| Inclusion and Solutions Working Group (ISWG) – Launch Meeting \| 14 April 2025 | |
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| **Meeting Details** | |
| **Date** | *14.04.2025* |
| **Time** | *15:00 pm* |
| **Lead** | *MLSP, Iva Vavic-UNHCR, Artiom Sici-UNICEF, Andrew Mitchell-WFP* |
| **Email** | *mdachiswg@unhcr.org* |

**Agenda**

- Introduction & Purpose: Welcome, co-chair roles, and objectives of the ISWG
- Why & What: Rationale for the group, key themes, and focus areas
- Partner Contributions: Mapping current activities and identifying gaps
- Next Steps: ISWG roles, priorities, and coordination going forward

**Information collection and relevant links**

*Click here to subscribe to ISWG mailing list*

*ISWG page on ODP website*

**Participants**

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| *Teodor Vicol, MLSP* | *Pippa Bown, FCDO* | *Victor Rotaras, APSCF* |
| *Iva Vavic, UNHCR* | *Irina Basiul, NCUM* | *Irina Stean, AO Laolalta* |
| *Artiom Sici, UNICEF* | *Fadel Daoud, WFP* | *Zastavnetchi Arcadie, PIN* |
| *Andrea Cuisana, UNHCR* | *Alina Alexei, WFP* | *Cazacu Andrei, UNHCR* |
| *Yigit Anil, UNHCR* | *Sivkova Sara, UNHCR* | *Rodica Pascali, Helvetas* |
| *Diego Nardi, UNHCR* | *Stelea Natalia, UNHCR* | *Denis Sirbu, AO Laolalta* |
| *Milos Popovic, RCO Moldova* | *Domnica Ginu, Lumos Moldova* | *Natalia Curnic, UNHCR* |
| *Michel Gerges, World Vision,* | *Hanna Ursol, PIN* | *Cristina Suruceanu, MLSP* |
| *Andreea Cacean, Centrul de Cooperare Sud* | *Almothana Hasan, ACTED* | *Angelica Saban, MLSP* |
| *Robyn Prinz, Regional PRM Coordinator, U.S. Embassy* | *Marte Ibrahim, IOM* | *Emilia Rusu, UN Women* |
| *Elena Tibirna, National Office of Social Insurance* | *Chelsey Carr, CWS* | *Emmanuel Otika, UNHCR* |

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| *Valentina Harovschi, IFRC Moldova* | *Eugen Popescu, UNHCR* | *Mihai Rotaru, MLSP* |
| *Andrea Ballan, Don Bosco Foudation Chisinau* | *Dan Arama, Intersos* | *Bruma Nicolae, Concordia* |
| *Natalia Balta, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation* | *Ceban Roman, CCR* | *Elena Munteanu, MLSP* |
| *Nina Lozinschi, Platform for Gender Equality* | *Violeta Prepelita, CRS* | *Svetlana Cires, CRS* |
| *Tara McCoy, IMPACT-initiatives* | *Sarah Delys, IMPACT-initiatives* | *Dumitras aliona, SOS Autism* |
| *Pierre Alejandro Chacon Zambrano, UNHCR* | *Arefu Araki, UNHCR* | *Silvestru Ecaterina, MLSP* |
| *Danuele Perdetti, Helpage* | *Hlib Fursa, Logoped* | *Alexandru Tutu, UNICEF* |

