Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

Comrat Local Refugee Coordination Forum Meeting

Meeting Details	
Date	*13 11 2025*
Time	*11:15 – 12:20*
Chair	*Natalia Stelea, Senior Field Associate, UNHCR*
Co-chair	*Comrat Townhall, CDA, Arina Rosca*
Reporting	*Natalia Stelea, Senior Field Associate, UNHCR*
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Agenda

1. Protection updates – recent developments and key highlights;
2. Updates in the UNHCR financial assistance programme in Moldova;
3. Education updates – mapping of Romanian language courses;
4. Updates from partners
5. AOB

Information collection and relevant links

Moldova operational data portal: Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation
Local Refugee Coordination operational data portal: https://data.unhcr.org/en/search
Services Advisor Moldova

Participants

Kyrylo Pryhodko, UNHCR	Erinet Mihail, IGM	*Lilia Licova, Ucraina*
Sean Sager, UNHCR	Furtuna Dmitrii, Laolalta	*Stoianova Svetlana, PIN*
Stelea Natalia, UNHCR	Alexandr Cazac, Caritas Moldova	*Cissa Marina, PIN*
Arina Rosca, CDA	Metbeiciuc Ludmila, Ucraina	*Vlah Elena, Ucraina*
Marina Grama, NRC	Gargakic Alina, Caritas Moldova	*Cekal Maria, Ucraina*
Olha Florinska, OHCHR	Ialama Zinaida, Ucraina	*Terzi Maria, Ucraina*
Colicic Galina, Ucraina	Balan Natalia, Ucraina	*Glavanari Olga, Ucraina*
	Curgova Ecaterina, Ucraina	

Summary of discussions and agreements / action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions

Introduction
 	
1. Protection updates – recent developments and key highlights;
	UNHCR opened the LRCF meeting by welcoming all participants and expressing appreciation for their presence. A short round of introductions followed, allowing participants to briefly present themselves and their respective organizations. Once introductions were completed, the meeting proceeded with the planned agenda.
	
	Temporary Protection
	• Currently, there is no indication of what will happen in Moldova when Temporary Protection (TP) expires at the end of February 2026.
	• It is likely that Moldova will align with developments in the EU. In June 2025, the EU Council, following a European Commission proposal, extended TP until March 2026. At the same time, the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation to guide Member States to plan a coordinated transition, from TP to national legal statuses (work, study, residency).
	• Several EU member states (e.g., Poland, Czechia, Italy, Romania) have introduced or announced dedicated residence pathways for Ukrainians, providing more stable legal rights than TP. Other countries continue to rely on general immigration pathways and existing residence categories.
	• UNHCR is currently conducting an internal assessment of different options for Moldova, alongside consultations with refugees to gather their perspectives on what should happen. No further national discussion on this issue is expected until after the elections.
	• Partners are invited to share feedback, based on their field interactions with refugees, on whether communities would prefer:
	  ○ a continued extension of Temporary Protection, or
	  ○ opportunities to transition to other legal statuses available in Moldova.
	
	UNHCR shared an update from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine regarding recent changes to border-crossing procedures for male citizens aged 18-22.	

- As of 27 August, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine announced updated rules permitting Ukrainian men aged 18–22 to travel abroad during the ongoing state of martial law.
- To cross the border, individuals must present:
  - a valid international passport, and
  - a military registration document (paper or electronic version), upon request by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU).
- It is anticipated that this change may result in an increased number of young Ukrainian men crossing into Moldova, including those who may remain temporarily or longer-term. UNHCR and partners are monitoring the situation and will share additional updates as trends emerge.

Changes in Ukrainian passport regulations

- The Government of Ukraine has ended the temporary passport measures introduced in February 2022 at the onset of the full-scale invasion. These previous emergency measures allowed:

  - extension of expired international passports, and
  - adding children's data to parents' passports.

