

**Minutes of Protection Working Group  
26 February 2025**

**Place:** Alexandrina 20-22 – Bucharest (hybrid format)

**Facilitators:** Jorunn Brandvoll, Cristian Musat, Wendy Zillich

17 online participants, 16 participants face to face

**Agenda**

1. Revision of objectives and purposes of the Protection Working Group
2. Achievements of the Protection Sector and PWG in 2024
3. Group discussions on prioritized activities for 2025 Workplan

**Topics discussed**

**1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROTECTION WORKING GROUP**

The current objectives of the PWG as per its Terms of Reference were presented with a view to discussing whether members continued to agree on those objectives or any changes should be made. The objectives are as follows:

- **Advocacy:** Identifies advocacy gaps and develops messages and tools to engage governmental, international organizations, and civil society.
- **Capacity Building:** Analyzes capacity gaps and strengthens the capacity of national and international actors to align protection responses with strategic priorities and evolving needs.
- **Joint Protection Response:** Coordinates and facilitates protection activities of agencies working with affected populations, respecting mandates and sector expertise.
- **Strategic Leadership:** Provides support and guidance to all protection actors, including child protection, education, GBV, and MHPSS actors. Oversees Child Protection and Education Sub-Working Groups and relevant task forces.
- **Technical Guidance:** Ensures protection is mainstreamed across all programmatic interventions, promoting access, safety, and dignity in humanitarian aid.

Members generally agreed on the objectives highlighting the potential role of the group related to advocacy.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SECTOR IN 2024**

### **2024 Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP):**

- **37 partners** appealed to provide humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees and multi-sectoral support under the RRP. **18 organizations** appealed under the Protection sector.
- The dashboard showing the indicators of the Protection sector and targets reached in 2024 was presented.
- The Coordination and partners highlighted that the dashboard does not reflect the full range of their interventions.
- The ensuing discussions on the reasons showed lack of clarity on some of the indicators. One member pointed out that they were being very cautious about their reporting and only counting cases which are “fully registered” in their databases with a view to being able to fully document the intervention carried out.

### **Review of 2024 Workplan:**

- The workplan of 2024 was then revisited highlighting what has been achieved and what has not been achieved.
- The creation of a tool to gather information on access to social benefits by refugees from Ukraine at a national level was highlighted as an achievement that had been envisaged in the workplan. However, concerns were raised on the tool being used by a few actors only so far. Questions were also raised about how the data in the tool is being utilized for advocacy purposes.
- A community engagement workshop that brought together all stakeholders to brainstorm on strengthening community structures and identifying community leaders was also identified as an achievement reflected in the 2024 workplan.
- The exchange of information in the group’s meetings on new developments such as Emergency Ordinance 96/2024, the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and the conscription legislation in Ukraine was also highlighted.
- A challenge for successful implementation of other activities in the workplan was seen in the fact that very few organizations had signed up to take the lead on implementing specific activities, processes or products envisaged by the workplan. It was also noted that the workplan may have been very ambitious and that some factors in context have changed since it was drafted, particularly that many organizations had significantly reduced their activities.

### 3. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. **Access to the territory, legal status and documentation:** Discussions in this working group highlighted the need to address challenges related to access to documentation pertaining to civil status changes in Romania as well as documentation issued by the Ukrainian Consulate. Under the PWG umbrella, the group proposed approaching the General Directorate for Registry of Persons (DGEP) with the aim of supporting awareness and capacity building for local civil registry institutions in areas with high concentrations of refugees from Ukraine and other nationalities. Additionally, the group emphasized the need to advocate for streamlining appointment processes at the Ukrainian consulate, where waiting times can currently extend up to two months.

To enhance clarity regarding legal status, the group recommended advocating with the General Inspectorate for Immigration (GII) for more durable solutions, such as facilitating access to long-term residency options, to mitigate uncertainties around Temporary Protection (TP) duration and transitioning to alternative statuses.

In terms of access to the territory, while no major issues were reported, the group stressed the importance of disseminating clear information on entry requirements.

Given reports of confusion due to information overload, the group suggested identifying areas requiring further guidance, such as diploma recognition and refining existing information sources to make them more accessible and targeted. A key proposal was to centralize information to ensure consistency and make information for those navigating legal documentation processes more accessible.

2. **Persons with specific needs:** Discussions in this working group focused on access to rights for persons with specific needs and began from the need to better coordinate advocacy efforts by all relevant partners, notably on the issue of access to social benefits by TP holders. The group agreed as a key first step on the identification of challenges across the country through inputting firsthand experience with cases managed in the tool developed last year in the PWG ([Acces la beneficii sociale / Access to social benefits](#)) in order to understand the most recurrent and pressing issues and locations where they occur. It also suggested to develop a clear answer chain with regard to cases put into the tool to ensure an intervention on individual cases which are added to the database.

Another aspect discussed was the need for statistical data (especially pertaining to accessing social benefits) which would increase the understanding of needs and the geographical distribution. The data request should be addressed to authorities on behalf of the PWG/RRP members and the data made available to all RRP partners through the IA dashboard.

The PWG members also highlighted the added benefit they find in the lessons learned from other colleagues. In this sense, it was suggested that “storytelling” related to case management by PWG members is embedded in the PWG meetings, leading to learning through empirical experience sharing on assisting PWSN in accessing rights. Similarly, the PWG plans to invite chairs of other IA WGs to share relevant products and updates with PWG members. In the same direction, PWG members requested that PWG internal info-sessions are delivered by various members on topics of their expertise. In this sense, a survey to gather suggested/needed topics could be developed, and co-chairs should identify suitable organisations to deliver short info-sessions and refreshers online.

Last but not least, the working group discussed about the need to create and implement a mechanism to monitor and rapidly react to misinformation/disinformation, including establishing correct information, the authority to verify the information, the best channel to publish it (in terms of relevance, authority and accessibility) and ensure further dissemination by PWG members.

- 3. Community-based protection:** Discussions in the working group focusing on Community-based protection addressed the need to create bridges between communities and authorities for advocacy purposes. This would entail, on the one hand, that information on services and social benefits is cascaded down to the community, while the community itself gets acquainted with processes and procedures in accessing social benefits to be the ones providing information within the community. To complement, the group identified the need to enhance efforts to have consistent messaging and complementary info provision among service providers, amplifying information currently provided in silos. A suggestion brought up by the group relates to mapping out all channels used by actors to provide info and find ways to interconnect them.

In addition, the group considered key to enhance the engagement of Refugee-led organizations (RLOs) in protection coordination, where members could support bringing them on board, produce a briefing kit providing info on interventions carried out by actors, as well as interconnect them with other funding opportunities and networks supporting their sustainability.

#### **4. FOLLOW UP**

The group’s coordinators will put together a common workplan based on the inputs provided by the three discussion groups. The common workplan will be prioritizing those activities, processes or products which are indeed realistic to be implemented through the group in 2025 and for which it will find members who will ensure follow up.