

Ukraine Refugee Response in the Republic of Moldova

“EduTech Labs” - Safe Digital Learning Hubs for Children & Adolescents in Public Schools

GUIDANCE NOTE

This note is designed to guide the Refugee Education Working Group partners and any other relevant actors in establishing and operationalizing the EduTech Labs inside targeted schools in the Republic of Moldova, to promote and facilitate the inclusion of Ukrainian children in formal school settings. The note aims to clearly outline a minimum set of activities and standards expected from partners in each of these labs in an effort to ensure uniformity of the proposed intervention across the various targeted schools. The EduTech Labs are established in close coordination with and support of the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) of the Republic of Moldova, local public authorities, and schools’ administrations. The EduTech labs intervention is directly linked to the National Education 2030 Development Strategy as well as the government and MER digitalization plans of the education sector.

1. Background:

In September 2023, the total number of Ukrainian refugees staying in Moldova was estimated to be 108,918 of which 48,826 are children (25,235 boys and 23,591 girls) according to UNHCR Data Portal. Out of the total number of refugee children registered and staying in Moldova, only around 2,105 children were officially enrolled in schools, of which 614 children were enrolled in pre-schools, as shared by MER in September 2023.

This amounts to an approximately 4% enrollment rate of Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools, which is the lowest rate in comparison to the other hosting countries in the region. The other Ukrainian children are believed to be at home, connected online with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education Platform. However, there are no monitoring mechanisms set in place in Moldova to track the number of children continuing their learning online via the Ukrainian Ministry of Education Platforms.

In an effort to ensure the access of Ukrainian children and adolescents to quality education in a safe protective learning environment, UNICEF and the Refugee Education Working Group partners are establishing EduTech Labs inside schools across Moldova.

2. What do EduTech Labs offer?

The EduTech Labs are digital hubs where children and adolescents receive:

1. **Online learning:** access to online learning platforms of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education through provision of the needed ICT equipment under the supervision of a dedicated teacher/facilitator to ensure pupils’ monitoring and mentoring whenever needed during or after the online classes.
2. **Non-formal education:** access to a package of non-formal education activities available for both Moldovan and Ukrainian children and adolescents. The non-formal education activities

could include language classes, for example, Romanian classes, and joint English and/or Ukrainian classes and catch-up classes for children in different subjects, including math and science, based on the pupils' individual need or group needs.


3. **MHPSS:** For children and adolescents, both Moldovan and Ukrainian, with mental health difficulties or showing distress signs, the EduTech labs will ensure they can access psychological first aid and focused support with trained mental health psychologists. In schools with already existing school psychologists, the EduTech labs would help facilitate referrals, while in schools without sufficient psychological resources, the EduTech labs may provide additional MHPSS services. Activities could be conducted in individual or group modalities.
4. **Recreational activities:** access to a package of different activities depending on partners' as well as school administrations' technical and financial capacities. Activities may include music and art therapy, Social Emotional Learning activities, community engagement initiatives, sports games, chess competitions, etc.
5. **Minimum Training package for teachers/facilitators:** all staff and professionals working in these EduTech Labs are required to receive trainings on Child Protection minimum standards, inclusive education, GBV preventions and referral pathways, Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) as well as trainings on Mandatory Reporting for child abuse and neglect. In addition, teachers/facilitators conducting the non-formal education sessions can receive trainings on IT and digital learning as well as online class management among many other possible trainings related to innovative learning.
6. **Information sharing:** Provision of general information regarding available services for children (especially on Child Protection and GBV referral pathways) through provision of leaflets, posters and screening of videos in the spaces.

Additional components that may be needed (based on availability of space, additional needs identified by the schools and partners' capacities):

- Medical first aid kit available in the space if the school does not have one already.
- Specific Non-Food Items (NFIs): depending on the needs of children and adolescents, including those with disabilities, as well as the capacities of partners. NFIs may include Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Kits, School Cleaning Kits, Stationary Kits, Early Childhood Care (ECE) Kits etc.
- Provision of meals for children accessing the EduTech Labs based on their school-level/age group, through the schools' canteens.
- Provision of transportation for children to access EduTech Labs from nearby Refugee Accommodation Center (RACs) or private housing, if there is an identified need, and in close coordination with the school administration.

All Refugee Education Working Group partners setting up EduTech Labs must work closely with the Working Group coordination team to ensure no duplication in the targeted schools as well as alignment of their interventions with the Working Group guidance.

3. Where are the EduTech Labs Located?

Based on MER and the Refugee Education Working Group list of prioritized schools, the partners have begun establishing the EduTech Labs in these targeted school across different regions in Moldova. Here is the list of schools  [Tech Labs Mapping](#) where the EduTech Labs are being set up.

