

Protection Sector Poland

Terms of Reference (ToRs)

March 2025

Background

Since the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Poland has shown exceptional hospitality to refugees from Ukraine. By February 2025, 1.909.684 refugees from Ukraine had registered for temporary protection (PESEL UKR registration) in Poland; 992.684 persons with an active registration.

In mid-2021, Poland faced a substantial increase in attempts to cross the border irregularly, via Belarus. A buffer zone limiting access to the border area was introduced in June 2024 for initial 90 days that have been then continuously extended. There are still a considerable number of irregular arrivals reported at the border with reported loss of life and limited access to territory and asylum. Since December 2024, Parliament has been working on the law introducing temporary and territorial suspension of the right to seek international protection in the context of the so called 'instrumentalization of migration' that is at the final stage of the legislative procedure.

The Protection Sector was established in March 2022 as part of the Refugee Coordination Model in Poland, in close collaboration with relevant government counterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders.

Vision

The Protection Sector provides technical guidance and oversight to ensure effective, coherent and predictable interventions to support the Government of Poland in its efforts to respond to the protection needs of all asylum seekers and refugees, stateless persons, refugees of ethnic minorities including Roma/ Sinti and other persons of concern with due considerations for their age, gender and diversity.

Also, the importance of the Government participation and leadership in (the long term) of the Protection Sector to ensure a coordinated and sustainable response is noted.

Objectives of the Protection Sector

- 1. Joint protection analysis:** Protection monitoring, and protection assessments are central to evidence-based advocacy and shall be the basis for programming. The Sector is responsible to ensure that all initiatives aiming at collecting, processing, and analyzing protection information are coordinated. This includes producing joint analysis and recommendations.
- 2. Advocacy:** The Protection Sector members shall work together on the identification of advocacy gaps across all protection areas and developing appropriate advocacy messages and tools to influence policies, legislation and practices through engagement with relevant stakeholders. The Protection Sector will prepare joint briefings/presentations whenever required e.g. RRP launch etc.
- 3. Technical guidance:** The Protection Sector, provides technical guidance to all operational actors on the ground to ensure protection is mainstreamed across all programmatic interventions, in line with international, European and national standards.

4. Knowledge-sharing and capacity building: The Protection Sector is responsible for knowledge management and capacity sharing when areas of cooperation are identified and to ensure that protection responses are of high quality and sufficiently contextualized. Also, joint Protection Sector capacity building initiatives will be organized in 2025.

Geographical Coverage and engagement with other forums

The Protection Sector has a national, country-wide coverage providing strategic direction and guidance to all actors engaged in the response to support the Government of Poland and national actors, in its efforts to respond the needs of all refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons.

The Protection Sector engages with the established and operational sub-national coordination forums including in Krakow and Lublin on protection issues, particularly regarding contextualized protection analysis and advocacy. Updates from the sub-national forums shall be shared with Protection Sector.

Membership and Chairing

The Protection Sector is co-chaired by UNHCR and Halina Niec Legal Aid Center. Relevant taskforces may be activated as needed with separate Terms of Reference, in line with the Protection Sector's objectives, including on key protection aspects namely child protection, prevention and response to gender based violence, prevention and response to trafficking as well as non-discrimination.

The Protection Sector emphasizes the recognition of that the Government of Poland has the primary responsibility to protect refugees and this platform is meant to facilitate and coordinate support in this regard. While the representatives from the government are not regularly participating in the Sector meetings, they are invited to discuss and engage on specific topics on needs basis.

Protection Sector membership is open to all partners, including UN agencies and other international organizations, international and national NGOs, civil society and grass roots organizations and Academia as long as they contribute to respond to the needs of all refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern.

Meeting and Reporting

The Protection Sector will convene as follows:

- 3rd Thursday of the month at 2pm (monthly)
- Sub-sectors will provide updates during each PWG (whenever available).
- The situation at the Poland/Belarus border and Detention Centers (SOC) will be discussed whenever needed.

This shall not preclude the possibility to convene separate technical discussions on any of the thematic issues mentioned above. Ad-hoc meetings may be called at short notice in case of specific issues that require immediate attention.

Presentations will be shared with Protection Sector members and posted in the data portal in a timely manner. Minutes will be shared on the data portal¹ one week after the protection sector meeting.

The meetings will have structured time slots corresponding to each of the relevant thematic areas as well as a dedicated time lot for general protection issues.

The meetings will be held in English with Polish translation provided online upon request (Teams link), with the possibility of scheduling in person meeting, with interpretation depending on the topics and interest from Protection Sector members.

Revision of Terms of Reference

The terms of reference guiding the structure and activities of the Protection Sector will be revised on annual basis and/or based on immediate needs as agreed by the members.

¹ Operational Data Portal - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/309?sv=54&geo=10781>