**Meeting Summary: Key Discussions, Decisions, and Action Points**

| Agenda | Discussion | Decisions/ Action Points |
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| Introduction & Purpose | The co-chair opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and introducing the newly established Inclusion and Solutions Working Group (ISWG), co-chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP), UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP. The ISWG was created through the merger of the Basic Needs Working Group (BNWG) and the Cash Working Group (CWG). While these two groups will continue to meet on an ad hoc basis to address specific technical or time-bound issues, the ISWG now provides a broader and more strategic coordination platform. Additional adjustments to the structure and scope of the group may follow, as part of ongoing Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) streamlining efforts. | |
| The "Why" | The rationale for this consolidation is rooted in the evolved objectives of the 2025–2026 Refugee Response Plan (RRP), which calls for a transition from humanitarian assistance to nationally-led solutions. Achieving this requires a more harmonized coordination model, especially with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. In light of diminishing resources and reduced staffing across the response, the group also aims to consolidate engagement—focusing on fewer but more purposeful meetings that promote stronger collaboration and strategic alignment.<br><br>With global funding shifts prompting many actors to revisit their strategies, the ISWG provides a timely platform to rethink engagement—not only bridging humanitarian and development efforts, but also shifting from operational implementation to a role of technical enablement, reinforcing national and local systems to assume greater leadership in refugee inclusion.<br><br>By convening a diverse range of actors—from policy-level stakeholders to frontline responders—the group aims to better align fragmented efforts, strengthen coherence, and ensure that refugee inclusion becomes a fully integrated component of Moldova's broader development agenda. Moldova is the only country in the regional Ukraine response whose Refugee Response Plan explicitly includes host communities as a target | |

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| | group alongside refugees—a recognition of both the country's repeated exposure to socio-economic shocks and its limited access to EU structural funds as a non-member state. From the outset of the crisis, the majority of resources were channeled through humanitarian funding, which was used to support both displaced and host populations—often in a 50/50 split. As humanitarian funding declines and development financing becomes more prominent, the ISWG is advocating for the same principle of reciprocity to apply, ensuring that refugee inclusion remains a core part of nationally led development efforts. | |
| The "What" | Accordingly, the ISWG is working to translate the current structure of RCF coordination and humanitarian programming into approaches more closely aligned with national policy frameworks and administrative systems. This involves adapting sectoral priorities to fit within national planning cycles, legal frameworks, and institutional structures.<br><br>To illustrate what is meant by this translation into nationally aligned approaches, themes traditionally organized under humanitarian sector groupings—such as Basic Needs or Cash—have now been reframed into four thematic areas rooted in Moldova's social protection system:<br>• **Social Transfers** – Encompassing cash and in-kind assistance, food distributions, and similar, aligned with Moldova's non-contributory welfare schemes. These efforts also aim to promote the gradual transition from humanitarian assistance to nationally administered social assistance programs.<br>• **Housing** – Covering shelter and site management activities, with an emphasis on aligning with national strategies for social and affordable housing.<br>• **Social Infrastructure** – Involving investments in community infrastructure—such as RACs, childcare facilities, schools, and public spaces—to strengthen local service delivery and promote social cohesion.<br>• **Social Care and Insurance** – Encompassing protection services and supporting refugee inclusion in contributory systems such as pensions and health insurance.<br><br>In addition to its technical working streams, the ISWG will be supported by a strategic advisory group on social protection (SPAG), which will serve as a platform for high-level policy dialogue with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, development actors, international financial institutions, and other key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Finance, with the aim of advancing refugee-inclusive financing and embedding inclusion within national systems. | |
| Social Protection Instruments | The meeting included a visual presentation of a typical national social protection system framework. Below this structure, the group reviewed a preliminary mapping of current provisions available to individuals under Temporary Protection, highlighting areas where government services are complemented by humanitarian and development interventions. | |

The visual was described as a quick and rough way to illustrate the overall landscape—intended to consolidate different streams of support into one picture and provide an initial basis for identifying service gaps and opportunities to strengthen the Government of Moldova's capacity to meet its commitments under the Temporary Protection Regime, both nationally and locally.

