

Inter-Agency Coordination Forum Meeting (RCF) - Hungary Ukraine Emergency Situation - 7 July 2023

AGENDA:

- 1. Introduction and Operational updates
- 2. MOI Education Department: Access to Education for Refugee Children in Hungary by Ms. Erika Palfi, Head of Department for Public Education Content Development / Ministry of Interior cation
- **3. EU policy approach on access to education for beneficiaries of Temporary Protection** by Csilla Volgyi / Policy Officer / European Commission
- 4. Testimonies from Refugee Students in Hungary
- 5. Back to School recommendations and cross-sectoral support for school integration
- 6. Any Other Business (AoB)

PARTICIPANTS:

58 participants; online/in-person meeting with ENG/HUN translation.

CO-CHAIR:

Ms. Sara Yasan, Education SubWG Chair

Introduction: This RCF meeting is co-chaired by the Education SubWG (ESWG). It aims to prioritize refugee education, promoting collaboration between the ESWG, government, and humanitarian organizations to enroll and engage refugee children in schools, generating actionable cross-sectoral recommendations to support their integration into local schools in Hungary. The recommendation note for this meeting has been made available on the RCF webpage.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES:

- Q2 reporting deadline July 14 (3 components: indicators, narratives + pictures, funding).
- The 2023 MSNA data collection is ongoing, 1/3 of surveys were collected; preliminary results are expected by August.
- The planning for the 2024 RRP is scheduled for Q3 2023 with a set of workshops in Sept/Oct.
- Ad hoc RCF on funding opportunities by the Visegrad Fund scheduled for July 12, 10-11 am.

MOI Education Department

Access to Education for Refugee Children in Hungary

Ms. Erika Palfi,
Head of
Department for
Public Education
Content
Development /
Ministry of
Interior cation

The meeting commenced with an introduction and an overview of the different responsible bodies involved in the education sector, with the Ministry of Interior in charge of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, while higher education/vocational education/training falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation. MOI reported that as of June there were 1,164 children from Ukraine in pre-school education/kindergarten, out of which 349 were Hungarian nationals. Additionally, there were 3,692 Ukrainian students in primary and secondary classes, with 1,156 being Hungarian nationals. Through the Government Decree 117/2022 (III.22) it was established that children of compulsory school age entitled to temporary protection are eligible for 130 000 HUF/month/pupil as supplementary allowance and 5 hours per week of individual preparation/learning support. The monthly allowance is disbursed through a central system. The assignment of Ukrainian students to the grade depends on the decision of the school principal; an important assigning factor is the level of Hungarian language skills, together with the level of preparation, and previous studies. For students without Hungarian language skills, catch-up activities and attendance at language classes are recommended and effective, given the quick learning abilities of younger students. All schools and kindergartens were advised to accept children from Ukraine and support the enrollment of refugee children in schools. Refugee children are also eligible for free supply of textbooks and learning materials; a Hungarian-as-aforeign language textbook was added to the textbook list in April 2022, covering grades 3 to 8 (notably, the textbook to acquire Hungarian language skills was developed by the Transcarpathian Hungarian Teachers' Association and is available free of charge). In cooperation with the Education Committee of the Transcarpathian County Council, hundreds of Ukrainian language textbooks, mainly suitable for lower school pupils, were delivered in Budapest. Ukrainian students who have not applied for temporary protection because they are staying in Hungary for a short period of time can also receive help to continue their studies from public institutions: digital tools, assistance with locating suitable educational



EU policy approach to education for TP holders

Ms. Csilla Volgyi, Policy Officer, European Commission facilities, and the availability of teaching aid. Ukrainian students are eligible for specialized mental health and psychosocial services through school/kindergarten psychologies.

EU policy approach on access to education for beneficiaries of Temporary Protection

Under the Temporary Protection Directive, Member States should grant persons under 18 years of age access to the education system under the same conditions as nationals of the host Member State. They may also grant adults enjoying temporary protection access to the general education system.

- 1. The EU works on supporting the inclusion of people from Ukraine into the education systems of EU Member States. More information is available here. In particular:
 - In June 2022, the European Commission released a practical manual to support the education of Ukrainian children in the EU. The manual draws from lessons learned and peer learning events since February 2022 and provides valuable insights and best practices to ensure uninterrupted access to education for displaced learners from Ukraine. It incorporates input from organizations like UNICEF, UNHCR, ministries, and the NESET network. The manual covers education principles and practices for inclusive education, spanning early childhood education to upper secondary education (0-18 years). It targets various stakeholders, including teachers and national authorities. The Commission highlights the importance of ensuring that all children have a place in schools in their host countries. The manual suggests measures such as preparing schools and teachers with additional staff, guidance, and training, providing targeted activities like psycho-social and language support, and engaging with displaced families to maintain connections with Ukraine. Long-term measures to promote inclusive education for all learners and support early childhood education and care are also emphasized for enhancing children's well-being.
 - <u>European School Education Platform</u>: A dedicated landing page on education and support for Ukrainian refugees with free online professional development courses/webinars.
 - New Ukrainian School Hub: providing extracurricular, non-formal educational resources.
 - eTwinning is an online peer-to-peer community platform for teachers and school staff. It offers dedicated discussion groups for teachers and their pupils in Ukraine and neighboring countries. The platform aims to assist European teachers in promoting inclusion and diversity within their classrooms. Displaced teachers from Ukraine who establish connections with schools in their host countries are granted full access to the eTwinning community, enabling them to initiate their specialized projects.
 - <u>Erasmus+</u> is a grant to study for up to 12 months at their receiving higher education institutions in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Erasmus+ program. It includes a new Erasmus+ Online Language Support platform that helps students, learners, teaching staff, professors, and educators, who participate in Erasmus+ projects, to acquire language skills.
- 2. Furthermore, the EU aims to coordinate and cooperate with Ukrainian authorities closely. On June 15, 2023, an Education Cooperation Arrangement was signed between the European Commission and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. This agreement aims to build upon existing cooperation, expand potential collaboration, and enhance support for the education of displaced children. It includes initiatives such as promoting cooperation between schools, utilizing online platforms, raising awareness about Erasmus+ program opportunities, encouraging greater involvement of Ukrainian organizations in Erasmus+ international actions, facilitating the recognition of academic qualifications, and strengthening the capacities of Ukrainian sports and youth organizations.

