehabilitation of infrastructure**

While many schools need infrastructure support, this measure aims to improve the school infrastructure of a targeted number of schools, with the aim of making schools more attractive for refugee children. The associated costs will not increase in the case of a full integration of refugee children, as they are geared towards the overall improvement of infrastructure in schools that will integrate refugee children.

- **Online Learning (Edu Tech Labs)**

Currently there are 98 Edu Tech Labs and though there are no plans to increase the number, their annual maintenance is required.

- **Communication**

Communication campaigns will be conducted for refugee parents to enrol children in Moldovan national schools. MER will also require technical assistance to translate the curriculum into Ukrainian language.

It was noted that this is a very ambitious programme, whose budget the government may not bear alone without donor support. Areas for financing with external funds will be finalized at a meeting to be conducted later.

The co-chair thanked the consultant for a detailed presentation and added the following:

- The *Roadmap for Education Inclusion* is a document owned by the MER, although it was developed with technical support from UNHCR and UNICEF. Therefore, MER will lead in its implementation and monitoring.



- This document serves both as a planning and fundraising tool, which is why it includes multiple implementation scenarios. These phased scenarios outline the funding needed based on different target group sizes. By planning for up to 100% enrolment, the costing anticipates a situation where all school-age children are eventually enrolled, aiding both planning and fundraising efforts.
- Some components, such as intensive Romanian language courses, are already being implemented. The roadmap highlights this component to attract additional financial resources for expansion. UNICEF has published a Terms of Reference (ToR) for a consultant to refine and scale up this intervention.
- Furthermore, plans are in place for deployments to support MER in implementing the roadmap starting early next year, with partners assisting in its rollout.
- The co-chair noted that while UNICEF will support certain components, additional donor funding will be necessary to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of all elements in the roadmap.

Discussion points raised by the partners:

- **Teachers' Trainings:** NRC raised a question on teachers' training component. It was clarified that teacher training costs are included in the document. Partners are encouraged to assist MER in this component where possible.
- **Implementation Responsibility:** The roadmap's implementation involves several MER departments, with Dr. Duminica leading. He emphasized the need for swift implementation, dependent on MER's capacity.
- **CCR's Contribution:** CCR is running Romanian language courses for 140 children in partnership with Chisinau municipality and other regions, planning to continue in 2025.
- **Children with Special Education Needs (SEN) Costing:** Lumos Foundation asked about refugee children with SEN, but data is not available. Costing is based on anticipated scenarios, with one teacher per 25 children (to be revised) noting that MER is currently revising the formula for inclusive education.



Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

3. Back to School Campaign	<p>NCUM, in collaboration with UNICEF, decided to start their enrolment campaigns earlier than usual, beginning in January 2025, to maximize children’s enrolment for the new school year starting in September 2025.</p> <p>For the 2024 back-to-school campaign, which launched on 11th July, NCUM initially targeted 500,000 people but successfully reached 266,000 individuals. The campaign utilized a range of media platforms, including personal stories and direct communication with school representatives. Messages were tailored to various audiences, with notable contributions from Dr. Duminica - MER, who participated in a video presentation that gained significant viewership.</p> <p>A key element of the campaign was to counter myths circulating in the refugee community about the challenges of enrolling children in school. Videos featuring mothers who had successfully enrolled their children were particularly impactful, highlighting the positive reasons for school enrolment. A video focused on Taras Shevchenko received strong support, as parents expressed gratitude for the information.</p> <p>NCUM also partnered with PiN to run information campaigns about enrolling children in Edu Tech Labs, using both traditional and modern media. Trolley buses, a popular mode of transport, were employed effectively to reach larger audiences. NCUM engaged with their community both online and offline, ensuring widespread access to important information.</p> <p>In addition to enrolment efforts, NCUM supported the identification of Ukrainian teachers for Taras Shevchenko through collaboration with partners. They also helped address salary issues related to these teachers.</p> <p>With support from MER, Ukraine’s Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), and the Ukrainian Embassy in Moldova, NCUM obtained data on Ukrainian children participating in educational activities. This data will be regularly updated.</p>	
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	<p>NCUM is working on identifying data gaps in areas where enrolment has not yet been fully captured. Their efforts include engaging parents to enroll children in the Moldovan education system and improving access to schools. Plans are in place to establish additional schools offering the Moldovan curriculum in Ukrainian, particularly in northern regions of Moldova where demand is high. This initiative will replicate the Taras Shevchenko model in Chisinau municipality.</p> <p>The co-chair emphasized the importance of developing a mechanism to track children continuing their education online using Ukrainian learning platforms in Moldova. This effort will require collaboration across multiple resources, including data from the Ukrainian Embassy, MLSP, and MER, to ensure effective tracking the number of children continuing to learn online.</p>	
4. AOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● RRP Co- chair expressed gratitude to all partners who contributed to the RRP process by submitting activities and noted that partners will be updated on the progress of the RRP document, which will likely be launched in January or February 2025. ● Revision of Romanian Language Mapping exercise Co-chair thanked partners for sharing information that was used for mapping of language courses during April 2024. She informed partners that a new mapping will	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Co-chairs to contact partners if further modifications are needed to the submitted RRP activities.



	<p>be conducted, as many organizations' activities have changed, and partners will be asked to enter their current Romanian language class details in a new Kobo form, which will be shared with the meeting minutes and presentations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Revised Kobo tool for mapping Romanian classes to be shared with partners.
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