The three core pillars of a typical Social Protection system:

1. **Social Assistance:** This includes instruments such as cash transfers, in-kind assistance, food distributions, energy subsidies, social housing, fee waivers for health and education, and public works programs such as "cash for work." These align closely with many of the humanitarian programs currently being implemented—such as multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA), meal provision in RACs, and WFP's cash support to hosting families. These are reframed as social transfers under a nationally coherent approach.
2. **Social Insurance:** Refugee inclusion is also gradually being explored within contributory mechanisms like health insurance, pensions, and unemployment coverage—although access often depends on formal employment and the ability to contribute. Several partners are already supporting advocacy and legal reform to expand coverage for refugees under these systems.
3. **Labour Market Interventions:** These include both active measures (e.g., skills training, job placement, language courses, financial inclusion) and passive reforms (e.g., legal frameworks and worker protections). They represent a forward-looking strategy for integrating refugees who are able to enter the labour force and contribute to the broader economy.

In the Temporary Protection Regime space, existing services such as free education, basic health coverage, the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF), and access to Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) are essential entry points. These are already being implemented with international funding but administered by government systems, laying the groundwork for sustainable national ownership.

The Humanitarian Gap Filling layer includes essential services that respond to immediate needs—such as MPCA, NFIs, cash-for-rent, language training, and peaceful coexistence projects. These interventions ensure continuity of care and dignity while bridging critical gaps in state capacity.

Finally, Development Gap Filling interventions focus on strengthening national systems and policy environments—ranging from integrated care models and infrastructure for disability support, to reforms in labour legislation, job creation, SME development, and advocacy for insurance expansion for informal workers and foreigners. This longer-term work is vital to ensuring that refugee inclusion is not a parallel track, but part of Moldova's broader development journey.

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| Cash TWG Coordinator Input | UNHCR covers MPCA assistance nationwide and IOM continues to provide cash assistance in the left bank. Other partners deliver one-off winter cash support. In 2024, the CWG made key progress toward transitioning to government-led systems by:<br>• Linking cash assistance to legal status, enabling access to national social protection schemes;<br>• Harmonizing targeting methodologies, eligibility criteria, and transfer values;<br>• Laying the groundwork for a more focused and needs-based approach to better prepare the population for future integration into government programs.<br>Further legal amendments are still required to ensure TP holders can fully access national schemes—an issue that ISWG will continue to address moving forward. | |
| Basic Needs TWG Coordinator Input | BNWG initiated the **Housing Technical Group** in 2025, with focus on long-term accommodation solutions. The group supports the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development in:<br>• Including refugees in the national social housing framework;<br>• Exploring options for affordable housing. Discussions are ongoing with both ministries and partners. | |
| The "How" | Translating Strategy into Action: To effectively support the Government of Moldova in meeting its Temporary Protection Regime (TPR) commitments, ISWG is focused on identifying practical instruments and modalities that can operationalize refugee inclusion within both national and local systems.<br><br>**1. National-Level Instruments:** Refugee inclusion is framed within Moldova's broader development architecture—anchored in the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2025–2026 and progressively aligned with:<br>• The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework,<br>• The National Program for the Phased Integration of Foreigners<br>• National Development Plan (2025–2027),<br>• And the overarching National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030".<br><br>**2. Local-Level Instruments:** The Cities of Solidarity initiative serves as an umbrella platform for localizing the refugee response by building the capacity of municipalities, local organizations, civil society, and refugee communities to lead inclusion efforts themselves. It plays a critical role in translating national commitments into concrete action at the community level, recognizing the central role of local actors in fostering refugee inclusion and resilience. Its approach is structured around the following key areas of action:<br>• Filling gaps in services and access<br>• Building local partnerships and community networks<br>• Investing in social infrastructure and shared spaces<br>• Strengthening local capacity and governance | |

