

POLAND PROTECTION SECTOR MEETING

Meeting Minutes – 6 June 2024, 2 PM

Meeting subject:	Monthly Protection Sector Meeting
Time & location:	2pm, hybrid meeting
Chaired by:	UNHCR and Halina Niec Legal Aid Centre
Minutes prepared by:	UNHCR
Participants:	UNHCR, Halina Niec Legal Aid Centre, Ministry of Interior, SIP, IRC, NRC, UNICEF, Unbreakable Ukraine Foundation, ELIL, Ovum Association, UNWomen, Fundacja Inicjatywa Dom Otwarty, Operation Mobilisation in Poland, IOM, NGO Forum “Razem”, UNFPA, LWF, Stowarzyszenie Mudita, Fundacja Feminoteka, Right to Protection Poland, Habitat for Humanity, University of Warsaw, Oxfam, Fundacja w Stronę Dialogu, International Justice Mission, PAH, Lutheran World.
Agenda:	Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Updates on Migration Policy (Mol) – 15 minii. Situation at the border area (Halina Niec) – 10 miniii. Updates on collective sites (Shelter Sector – IOM/Habitat) – 10 miniv. Updates on education (Education Sector – UNICEF) – 10 minv. AOB
AGENDA POINT	DISCUSSION
Introductions and Overview	Participants were welcomed to the Protection Sector meeting for the Refugee Response on Poland. The agenda was presented.
Agenda point 1	A representative from the Ministry of Interior (Mol) presented an update on the preparation of the national migration strategy. The coordination of the process is assigned to the Inter-ministerial team for migration policy and the Deputy Minister Maciej Duszczyk. The strategy will cover 5 years period (2025-30) and the process of creation is divided into 2 stages: 1 – research and analysis prepared by the Committee of Polish Science Academy, 2 – formulation of the strategy based on conclusions and information derived from the stage no. 1. Regarding the first stage, a meeting was held in May, where the Committee presented the main assumptions of their research, which will be divided into 8 areas with 10-15 research questions per each. Eight panel discussions are planned to be held with various organizations involved. The date for the submission of the Committee’s report, and thus the completion of the first phase, is expected

	<p>at the end of September this year. It is still not confirmed as to who will be in charge of conducting the second stage – formulating the strategy, however it is presumed that it might be a cooperation of academics and administration. The MoI is committed to preparing the strategy before the end of the year, as Poland will hold the Presidency in the Council of the European Union in 2025 and one of its priorities is to influence the migration policy and manage the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.</p>
Agenda point 2	<p>HNLAC gave a presentation regarding recent developments relevant to Protection in light of the situation at the border area. The Amendment of the Special Act, Ukraine’s new mobilization laws and actions taken by the Polish government regarding the escalating situation at the border with Belarus, were marked as the most important current issues. Among the implications of Ukraine’s new conscription laws there were identified: a continuous assistance provided to men at conscription age by Ukrainian consulates, however burdened with the obligation to provide full personal data along with Polish address; and a high number of requests for information on asylum procedure received by HNLAC from Ukrainian men. Considering the developments at the Polish-Belarusian border, according to the authorities the situation is extremely volatile and there were few incidents involving attacks on Polish Border Guard officers. The government’s response is focused on deploying several hundred additional officers to the border and introducing a temporary (90-day) ban on staying in a designated area adjacent to the state border with Belarus to limit the presence of bystanders in the area. The regulation has not yet come into force as the ongoing consultations are causing a delay.</p>
Agenda point 3	<p>The presentation was given on the impact of the Special Act amendments on collective centers (CC). The key changes in the Special Act includes: establishing a definition of the collective site, change in the management of the reception points, co-financing, assessing humanitarian exemption by voivode and new rules regarding NGOs running CC. The amendment abolishes i.e. public transportation fee and cleaning and hygienic items provision. The influence of these changes will be significant especially for small CC (under 10 beds) managed by NGOs as the process of closures might be further exacerbated. Despite the transition, it was highlighted that still no solutions were presented for ethnical minorities. Further amendments include the abolition of so-called 40+ financial support for private home/apartments owners providing accommodation, which may result in premature decisions to return to Ukraine, homelessness and pressure on already stretched housing market leading to further increase in prices, however no detailed research was conducted on the influence of this program on the housing market and accommodation perspectives.</p>
Agenda point 4	<p>UNICEF gave an update on education sector influenced by the amendments to the Special Act. Some of the most important changes will be the mandatory school enrollment and psychological counselling run by municipalities. It was highlighted that there are ongoing issues such as the language barrier and insufficient support for children with special needs. Moreover, there should be a higher recognition of needs of children living in accommodation centers, especially from ethnic minorities such as Roma community. According to UNICEF, it is crucial to maintain the cooperation between different Ministries (Education, Family and Social Welfare, Interior) to better understand the arising cross-cutting issues.</p>
AOB	<p>UNHCR presented a matrix created to map the scope and forms of support that partners will be able to provide to refugees impacted by the new Special Act amendments on the Housing and Accommodation frost as of 1 July 2024. Partners from the Protection Sector are</p>

	invited to share their inputs by 13 June 2024. Gathered information will be shared with different authorities as they are the primary responsible to support refugees.
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ACTION POINTS SUMMARY				
No.	Action	Responsible	Deadline	Status
1.	Partners from the Protection Sector are invited to share their inputs in the matrix of partners' potential response to the most urgent needs of refugees related to the Housing and Accommodation.	Protection Sector members	13 June 2024	Ongoing