



## Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group (IREWG)

### IREWG Monthly Meeting – 07 September 2023

<b>Meeting Details: Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group Monthly Meeting</b>	
<b>Date</b>	07 September 2023
<b>Time</b>	13:00-14:30
<b>Chair</b>	Valentina Olaru (MER) Loujine Khoury (UNICEF)
<b>Co-Chair</b>	Katherine Lampe and Fadia Jbara (UNHCR)
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:valentina.olaru@mec.gov.md">valentina.olaru@mec.gov.md</a> <a href="mailto:lkhoury@unicef.org">lkhoury@unicef.org</a> <a href="mailto:lampe@unhcr.org">lampe@unhcr.org</a> <a href="mailto:jbarafa@unhcr.org">jbarafa@unhcr.org</a>
<b>Agenda</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>MER updates regarding the:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Procedures to enroll Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools and status update for the MER Instruction that was released in this regard.</li><li>Updates on enrollment numbers of Ukrainian children for the new school year 2023/2024</li><li>Priorities of the Ministry of Education for the education sector as presented by MER on the donors meeting on Friday, 4 August.</li></ul></li><li>Temporary Protection updates</li><li>Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) consolidation process and updates.</li><li>Presentation of Education Assessment main findings.</li><li>Partners Presentation</li><li>AoB (ActivityInfo updates, mapping tools, Winterization Plan updates)</li></ol>	
<b>Information collection and relevant links</b>	
Activity Info Platform: <a href="https://www.activityinfo.org/">https://www.activityinfo.org/</a>	
<b>Participants</b>	



- Katherine Lampe - UNHCR	- Valentina Olaru – MER	- Tatiana Zalozj - Terre des hommes Moldova
- Fadia Jbara - UNHCR	- Dmitrii Surovtov_- _IsraAID	- Lamis Al Hasan- NRC
- Loujine Khoury - UNICEF	- Joanna Filopoulos - REACH	- Andrea Ballan - Fundatia Don Bosco
- Eugenio Carrilo - PIN	- Camelia Corbu - ICRC	- Eloi Rouillon - WeWorld Moldova
- Ion Gonta - World Bank	- Ana PALII, Solidarites International	- Martha Glover-Short - CRS
- Ion Duminica - Coalition Roma Voice	- Olesea Cotiujanu - Human Rights Education, Child Rights Information Center	- Dina Zamfirova - UNHCR
- Marin Alla – CVR	- Mihai Cotorobai - PIN	
- Lucy Strickland – Plan International	- Liviu Ciocan - DRC	
- Tatiana Pusca – CRS	- Olga Gordila-Bobeico - UNFPA	
- Natasa Omerovic – IOM	- Emmanuel Otika - Basic Needs Working Group (UNHCR)	

### Summary of discussions and agreements/action points

Agenda	Discussion	Actions Points
<b>1. MER updates</b>	<p>As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, the number of Ukrainian Children enrolled in general education (grades 1-12) was 1,259, with an additional 644 children enrolled in preschool.</p> <p><i>*Note: updated numbers shared from MER on 11 September refer to updated numbers of enrolled children in general educations and preschools as the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,491 children in general education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grades 1 - 4 (primary): 744 children</li> <li>Grades 5 – 9 (secondary): 687 children</li> <li>Grades 10 -12 (upper secondary): 60</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 614 children in Preschools (318 girls, 296 boys)</li> </ul> <p>MER noted that if further disaggregation is requested by district, MER will provide it as well in the upcoming meetings. For the moment, the highest numbers of enrolment are registered in Chisinau with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MER to provide data disaggregated by district and sex.</li> </ul>



207 pre-schoolers and 643 school-aged children, followed by Balti with 53 pre-schoolers and 44 school-aged children. In other districts, the numbers of enrolment are lower than in Chisinau and Balti.

The [MER Order](#) with the updated guidelines on the enrolment of Ukrainian Refugee Children in education institutions in Moldova was published on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. The order focuses on simplified guidelines for the enrolment of Ukrainian children, who arrived in the Republic of Moldova after the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, in Moldovan schools. As for third country nationals, another separate order will be published by MER.

MER specified the supporting documents requested for registration in schools :

- ID Card of child's parent/guardian
- Child's birth certificate or ID
- A health record for the child; in case it is not available, any health certificate issued by the Health System in Moldova will suffice. If parents/caregivers are delayed in getting the health record certificate through the Moldovan Health System, they can also sign an affidavit saying that they will acquire this document in a reasonable time.
- Application template, available at MER website for both schools and preschools. Caregivers and parents don't necessarily have to fill in the templates as long as they can provide in writing all the needed information.
- Educational records or certificates for the child. All forms are accepted even without stamps or hand signatures. Also scanned copied are accepted. If these documents are not available or attainable from the schools in Ukraine, the parents must sign an affidavit stating which class the child was attending in the Ukrainian system. At the Moldovan educational institutions, there is a committee that decides to which class to assign the child depending on the background of the child concerned. For KGs, an ID and a health certificate are needed.

