Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting

Meeting Minutes – 19 November 2024**Meeting subject:**	Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting
Time & location:	19.11.2024 @ 9 am – UNHCR Krakow Sub-Office
Chaired by:	UNHCR
Minutes prepared by:	UNHCR
Participants:	UNHCR, Zustricz Foundation, IB Polska, IOM; Małopolski Urząd Wojewódzki; Stowarzyszenie Patchwork, Policja, Centrum Pomocy Prawnej im. Haliny Niec, HumanDo, Fundacja Vela, Fundacja POS
Agenda:	1. Updates from the Voivodship 2. Updates from the coordination 3. How to better mitigate the protection risks in collective sites. ○ Key Risks ▪ 2b. How to Better Address Risks Jointly ○ Ongoing Trainings Voivodship/IOM/UNHCR for Powiat coordinators ○ Safety Audit ▪ 2c1. Overview of what is a Safety Audit ▪ 2c2. Next Steps 4. Any Other Business (AOB)
AGENDA POINT	**DISCUSSION**
Introduction and update on points from last meeting	• Participants were welcomed to the 38th Małopolska Coordination Group (MCG) meeting. The meeting was chaired by UNHCR.

	• UNHCR thanked participants for their presence.

Agenda point 1	***Applications for Exemption from Accommodation Cost Sharing***
	
	• **Total Applications**:
	  ○ Initial applications: **1,443**
	  ○ Repeated applications: **1,228**
	  ○ Total: **2,600 applications**
	• **Processed Applications**: **2,473**
	  ○ Positive decisions: **1,693**
	  ○ Negative decisions: **780**
	• **Key Groups exempt from cost sharing** :
	  ○ **Individuals undergoing disability certification**:
	  ▪ Refugees who have disability certification obtained in Ukraine and are waiting for the decision of the Polish authority weather the Polish certificate of disability will be given to them
	  ○ **Unemployed individuals actively seeking work**:
	  ▪ Verified through participation in training, submitting CVs, etc.
	  ▪ People registered in PCPM program 'together to independence'
	
	• **Abuses Identified**:
	  ○ Falsified medical certificates, this was reported to the prosecutor's office. E.g. authentic certificate was verified by a doctors, whilst around 7 were copies in which the name of the applicant was changes. (Rabka and Koninki)
	
	Collective Shelters in Małopolskie
	
	• **Number of Shelters**: **268**

Support Programs and Concerns

- **PCPM (Polish Centre for International Aid)**:
  - Assists individuals registered under the "Towards Independence" project.

Application Processing Challenges

- Delays due to suspended processes after submitting applications to medical adjudicators.
- Voivodeship remains in contact with adjudicators to verify application statuses.

Accommodation Capacity

- **Collective Shelter Capacity**:
  - **7,232 taken places**
  - **4059 free places** (in case of increased number of arrivals during winter)
  - **~11,000 total places** available across facilities.
- **Contingency Agreements**: Maintained for potential arrival of larger refugee groups.

Local Challenges

- **Issues Noted**:
  - Increased **claims and frustration** among refugees fatigued by current circumstances and unable to find jobs.
- **Selective Acceptance of Refugees**:
  - Some poviats/gminas halted refugee intake:
    - Tarnów: **Over 1,000 refugees** already accepted.
    - Oświęcimski: **600 refugees**, requiring a break to stabilize.
    - Myślenice, Krościenko, Szczawnica, and Rabka: Currently not accepting.

Children Relocation Concerns

- **Unregulated Movements**:
  - Example: **100 children relocated** to private hotels without consultation with government or local authorities.
  - Police requested prior notification when children cross borders.
- **Proposed Procedure**:
  - Voivodeships should approve relocations and allocate suitable locations.
  - Proper preparation of **legal documentation and staffing** required for financial support from voivodeships.

Notable Trends

- **Current Refugee Flow**:
  - Minimal influx of new refugees (~15 arrivals in the last month; 3-4 families).
  - Return of longer-term refugee groups with high demands.
  - 3% of all refugees in Malopolskie live in collective sites.
- **Collective Shelter Dynamics**:
  - Cases of individuals with **6-7 referrals** to collective shelters being declined due to behavioral issues (e.g., causing disturbances).
  - Red-flag messages issued to encourage behavioral reflection.

