



MHPSS TWG - Bulgaria

Meeting Minutes



Members

WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, NCPHA, BRC, AKNO, Pomosht za Ukraina, Pituitary Association, USRF, CRWB, Nadja Centre Foundation, BEINX.Org, SAR

1. Action points from previous meeting follow up.

A link has been circulated for direct access to the shared folder “MHPSS TWG – Bulgaria”, including a broad variety of MHPSS materials; the folder includes both documents specific to the TWG in Bulgaria (e.g. meetings, contact list, etc.), and international handbooks and thematic guidelines (folder n.5 – MHPSS Guidelines).

2. One year of MHPSS response: a Regional Perspective.

Today the TWG hosted Sofia Casas, MHPSS Officer from the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, who gave a comprehensive presentation on MHPSS in other Refugee Receiving Countries in the region and provided inputs to reflect on Bulgaria ongoing specific dynamics vis-à-vis other contexts.

Highlights of the presentation were the following:

- Population trends: since the onset of the crisis, 1,044,734 Ukrainians arrived in Bulgaria, 151,712 applied for TP, only 49,783 stayed. Unlike other refugee receiving countries, the number of refugees recorded in the country is significantly lower than the number of those who applied for TB, roughly a third. Since November 2022, the arrivals/departures trend looks flat. Out of the 10,191 refugees accommodated by the Govt, more than 50% are in Nassebar and Varna.
- Common MHPSS challenges identified in region:
 - Language barriers
 - Lack of experience in humanitarian mental health
 - Focus on specialized services
 - Duplication of services
 - Service mapping / referral pathways
 - Lack of communication between providers
 - Lack of collaboration with Government and national actors
 - Cultural norms on help seeking behaviors
- Several examples of activities in the field have been shared to illustrate best practices from the different layers of the MHPSS pyramid across the region.
 - Layer 1: 37 Blue Dots, IOM training border guards in Psychological First Aid, stress management and burnout prevention in Moldova
 - Layer 2: supporting refugee-led organizations in Hungary
 - Layer 3: Ukrainian psychologist Inna in Blue Dot Warsaw
 - Layer 4: mental health care for Ukrainian in Czech Republic
- Identified next steps across the region:
 - Strengthening capacity of refugee-led organizations to deliver psychosocial support
 - Using more community based best practices adapted to the culture and context
 - Scaling up of task-sharing psychological interventions for Ukrainians
 - Integrating Ukrainian mental health professionals and social workers into care systems in host countries
- Some questions for discussion have been raised too:
 - ✓ As technical practitioners, what are some of the best practices you have seen in Bulgaria?
 - ✓ What are some solutions you have found to the challenges?
 - ✓ What are areas of training and technical support needed?

These questions can guide further discussion within the TWG members in the next meetings. It was noted that Belgaria counts on a wide and diverse variety of actors already working significantly across the 4 layers of the intervention pyramid and significant good work is ongoing at the community-based level, hard to find in other context and this represents a robust starting point.

N/A



Updates & Achievements



Action Points