Next steps, as per the Communication on Temporary Protection: 1) assistance will be provided to Member States in increasing school enrollment rates through the EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine; 2) Efforts will be intensified to engage Ukrainian authorities and encourage parents to send their children to schools in the EU. 3) Initiatives will be undertaken to facilitate the recognition of academic qualifications obtained in Member States within Ukraine. 4) Ongoing support will be provided to teachers and schools through online materials, training courses, and sharing of good practices, focusing on language teaching, psycho-social support, and inclusive education. 5) Member States will be encouraged to fully utilize the skills and expertise of displaced educational staff from Ukraine. 6) Lastly, implementing capacity building in higher education will be emphasized as part of the Erasmus+ program.



Ukrainian refugee students in Hungary

Testimonies from Refugee Students in Hungary

4 Ukrainian refugee students, ranging from grades 6 to 10, shared their experiences as refugee students enrolled in Hungarian classes. They provided insights on three key questions: the positive aspects they have encountered, the challenges they have faced, and their suggestions for encouraging and facilitating school enrollment and participation.

Sasha initially faced challenges with her language and she felt strange; however, she eventually made friends. At first, she had passive participation in activities due to the language barrier and experienced bullying, with some teachers being unsupportive and even yelling at her. A suggestion was made to assign teachers who speak English or Ukrainian to refugee children and to make the school environment more colorful, as the building was predominantly grey and had a negative impact.

Dasha's biggest obstacle was the language barrier, but English was helpful, and both fellow students and teachers provided assistance. Learning the language on her own was a significant challenge. She was the only Ukrainian student in her school and expressed the need for more Ukrainian peers or a teacher who could directly support her with the language.

Pasha felt welcomed in the school, and one teacher helped with Hungarian-Ukrainian translation. However, two Ukrainian girls in the school often faced bullying, such as name-calling and misplacement of personal belongings. The boys in the school protected the girls. Pasha suggested that it would be beneficial if the teachers could speak English.

Roman encountered difficulties in following many subjects taught in Hungarian. As a result, he was transferred to English classes instead. He experienced bullying, possibly due to Hungarian boys trying to impress Hungarian girls. Roman proposed that it would be beneficial to group Ukrainian children in one class and have an opportunity first to learn Hungarian to catch up. He mentioned that there are 100 Ukrainian children across all grades in the school. Some teachers expressed the opinion that Ukrainian children were not smart enough, and Roman found much of the material too easy for him because he was placed in 6th grade despite being academically advanced.

Back to School recommendatio

ns

Mr. Balázs Dezsényi, Education Officer, UNICEF (on behalf of the Inter-Agency ESWG) The ESWG (Education Sub-Working Group) developed an Advocacy Note to support the school enrollment and participation of refugee children in Hungary. The ESWG comprises more than 50 partners, including local and international NGOs, international organizations, ministry colleagues, and donor representatives. Partners of the ESWG emphasize the importance of including refugee children in schools and ensuring their educational progress. This helps develop their social and emotional skills, facilitates social integration, and expands their prospects.

The ESWG calls for action in several key areas. Firstly, parents should be informed and involved in their children's education. Secondly, Hungarian schools need support in their daily work with refugee children, including teacher training, hiring additional staff, and establishing clear processes for hiring refugee teachers and psycho-social support staff. Thirdly, inclusive schools should be advocated for and promoted, with support for teachers, multiculturalism, respect for diversity, anti-racist practices, and gender equality. Fourthly, schools should provide a safe environment for all, addressing the causes of violent behavior, discrimination, and bullying. Fifthly, support should be provided for children with diverse needs, including certification and accreditation, language classes, literacy, numeracy programs, and individualized support plans for children with special needs. Lastly, multiple pathways for learning and entering the job market should be offered, including adequate learning environments, youth programs, psychosocial support, skill training, vocational opportunities, and learning-to-earning programs for adolescents above the age of 16.



Cross-sectoral support for school integration

(RCF)

The Regional Refugee Plan emphasizes the importance of education for refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, prioritizing access to education and the enrollment of refugee children in national schools. Cross-sectoral collaboration between RCF members, ESWG actors, and national departments on school enrollment and participation is crucial for creating inclusive learning environments. The following cross-sectoral recommendations aim to support safe and inclusive school enrollment, complementing interventions in accommodations, mental health, and community engagement to ensure successful integration into the formal education system. The full list of recommendations is available here.

The Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) emphasizes the importance of enhancing support services for refugee children from Ukraine in various areas:

- Accommodation and housing play a crucial role in promoting school enrollment by providing stability, proximity to schools, and appropriate spaces for studying.
- Health and mental health support, including psycho-social services and training for teachers, are essential for the well-being of refugee children.
- Community engagement helps parents navigate the education system and raises awareness of the benefits of education.
- Social cohesion and integration can be promoted through cultural exchange programs and mentorship initiatives.
- Addressing basic needs such as food, clothing, and hygiene supplies is crucial to ensuring comfort and consistent school attendance.
- Cash-based interventions and livelihood support alleviate financial constraints and enable families to prioritize education.
- Lastly, access to livelihood for parents, proper digital equipment, and scholarships for adults and youth in care systems are vital for supporting the educational journey.