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| | • Enabling civic participation and co-design of solutions<br>• Unlocking development finance and engaging donors<br>• Driving the transition to sustainable, locally led solutions<br>• Supporting innovation and strategic recalibration | |
| The National Program on the Phased Integration of Foreigners | The *National Program on the Phased Integration of Foreigners (2025–2027)* is a government-led, multi-annual strategy that falls under the broader *National Development Plan (2025–2027)* and aligns with the *National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030"***.** The vision is to create a society in which foreigners—including TP holders and other displaced persons—can fully integrate and contribute to Moldova's economic and social development.<br><br>The national program represents a shift from humanitarian and UN-led programming to a *government-led development model*, financed by the state budget and supported by development partners. This gradual transition is designed to ensure sustainable integration while building national capacity.<br><br>This strategic shift is operationalized through concrete sectoral priorities defined within the program, with dedicated objectives, targets, and financing estimates across key inclusion areas such as social protection and housing:<br><br>**Social Protection:**<br>*Objective:* Ensure access for displaced persons to a comprehensive package of social protection services, including cash assistance, employment support, child protection, GBV services.<br>*Target:* 75% of displaced persons covered by social protection schemes by 2027.<br>*Estimated Cost:* EUR 78 million, of which EUR 60 million is planned for refugee cash assistance.<br>This does not imply an immediate transfer of humanitarian cash programs to the government, but rather a gradual handover process, supported and monitored by development actors.<br><br>**Housing:**<br>*Objective:* Strengthen national capacity to provide adequate and dignified housing for displaced persons.<br>*Target:* 50% of displaced persons to have their housing needs adequately met by 2027.<br>*Estimated Cost:* EUR 2 million.<br>Planned actions include updating eligibility criteria for social housing and expanding access through national systems.<br><br>The National Program is expected to be approved soon. Once finalized, detailed documentation and sectoral planning will be shared with this working group. | |

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| | MLSP requests that the cash support component under the Small Repairs Programme be expanded to include all beneficiaries who request this assistance. It is further advised that the eligibility criteria be revised to allow access for all refugees**,** in line with efforts to support their integration into the host community**.**<br><br>Participants inquired whether the ISWG is involved in the implementation or coordination of the National Program. It was clarified that the process is government-led, with each sector coordinated by the respective line ministry. | |
| Local Action Plan Framework | As part of the broader *Cities of Solidarity* umbrella initiative, the Local Action Plan (LAP) Framework was introduced as a practical tool to support evidence-based, locally led refugee inclusion. The framework consists of three interconnected components designed to identify, plan, and communicate strategic investments that benefit both refugee and host communities.<br><br>1. **City Profile**: The first component is the development of a web-based city profile, grounded in the Community Profile Survey developed by UNHCR and implemented by REACH. The survey gathers refugee perceptions at the neighborhood level, capturing data on access to services, participation in community life, and urgent needs. By collecting the residential locations of refugee households, the tool introduces a spatial dimension that allows for an area-based analysis. In parallel, municipalities contribute GIS data on public infrastructure and service delivery capacities. When these two datasets are overlaid, the resulting spatialized socio-economic profile reveals geographic inequalities and areas of unmet need. This dual-source evidence base helps pinpoint exactly where resources should be directed for maximum impact.<br><br>2. **Action Plan**: The second component translates the insights from the City Profile into a curated portfolio of strategic projects. These projects directly respond to identified service gaps, spatial disparities, and priority needs—ranging from infrastructure investments (“hard” measures) to social programming (“soft” measures). Each proposed intervention outlines what will be done, where, by whom, over what timeline, at what cost, and with what expected benefit. The end product serves as both a strategic funding appeal and a digital concept note, supporting municipalities in mobilizing resources from national or international partners—especially where local proposal-writing capacity is limited.<br><br>3. **Results Showcase**: The third component focuses on communicating the long-term value of both past and planned investments. Through before-and-after visuals, service capacity data, and concrete examples, it demonstrates how inclusive interventions have produced sustainable improvements rather than short-term fixes. In some peripheral areas, the presence of refugees has helped sustain schools and social care services that might otherwise have closed, effectively revitalizing local systems. The Showcase also highlights the broader dividends of refugee inclusion— so not only social, but economic (e.g., MPCA multipliers, contributions to GDP), as well as demographic (e.g., countering emigration, aging population, and a shrinking tax base). It is intended not only to inspire donor confidence and secure continued funding | |