<u>The following measures are no longer valid.</u>

- **A regular passport services have now been fully resumed through:**
  - Ukrainian embassies and consulates abroad, and
  - Document Service Centers (DP "Document") abroad

Key Updates

- Ukraine is returning to international standards for passport issuance.
- Validity periods:
  - For adults (16+ years): **maximum 10 years**
  - For children (under 16): **maximum 4 years**

2.Updates in the UNHCR financial assistance programme in Moldova;	• Each citizen must now have their own individual passport: children can no longer be included in their parents' documents.
	• "Extended" passports and passports with children's entries may cause travel difficulties, as most countries and airlines only recognize biometric passports issued for up to 10 years. Airlines follow ICAO international standards and may refuse boarding to passengers with extended passports.
	For Ukrainians Abroad
	• Those who need to return to Ukraine but face border issues due to extended passports should contact the nearest Ukrainian embassy or consulate to obtain a Certificate for Return to Ukraine ("white passport").
	  ○ Issued the same day if identity and citizenship are confirmed.
	  ○ Free for children under 16; consular fees apply for adults.
	For Ukrainians in Ukraine
	• Those who cannot enter an EU country with an extended passport should apply for a new biometric passport at any Document Service Center, CNAP, or migration office in Ukraine (regardless of place of registration).
	
	UNHCR Financial Assistance
	
	UNHCR informed participants that **starting in November 2025**, additional prioritization criteria will be applied to the cash assistance programme. As a result, **some individuals currently receiving assistance may no longer remain eligible** from November onwards.
	
	A reassessment and verification exercise is being conducted from mid-October through the end of November to review the needs of current beneficiaries. All beneficiaries who remain eligible and successfully complete the verification will receive their October payment by the end of October. Following the assessment, households will be notified by SMS at the end of November regarding their eligibility status for continued cash assistance.
	
	UNHCR also informed that enrolment interviews for new arrivals from Ukraine are temporarily paused during the verification and reassessment period. Enrolment for newcomers is expected to resume in December. *A reconsideration mechanism will be available for individuals found*	

	ineligible. Beneficiaries who receive exclusion SMS notifications will have the opportunity to request a review of their case two weeks after receiving the message.	
3.Rights of refugee children with disabilities from Ukraine to access social benefits	**Rights of Refugee Children with Disabilities. UNHCR** briefly highlighted key information from the leaflet on the Rights of Refugee Children with Disabilities**,** which outlines how families from Ukraine can access disability-related benefits in Moldova. Eligibility requires both temporary protection status **and a** disability certificate issued by the National Council for Determination of Disability and Work Capacity. **The main benefits available include:** • State social allowance**,** varying according to the degree of disability; • Allowance for care, accompaniment, and supervision for caregivers of children with severe disabilities; • Transportation compensation**,** including additional support for children with locomotor disabilities. The Council for Disability determines the degree of disability within 30 working days after the full application is registered at the territorial office. For more information follow the link: click here Participants confirmed that the procedure for obtaining disability certificates for refugee children in Moldova follows the same steps as for local children. It was noted that some children already have their disability certificates automatically extended in Ukraine. For those whose certificates are not extended in Ukraine, the renewal process in Moldova has been carried out successfully. The only noted challenge is that all required documentation and processing are conducted in Chișinău.	
4.Education updates – mapping of Romanian language courses;	**UNHCR informed participants about the ongoing Ukrainian Studies component**, an optional online education programme offered for Ukrainian children studying in Moldovan schools who wish to maintain a connection with the Ukrainian curriculum. **The programme allows children to:**	

- continue full-time studies in Moldovan schools, while
- receiving complementary Ukrainian online education (up to 5–8 hours per week).

Currently, 61 schools provide access to the Ukrainian Studies online component. The curriculum is reduced and focuses only on subjects essential to Ukrainian cultural, linguistic, and civic identity—subjects not taught within the Moldovan curriculum.