Auditor status is completely dropped. Therefore, students who were only attending as auditors in Moldovan schools, will have to decide whether they want to officially enrol in the schools or want to be connected online to the Ukrainian Education System. If they want to continue their learning online, schools can provide a safe space with computers and internet connection for their online education. For former auditor students who wish to officially enrol in Moldovan schools, the same set of previously mentioned documents is required. If the documents have been submitted earlier, there is no need for resubmission.



MER noted that there is an issue of a funding gap as the Ukrainian children newly enrolled in schools were not considered in the current MER budget. Therefore, the months of September to December will be difficult for some schools as some don't have a sufficient budget for their students.

For Ukrainian students who are enrolled in Moldovan schools and will be sitting for exams, MER provides a lot of facilitations regarding the Romanian language classes and other subjects whenever needed to ease the process for them. For students going to upper secondary, if they have any document from Ukraine certifying that they graduated from Gymnasium in Ukraine, it's accepted without any equivalency. If they don't have any documents certifying that, they can go to upper secondary without any tests, and before their graduation in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade they will have time to either bring the documents certifying their lower secondary education or sit for Moldovan exams (either at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade or 11<sup>th</sup> grade) to retake the 9<sup>th</sup> grade exams. MER also has contacts with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education to facilitate the exams being taken online with MoE Ukraine.

MER continues to provide a flexible option for children to enrol formally in Moldovan schools or continue their learning online and preferably in a school setting. The educational institution will help them through the Tech Labs available so far by UNICEF and partners' fundings, but if schools don't have tech labs, any room that is safe and has internet connection and needed ICT, can be used to facilitate online learning for these children. The monitoring and mentoring in these spaces, however, becomes another point to be discussed further and sorted out as the school staff including teachers will be working additional hours and taking on new tasks. MER cannot pay for new staff at this time.

Regarding unaccompanied and separated children who are not with their parents in Moldova but have a legal guardian, they will also be able to enrol in schools. The order covers one point in this regard.

A question was raised regarding Roma children from Ukraine and their enrolment in Moldovan schools. One of the partners noted several issues regarding the enrolment of Roma children in schools in Moldova including the issue of parents who are not literate and don't know how to fill in the application. The same applies for Moldovan Roma children. It was also noted that some parents also are unmotivated or uninterested in enrolling their children in schools. Most Roma families live in private accommodation or in host communities and it can be hard to target them with interventions. There are many other challenges that were mentioned regarding the integration of Roma children in Moldovan schools. Some children are not academically ready to go to school and some schools are not ready to welcome Roma children and ensure their smooth integration.

MER clarified the following points:



- Regarding parents' literacy, parents can check on the school application what is required to be submitted. They can find somebody who will help with that.
- If child is in an extended family, and there is a legal guardian who is not the child's parent, they have the right also to enrol the children in school.
- Regarding institutions not accepting children, the law of Moldova applies to all citizens regardless of ethnicity, and discriminatory actions taken by educational institutions, or their staff are punishable by law.
- Regarding available places in schools, some parents want their child to go to a particular school even if there are no places. But schools cannot accept more than 40 pupils in class.
- If a child doesn't have the required educational background, at school, they look at his/her age and what he/she knows, and decide which class to enrol the child in. An Individual Educational/learning plan should ensure the inclusion aspect in teaching and learning. In terms of discrimination, any incidents, should be conveyed to the MER as there is a legal and punishable act for refusing a child based on ethnicity.
- If the Roma parents don't want to take their children to school, legally speaking MER cannot remove the child from his family. Other agencies, outside the educational sector, would need to intervene.

MER specified its sector priorities in a document in English which can be shared electronically.