If partners are interested in establishing new EduTech Labs, they should approach the Education Working Group, who will help facilitate a conversation with MER on the list of additional prioritized schools, keeping in mind the following criteria:

- Schools are not already targeted by other partners.
- Schools are already enrolling a significant number of Ukrainian children, OR
- Schools are located in regions and communities with high population of Ukrainian children.

4. How are the EduTech Labs set up?

A matrix of minimum requirements when EduTech Labs are set up within a school are outlined below, focused on the role of UNICEF and Refugee Education Working Group partners that are setting up EduTech Labs or choosing to provide services in (or linked to) EduTech Labs.

Characteristics of Established EduTech Labs by the Refugee Education Working Group Partners:	Minimum Requirements
<p>1. Ensure appropriate location and dedicated space:</p> <p>The EduTech Labs were identified in close coordination with the MER and the school administrations who showed interest, and had the financial capacity to cover minor rehabilitation (including electricity network, lighting system, painting, floor repairs etc.) to prepare the spaces for setting up the EduTech Labs. This was also complemented by the development of a Digital Lab playbook guide for schools; which is a step-by-step guide for schools for conducting the renovation works, explaining the objectives of an EduTech Lab, types of innovative learning activities that are to be conducted, etc.</p>	<p>The EduTech Labs should be set up inside schools that have the space and capacity to host and run EduTech Labs. The place dedicated for the labs should be spacious enough (preferably 60 – 70 square meters) to set up the ICT equipment and furniture needed for the online learning and courses with additional space available to conduct group activities.</p> <p>All locations/ spaces in schools chosen for setting up EduTech Labs should be accessible for children with disabilities. If possible, there should be a dedicated private space for MHPSS interventions to allow MHPSS professions to interact with highly vulnerable cases of children showing signs of distress in the EduTech Labs. Otherwise, sessions can be conducted in other designated spaces in the school.</p>
<p>2. Maintain Safety Measures of the space:</p> <p>The EduTech Labs safety measures cover the following:</p>	<p>All safety measures need to be put in place to ensure no harm to children or adolescents accessing the</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EduTech Labs are set up on the first floors/ground floor to ensure accessibility of children with physical disabilities while also taking the needed precautions to avoid risks of any potential thefts or floodings. - EduTech Labs are provided with a well-designed electric network, high-quality and child-safe electrical wires and sockets, as well as LED lighting fixtures (for energy saving). - The finishing materials used in the renovation and decoration are durable, child-safe, environmentally friendly, and easy to maintain. - Monitoring cameras are also set up in the EduTeh labs. 	<p>EduTech Labs. This would include safe electric wiring and sockets within the labs and ensuring that no hazards are left in the space. Whenever possible, the spaces should have natural lighting and proper ventilation.</p> <p>In addition, the labs should be equipped with safe, local, cultural and age - appropriate recreational materials with low environmental impact.</p>
<p>3. Provide ICT equipment: EduTech Labs have been provided with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 15– 20 laptops - 4 All-in-One Computers - 1 Interactive board - 1 Multifunction printer - 1 Conference camera - 1 Router - 1 Surveillance Camera 	<p>EduTech Labs should be provided with the needed basic ICT equipment including between 15 to 20 laptops * in addition to the mouses, headsets and any other necessary gadgets.</p> <p>*Please note the number of laptops provided would highly depend on the number of children accessing the EduTech lab and arrangement with the school administration. 15 to 20 laptops is the preferable number of laptops needed to set up the EduTech Labs.</p> <p>EduTech Labs should be also provided with a router (if not available already at the school) as well as a multifunctional printer.</p> <p>All ICT equipment to be procured by partners should be discussed and approved with the MER and school administration.</p>
<p>4. Provide necessary furniture: EduTech Labs have been provided with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 pupils' seats* - 1 Teacher's chair - 20 Tables for pupils - 1 Table for the teacher - 1 Storage cabinet - 1 Table for multifunction printer 	<p>EduTech Labs should have at least the basic furniture needed for all the pupils and teachers. This would include seats and tables corresponding to the number of laptops provided to the lab. A teacher's table and seat should be also provided in addition to tables used for the group/ interactive activities and one multifunctional printer.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Magnetic whiteboard <p><i>* Number of seats and tables would mainly depend on the number of laptops provided as well as the number of children</i></p>	<p>A whiteboard should also be provided. Any type of whiteboard should suffice.</p>
<p>5. Train teachers/ facilitators:</p> <p>UNICEF and partners are building the capacity of 300+ teachers to deliver innovative inclusive learning activities within the EduTech Labs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selecting a team of 10 Mentors to lead an extensive teacher training program scheduled for September to November 2023. - Implementing continuous monitoring of teachers' performance. - Developing a comprehensive Pedagogy Guide for Teachers in the EduTech Labs. - Customizing into Russian language the learning resources of three courses. - Instructing teachers on innovative teaching and learning practices. - Training teachers and facilitators on inclusive education approaches and interventions. 	<p>All teachers and school staff accessing EduTech Labs should receive training on child protection minimum standards, GBV prevention and referral pathways as well as mandatory reporting for child abuse.</p> <p>Teachers and school staff should also receive trainings on social emotional learning and Psychological First Aid (PFA). In addition, clear pathways should be established for referrals within the EduTech Labs connected with the school's psychologist.</p> <p>Teachers should also be capacitated with trainings regarding online and in – person class management and digital learning and any other relevant topics related to innovative learning.</p>
<p>6. Provide activities/interventions within the labs that seek to*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the monitoring of children's learning online on a daily basis during schools hours. - Provision of support/ mentoring sessions for children learning online <i>(at least 3 times per week)</i> - Organize non-formal education activities in the after-school hours mainly focusing on catch up classes and Romanian classes <i>(at least 2 times per week for language classes or any other non-formal education activity)</i> - Organize joint learning sessions for Moldovan and Ukrainian children on digital skills, STEAM trainings etc. 	<p>All EduTech Labs should provide:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal Education (during-school hours): Mentoring and monitoring online learning for children and adolescents continuing their education online using Ukrainian learning platforms. <p>EduTech Labs should also ensure that the following services are available to children accessing the Labs. In schools where these services are already provided by the schools, the EduTech Labs can help ensure that refugee children are also included and support children to participate. In schools where some or all of these services are not available, EduTech Labs should offer these services themselves:</p>