Oversight and Standards in Shelters

- **Shelter Regulations**:
  - Voivodeship controls standards via statutory requirements, with poviat-level monitoring.
  - Queries regarding space per person (square meters) can be clarified through a Freedom of Information request.

Roma-Specific Issues

- **Capacity**: Roma shelter in Koninki has a limit of 100 individuals, but reports suggest overcapacity.

	• **Training**: Poviat coordination training for handling Roma-specific concerns is scheduled. ***Future Outlook*** • **March 2026 Support Program**: Planned support for new refugees under the "Towards Independence" project. • No indication of a significant refugee influx; stable intake levels expected.
Agenda point 2	

Agenda point 3	1. *Overview of different protection risks in collective sites:* • Higher exposure to GBV (inc. DV) • Human trafficking and labour exploitation (gangs operating on the border, anecdotal incidents of hotel managers exploiting refugees for free labour or below minimum wage). • Involvement in criminal activities • Family separation • Children dropping out of school (being addressed with the changes in the law) • Homelessness (NGO working with homeless in Łódź have reported increased number of Ukrainians registering) • Return to Ukraine/ occupied teritories • Inability to get legal documents (reports of increased number of people seeking financial support to apply for new documents). • Reports of conflicts within sites, including physical alterations. • Difference between privately run and publicly ran sites, in private it's more challenging to address the issues. • Issues of drug and alcohol usage amongst youth. • Women feel pressured to provide sexual services due to pressure of their financial situation. • Main issue is that refugees are scared to report. 2. *Possile ways of increasing cooroboration to reduce the risks* • A call to share these anecdotal evidence and addresses of relevant collective shelters with Voivodeship. Recently, a report of inappropriate behaviour in Tarnów was shared and this was addressed. • Suggestion of a harmonised reporting mechanism. A template for incident reports can be shared with the coordination group and submitted to Voievod in regular intervals. • Call from the police to report any situation of sexual and financial exploitation. Police have ability to relocate people to another site if people are scared of reporting their exploitation. • Relocations are continuously taking part for people whose meets aren't being met or they have experienced inappropriate behaviour. • Best practices observed: concierge system 24/7, rules and regulations, internal policies, regular meetings between site manager and refugees and building rapport, zero tolerance policy for strangers loitering. • Initiatives: training for poviat coordinators, guidance on MHPSS, mapping activities related to mental health. 3. *Powiat and gmina coordinators training*

	• Suggestion on future topics: Roma, conflict resolution, interacting with people with mental health disorders, immigration solutions, refugee law in Poland, migrant law training, motivating refugees to seek employment and independence. *4. Safety audit* • It's an assessment designed to identify and understand the safety concerns related to GBV and risks affecting refugees in different settings (urban, rural, reception centres/ shelters/ camps). It aims to collect information on the perception of safety around GBV risks to identify high risk factors in refugee surroundings and their opinions on strategies to enhance safety and minimize GBV risks in their communities and on the provision of services. • Safety audit allows us to identify the needs of refugees around GBV risks without seeking evidence or proof, our responsibility is to protect people at risk. Goal is to reduce the possibility of GBV risks. • Actors should know the tools and standards. • How to do it? Review the existing data, and work with local authorities. We must define the purpose. • Three collective sites to be chosen for a pilot for safety audit. Safety audit can be presented during January powiat coordinator training. Call from participants in wanting to join the initiatives and share previous reports. • 268 collective sites in Małopolskie, need for further discussion to select the 3 for the pilot.
Agenda point 4	*1. Update on the 16 days of activism against GBV campaign:* • Panel discussion 25.11 Pałac Potockich on challenges on preventing GBV and protecting from GBV and sharing progress. All are invited.

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY				
No.	**Action**	**Responsible**	**Deadline**	**Status** (as of)
1.	A template for incident reports to be created and shared with the coordination group and submitted to Voievod in regular intervals.	UNHCR	Presented on the next coordination meeting	Ongoing
2.	Concerns relating to incidents at collective sites to be reported to the voievod and police when appropriate	Participants		Ongoing

3.	Proposed safety audit to be presented during January 2025 powiat coordinator training	UNHCR		