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| | during the transition from humanitarian to nationally led systems, but also to encourage sustained government commitment to refugee inclusion—demonstrating that such investments benefit not only displaced populations, but also strengthen services, resilience, and opportunities for host communities. | |
| Partner Contributions: Mapping current activities and identifying gaps | The co-chair proposed a list of key activities to initiate discussion that partners may already be implementing in support of refugee inclusion, helping participants locate their current work within a broader transition framework — from humanitarian programming toward integration with national systems.<br><br>The proposed activities span multiple levels of engagement, including:<br>• Community-based gap-filling and referral systems<br>• Capacity building for local actors and case management<br>• Support to infrastructure and social services<br>• Policy advice, technical assistance, and systems maintenance<br>• Strategic financing and accountability reforms<br><br>Participants were invited to consider where they are most active along this continuum—from community-level engagement to national policy influence—and how their work aligns with or complements existing government-led efforts. They were also encouraged to reflect on any gaps, duplications, or opportunities for stronger coordination across actors, who is doing what, where, and how, and to identify potential entry points for greater collaboration and co-leadership in the inclusion space.<br><br>In which areas are they currently active—such as social transfers, housing, employment services, or legal support? At what scale do they operate—community, municipal, national policy level, or cross-cutting? How do the activities complement or fill gaps in government-led systems, and are there practical examples of successful bridges between humanitarian programming and national services?<br><br>The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) expressed strong support for the establishment of the ISWG and the activities proposed under its framework. Several of these initiatives had previously been addressed in separate coordination groups, and their consolidation into a single platform was welcomed as a means to promote more efficient collaboration, improve implementation, and better address refugee-related challenges at the community level. MLSP confirmed it will engage all relevant departments—including those responsible for child protection and labour market integration—and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting refugees within the limits of available resources. While current operations of the Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) are fully funded through external support, the Ministry noted that financial provisions for sustaining these centres have been included in the 2026–2027 national budget. | |

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| | The Ministry proposed that monthly financial assistance be discontinued for refugees residing in RACs, as they are already provided with food and shelter. Instead, the Ministry recommended that cash assistance be redirected to refugees who are living in the community and actively pursuing integration. The financial support should be guided by a needs-based and equitable approach, ensuring that limited resources are prioritized for those with fewer forms of institutional support.<br><br>The co-chair highlighted that cash-for-rent assistance provided by multiple actors serves as a critical stabilizing factor for refugees, enabling them to pursue employment, enroll their children in school, and begin rebuilding their lives within host communities. However, many refugees in Moldova face heightened vulnerabilities compared to other contexts and are unable to integrate into the labor market. A residual caseload—particularly individuals with disabilities, chronic health conditions or other vulnerabilities limiting self-reliance—remains dependent on ongoing support in RACs. It was suggested that a systematic analysis of the socio-economic conditions of RAC residents be undertaken to better understand barriers to integration and to inform evidence-based resource mobilization for sustaining these facilities. | |
| Next Steps | The co-chair team presented the 2025 Inter-Agency Calendar, outlining key coordination and reporting milestones, including quarterly RRP reporting, winter strategy planning, contingency planning, and donor engagement. This overview was intended to help partners align their activities with the broader inter-agency planning cycle.<br><br>Participants were encouraged to reflect on the added value of the ISWG and how it could best support their efforts. The participants were invited to provide feedback on the preferred frequency of meetings, suggesting options such as regular monthly meetings, thematic sessions, or a more phased approach beginning with bilateral consultations, followed by a strategic planning workshop to bring stakeholders together.<br><br>Participants were asked to share their needs and priorities regarding practical tools and outputs, including the potential development of a mapping of actors and activities, a legal framework analysis, or support in defining the ISWG strategy and workplan. | |
| **Next meeting:** | **Tuesday, 27/05/2025, 14:00-15:30** | |