<p>(at least 2 times per week)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of extracurricular and recreational activities including art therapy, storytelling etc (at least one per week) - Provision of individual and group MHPSS (minimum 3 times per week) <p><i>*Please note that the frequency of the activities are added to ensure consistency in the duration of the interventions implemented by the partners.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Non-Formal Education (after-school hours): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 language classes (Romanian, Ukrainian, English etc.) 2.2 Catch- up classes for different topics: math, science etc. 2.3 Courses on STEAM, Digital skills, Programming, or any other relevant and requested topics from the children and adolescents. 3. Recreational Activities: access to a package of different activities depending on partners' as well as school administration's technical and financial capacities. Activities may include music and art therapy, Social Emotional Learning activities, community engagement initiatives, sports games, chess competitions etc. 4. MHPSS: provide focused psychosocial support through individual or group counselling. Ensure children or groups with mental health conditions or in distress have access to psychological first aid and are linked with the school psychologist to receive focused support. Children can also access support through the Mobile Clinics in case targeted schools do not have a dedicated psychologist.
<p>7. Provide Information:</p> <p>UNICEF and partners provide information on available services that are relevant for Ukrainian and Moldovan children and adolescents.</p> <p>Dissemination of the information is mainly conducted through group psychosocial and recreational activities within the labs.</p>	<p>EduTech Labs should provide: i</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Information/communication materials. -Child-friendly information accessible to children with disabilities. -Updated information, including links to the relevant UNHCR Help page, referral pathways and government information.

Partners willing to establish additional EduTech Labs are expected to align with the minimum standards and the general identified package of services provided above.

Other Refugee Education Working Group partners who would like to organize activities within the spaces of the EduTech Labs set up by UNICEF or other partners, are requested to closely coordinate with UNICEF (or any other partner responsible of the established EduTech Lab) as well as the school administration in

order to avoid duplication in the activities, ensure complementarity of the interventions and avoid potentially overwhelming the school administration with activities.

Partners are also invited to collaborate together whenever possible to complement interventions in order to meet the minimum standards and the package of identified services. For example, two partners can establish an EduTech lab while each focusing each on a specific set of activities from the ones identified above.

8. Promotion, branding and visibility

To facilitate recognition of the services of the EduTech Labs by school administrators, students, teachers and parents, UNICEF developed branding for EduTech Labs that can be used by Education Refugee Working Group partners establishing any EduTech Labs who adhere to the above package of services and minimum standards of the Refugee Education Working Group.

All EduTech Labs will ensure the below visibility and can be guided by this final branding and visibility package [EduTech - Google Drive](#)



9. Next steps

- Operationalization of the EduTech Labs through close coordination with the MER and schools' administrations.
- MER guidance on the management aspect of the EduTech Labs with the schools' administration, specifically, in terms of the EduTech Labs teachers/ facilitators who will have extended responsibilities and potentially increased working hours.
- Continued provision of technical and financial support for the EduTech Labs and teachers/ facilitators for one school year (2023/2024).
- Mentoring the trained teachers/facilitators in the EduTech Labs for the school year 2023/2024.
- Ensure capacitating the school administration and staff with the required set of skills to run the EduTech lab after this school year.
- Continue to jointly establish additional EduTech Labs whenever needed and ensuring connection and coordination with the Refugee Education Working Group coordination team and in close consultation with MER and local public authorities.