These include:

- Ukrainian language and literature
- History of Ukraine
- Geography of Ukraine
- Fundamentals of law
- Defence of Ukraine

The programme follows a fixed schedule, aligned with the needs of families. Teaching generally starts at the beginning of the academic year; however, children may join during the year if places become available. The programme is available for pupils in grades 7–11.

Students in grades 9–11 may receive additional online support for preparation for Ukrainian national exams (GIA and/or NMT). Children enrolled in the Ukrainian Studies component may receive Ukrainian educational documents with grades in Ukrainian Studies subjects, recognized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Enrolment is available online at: **https://ukrainian.studies.mon.gov.ua/**

Following several rounds of surveys and consultations conducted with refugees, one of the most frequently expressed requests was the need for greater access to Romanian language learning opportunities**.**

Members of the **Education Working Group (EWG)** prepared a mapping of Romanian language courses currently available for refugee children in the Comrat region. Courses are conducted after school hours in several educational institutions and are open to both primary and secondary school-aged children.

5.Information updates from partners	**<u>Theoretical Lyceum "Dmitrii Mavrodi", Str. Ostrovschi 2</u>** **Target group:** primary and secondary school-aged children **Level:** Intermediate **<u>School at 144 Lenin Street</u>** • Target group: primary and secondary school-aged children • Level: **Beginner** **<u>Theoretical Lyceum "Dmitrii Mavrodi", Str. Ostrovschi 2</u>** **Target group:** primary and secondary school-aged children **Level:** Beginner These classes are designed to help refugee pupils strengthen their Romanian language skills to better integrate into the Moldovan education system. However, current language classes are available only for school-aged children**,** leaving a gap for adult learners. Refugees highlighted that improving their Romanian language skills is essential for social integration, navigating public services, and supporting their children in school, and they requested **that** Romanian language courses be organised specifically for adults**.** Many refugees noted that an **online format**, especially if offered outside standard working hours, would allow working adults to participate more easily. While the Ministry of Education currently organises Romanian language classes for both refugees and local residents, the number of available places is limited**,** and registration is typically conducted only once per year. Refugees also mentioned that information about these opportunities is poorly disseminated, and by the time the information reaches them, all available slots are already occupied. As a result, many individuals who register are unable to join due to the limited number of places. **NRC – Housing Improvement Programme** • NRC presented its programme on improving housing conditions for refugees and vulnerable households in Moldova.	

	• The programme focuses on essential home repairs aimed at improving safety, dignity, and overall living conditions. • NRC conducts technical assessments through on-site visits by engineers, followed by jointly agreed repair plans with eligible households. • Support includes provision of materials and labour for repairs that meet safety and vulnerability criteria. • The process is structured in clear steps: application, eligibility review, home assessment, confirmation of works, and completion by contractors. • Before-and-after examples of completed interventions were showcased to demonstrate impact. *Additional information, contact details and other materials is available in the files attached.* **Refugee participant:** A refugee participant highlighted the high cost of rent and noted that many Moldovan families have been living abroad for extended periods, leaving behind properties in Moldova that legally belong to them but lack proper documentation. In the absence of official papers, residents cannot take legal possession of these homes, cannot sell them, and cannot invest in repairs or renovations. She stressed that resolving such cases often requires lengthy court procedures, sometimes lasting many years, in order to establish ownership of family properties. The participant shared that she is currently living in such a house. Although the informal owners are willing to sell it to her—or, in some cases, even donate it—the process cannot move forward due to the lack of legal documents. She asked whether INGOs could support or provide guidance on such situations, given the significant implications for housing stability among refugees. The participant also expressed her appreciation to all those involved in addressing an issue raised in a previous meeting related to documentation required for school enrolment. She noted that children previously needed to present original documents from Ukraine, but	

	following recent advocacy efforts, schools now accept copies of these documents for enrolment.	
Next meeting: TBC	Participants can access the platform via the following link: Services Advisor Moldova.	