- Having good quality teachers. MER wants to attract high quality graduates, so admission requirements to faculty of Education Sciences will be strengthened.
- Improve quality of education and equipment. This is done with support of the World Bank.
- Vehicles to improve transportation of students to and from school.
- Improved sanitary aspects.
- Students taking part in decision making process with respect to school budget planning.
- Having new legal procedures sanctioning illegal funds.
- Creating opportunities for parents to donate to educational institutions.
- Increase number of creches for children under 2 years as there is high demand.
- Focus on private KGs.
- Autonomous management of KGs.
- Increase salary for university teachers, increase competitive opportunities, and have more financing to attract foreign students in the next year.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Have new vocational schools that will focus on specialities requested by the labour market.</li></ul> <p>All these priorities will improve the quality of education in Moldova and put it among top quality countries.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the contribution of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to help address the challenges for enrolment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- MER made clear that the biggest challenge is human resources and there is a need to have internal support within the MER to help in with the coordination of the refugee response and the integration process of refugees in schools in Moldova. For this point, UNICEF noted that they are in the process of recruiting a consultant for six months to support MER in the enrolment process of Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools.</li><li>- MER agreed that there is a need to have staff at school to monitor children who study remotely.</li><li>- MER mentioned the need to have organizations who can help in the Romanian language.</li><li>- In addition, CSOs can help in graduation examination preparation and execution, especially in certain topics like history. Also, digital capacity and internet is lacking in some regions and villages which affects studying online.</li></ul> <p>A second question about having a database and statistics regarding Ukrainian children in Moldova who are studying online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- MER noted that there are no statistics from Ukraine in this regard. MER wants to have open channels with the Ministry of Education in Ukraine, as it is confirmed that online learning reduces the quality of education. This is why in person learning is highly recommended and encouraged.</li></ul> <p>The Deputy Mayor of Chisinau Municipality noted in the meeting that there is high pressure on schools in Chisinau. So far, around 1,069 children are enrolled.</p> <p>The Municipality stressed on additional needs and areas of support where CSOs can help including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Need for psychological counselling in each educational institution.</li><li>- Outreach for children who are studying online, mapping of families with children, and encouragement for them to enrol in schools</li></ul>	<p>MER to share the sector priorities documents with the Working Group partners.</p>
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<p><b>2. Refugee Accommodation Centers (RACs) consolidation process and updates.</b></p>	<p>RAC consolidation Process: phased closure (UNHCR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timeline for closure</li> <li>- RACs under short term closure</li> <li>- RACs under Midterm Closure</li> <li>- Procedure for the consolidation of RACs</li> </ul> <p>For education partners, if there are any activities in the RACs that will be closing, it is recommended to move the activity to a location where there is an identified need.</p> <p>Some people will move to RACs and some to private accommodation, so it's important to know the needs of people.</p> <p>If anything is noticed that needs follow up during the closure, needs to be conveyed.</p>	<p>Presentation to be shared with the Education Working Group partners to help in planning for activities.</p>
<p><b>3. Temporary Protection updates</b></p>	<p>Temporary protection Updates (UNHCR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An exceptional measure introduced by the government of Moldova for a year but might be extended.</li> <li>- IGM is responsible for the TP measures.</li> <li>- Proof of Residence was a complex process, that led to fewer people registering. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, this was amended to allow a self-declaration to be signed in lieu of the previous proof of resident requirement.</li> <li>- An additional change makes caregivers of children who are eligible for TP also eligible for TP. This measure was introduced to support family unity and prevent family separation.</li> <li>- On the IGM Facebook page there is data on TP beneficiaries posted each week</li> </ul> <p>Temporary Protection registration is an ongoing process, so people can still register, and if legal assistance is needed, a number of legal partners are available to help.</p>	
<p><b>4. Education Assessment Progress (REACH)</b> <b>5. Partners Presentations</b></p>	<p>Both presentations were postponed for the next meeting due to time limitations.</p>	<p>Share the presentation with the Education Working Group partners.</p>
<p><b>5. AOB</b></p>	<p>1. Winterization Plan 2023-2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus is with the Cash Working Group and Basic Needs Working Group. Interventions are mainly focused on cash assistance and intervention in RACs, community infrastructure and</li> </ul>	<p>-If partners have funding for rehabilitation for winterization interventions for schools and KGs</p>



	<p>shelters, and not activities linked directly to Education activities. The only linkages that might arise are infrastructure rehabilitation for schools and preschools identified through a specific community infrastructure assessment. Date for submission of Winterization projects in ActivityInfo is 15 September.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. Mapping tool for Edutech labs to collect information from partners; All partners to update their data on the tool by the 8<sup>th</sup> of September.</li><li>3. Mapping Romanian Language centers; All partners to update their data on the tool by the 8<sup>th</sup> of September.</li><li>4. Education Working Group is finalizing a technical guidance note for Edutech labs. The note will be shared with the partners to guide them if they are planning to follow the same intervention in schools.</li><li>5. Refugee Response Plan (RRP) 2024 updates: RRP is a regional fund-raising tool to respond to needs of people who were displaced due to the war in Ukraine. The education sector, just like the other sectors, have to identify the priorities for the education response in 2024 and how to best support MER in terms of enrolment and inclusion of Ukrainian children in the Moldovan Education System. In preparation for RRP 2024, a workshop will be organized before the end of this month to discuss together and agree on the sector priorities for 2024. Humanitarian partners will submit their proposed projects that are aligned with the proposed sector priorities for funding by mid-October. This doesn't guarantee that the projects will be funded. This, however, will facilitate the funding opportunities for the partners as donors may reach out to partners, if they are interested, with verified and approved projects submitted on the system.</li></ol> <p>A point was raised from Roma Task Force regarding 21 school-aged children in the premises of the Testimițianu RAC and transportation that is required for them to reach to the nearest school. Distance to Vasile Lupu Russian High School is a maximum of 2.5 km.</p>	<p>identified, ensure to inform the Education Working Group coordination team to coordinate with the Basic Needs Working Group.</p> <p>-Partners to fill the mapping tool for Tech Labs and Romanian Language by 8 September 2023</p> <p>-More details will be shared regarding RRP and the sector workshop</p> <p>-EWG will follow up with Roma Task Force.</p>
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