

POLAND PROTECTION SECTOR MEETING

Meeting Minutes – 30 January 2025

Meeting subject:	Monthly Protection Sector Meeting
Time & location:	2pm (hybrid meeting)
Chaired by:	UNHCR, HNLAC
Minutes prepared by:	UNHCR
Participants:	HNLAC, UNHCR, PAH, WHO Poland, Plan International Poland, Towards Dialogue Foundation, IOM, UNICEF (27 pers.)
Agenda:	Agenda <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Opening remarks by the UNHCR Deputy Representative2. Update on legal developments3. 2024 feedback and 2025 plans - plenary brainstorming4. Revision of TORs for 20255. Revision/presentation of volunteer guidelines/emergency leaflet6. Preparing for the 2025 RRP launch on 20 February7. Updates from GBV, MHPSS, Child Protection, Counter-Trafficking and PSEA/AAP8. AOB
AGENDA POINT	DISCUSSION
Agenda point 1	UNHCR Deputy Representative, June Shirato, welcomed participants to the first Protection Sector meeting of 2025. The Deputy Representative emphasized that the meeting serves as a key platform to discuss the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the Polish-Belarusian border crisis. It was noted that the public hearing at the Administration and Internal Affairs Commission in the Polish Parliament on the draft amendments to the Act on granting international protection will take place on 4 th February where UNHCR Representative is scheduled to speak.
Agenda point 2	Key discussions included migration and asylum procedure in Poland (presentation):

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New post-TPD residence permit (CUKR): Introduced in the June 2024 Amendment to the Special Act, offering a three-year permit for Ukrainian citizens. However, application procedures remain unimplemented, awaiting publication in the Polish Monitor. • Asylum applications from Syrian nationals: Issues related to the Office for Foreigners’ processing of Syrian asylum cases were discussed. Applications for international protection from Syrian nationals are accepted by the authorities however, OFF has not been issuing decisions, probably awaiting expert assessment of the current situation in Syria. • EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and Poland’s Migration Strategy: The Polish the government plans to impose temporary and territorial suspensions of asylum applications, postponing most integration-related actions until 2026. A system for monitoring international protection procedures is scheduled for Q2 2025. • Polish-Belarusian border: increased distress calls from third-country nationals (TCNs) in Belarus, reporting multiple pushbacks and fears of deportation. Many are requesting assistance for safe passage through the Terespol border crossing, where entry is frequently denied • Legislative updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Government Act Amending the Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners (Document No. 924) introduces territorial asylum restrictions and additional grounds for refugee status revocation to <i>reinforce border security</i>. ○ Employment of Foreigners Act proposes <i>higher penalties for illegal employment</i> and digitalization of administrative procedures. ○ Visa system reforms include changes for students and highly qualified professionals under the EU Blue Card scheme. ○ Repatriation Bill <i>aims to streamline processes for individuals of Polish origin</i>, though it remains under review.
Agenda point 3	The discussion focused on reflection on 2024 achievements and challenges to develop a 2025 workplan. A shared folder will be created to store key advocacy messages. The group also discussed potential protection sector training sessions, debating whether they should be internal or involve external partners and government entities. Partners were invited to provide written feedback to the Protection Sector co-leads via email sharing insights to guide planning for 2025.
Agenda point 4	Participants reviewed the 2024 Terms of Reference (TORs) with an emphasis on ensuring the 2025 document reflects legal and operational developments. It was noted that:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TORs should better reflect evolving challenges at the Polish-Belarusian border, ensuring a <i>broader scope beyond Ukrainian refugees</i>. • Collaboration with the NGO Forum "Razem" (focused on the Polish-Belarusian border) should be expanded to encompass <i>a wider range of forcibly displaced populations</i>. • <i>Stronger efforts are needed to engage a wider audience</i> in sector meetings to enhance participation and knowledge-sharing.
Agenda point 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The emergency leaflets provide crucial information for refugees, including legal assistance and medical support. • Volunteer guidelines include nine essential tips for supporting refugees. <i>These will be presented in a three-page document with QR codes linking to additional resources.</i>
Agenda point 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2025 Refugee Response Plan (RRP) launch is scheduled for 20 February. • A separate meeting with sub-sector leads will be held after the Protection Sector meeting to discuss details. • Further information on preparations will be shared subsequently.
Agenda point 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MHPSS: no major updates; follow-up discussions will be scheduled • Child Protection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rising cases of violence, abuse, and neglect against children. ○ Lack of comprehensive support for children in alternative care, particularly care leavers. ○ Limited refugee/asylum-seeking child protection mechanisms for those arriving from the Polish-Belarusian border. ○ Foster care shortages and inadequate support for foster families. ○ Access to asylum for children, particularly amid temporary asylum suspensions. ○ The need for improved child protection standards in collective accommodation centers. ○ Challenges faced by Roma refugee children and children with disabilities. ○ Proposal: Establish a sub-working group for child protection, with an initial meeting planned for 17-19 February 2025.

Agenda point 8

- The **Inter-Agency Coordinator** highlighted the next inter-sector meeting on Thursday, 13 February, stressing the importance of reporting and showcasing sector work.
- **ICRC update:** ICRC is collecting information from occupied territories in Ukraine, noting that their presence in these areas is limited. They are seeking anonymous testimonies from recent arrivals. *ICRC contact details will be shared for dissemination among participants.*