Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Meeting Minutes – Education WG, 10 November 2025

- Participants:
- Maria Yankova, UNICEF
- Iva Partsaleva, UNHCR
- Galina Vlasenko
- Yoana Beshchuk, Elena Volkova, Open Doors
- Desislava Kancheva, Daria Hobarchik USRF
- Vanya Dobreva, Pitutiary Foundation
- Ruzha Doncheva, NRG
- Prof. Siika Chavdarova-Kostova, Sofia University
- Kristina Gologanova, Reachout
- Svetlana Radolova, Az Buki Vedi
- Yanka Kosarova, FAR
- Yulianna Kulyukina, Aid for Ukraine

Operational situation:

- The Council of Ministers voted to provide funding for transportation for children under temporary protection in the regions of Burgas, Varna, and Dobrich. The text of the Council of Ministers' decision can be found HERE.
- Amendments to the Pre-school and School Education Act were voted on at first instance in the National Assembly. Among many other changes, the introduction of new forms of language support is envisaged, including a preparatory class. It is still unclear what specific steps will be taken. It is necessary to develop sublegislative normative documents, curricula, teaching resources, and train teachers. The text of the amendment law is available HERE. Please pay particular attention to Article 16.
- Amendment to Article 107 of Regulation 11 on the recognition of student learning outcomes, which changes the procedure for recognizing secondary education completed abroad. As of October 1, this is now carried out by the National Center for Information and Documentation (NACID). More about the procedure itself HERE. Price – BGN 50. If they also want an official note for the recognition of grades in subjects that are not part of the diploma – BGN 48.90.

Discussion – recognition of secondary education

- All NGOs are worried that centralized recognition in Sofia will make it harder for people who live in other places.
- Aid for Ukraine: Centralization will further slow down the process and make access to higher education difficult, given that diplomas in Ukraine can be obtained in June at the earliest, recognition takes a month from the submission of all documents, and student admission campaigns end in July.

- Open doors: shared experience from many mistakes in the decisions issued by NACID for the recognition of diplomas (mistakes in four out of 10 applications submitted)
- Pitutiary Foundation: seek a way for Bulgarian educational authorities to access Ukrainian databases – there is such experience in Poland and other Western countries. This will also help prevent abuse.

Bulgarian language exam for medical professionals

- The Pitutiary Foundation reports that the Institute of Education has introduced a separate Bulgarian language exam for nurses and laboratory technicians (different from that for doctors, dentists, and pharmacists). This is considered a step in the right direction.
- There is still a significant lack of Bulgarian language training materials for mid-level medical staff.
- There is a need to create a platform for medical professionals where they can learn the language and prepare for their practice in Bulgaria (similar to Ucha.se, but for medical professionals). Such a practice already exists in Poland and other Western countries.
- Every month, Pitutiary Foundation identifies 50 new medical specialists from Ukraine, Russia, and other countries of the former USSR who arrive in Bulgaria and want to legalize their documents.
- Aid for Ukraine reports on 135 SU "Jan Amos Comenius," which refuses to organize additional Bulgarian language training for children enrolled in the first grade.
- NRG reports zero language support for children enrolled in kindergartens in the municipality of Varna. NRG has no information about additional Bulgarian language training in any kindergarten. This greatly hinders the children's adaptation and often, despite great efforts to enroll them, they drop out. There is a lack of capacity among teachers in preschool groups, teaching methods, and resources.
- Proposal: The UNHCR Academy for Teachers of Refugee Children includes kindergartens (mainly in Plovdiv, but also in Burgas). A mechanism for the exchange of information and materials should be created.
- FAR reports that they have received cases of a lack of places in kindergartens in large cities and complaints of bullying in schools.
- Reachout: PP Vazrazhdane has submitted a proposal that restricts civil society organizations' access to schools on the pretext that they are foreign-funded. In a Facebook post by the Bulgarian Center for Non-Profit Law, examples are given of UNICEF and UNHCR, which will not be allowed to work with children in schools. This is a dangerous trend and must be responded to sharply. Petition against such proposals HERE.

Opportunities for project funding

- UNHCR reports that it had a meeting with the Education Program Executive Agency. The agency funds two types of projects: systemic projects, in which all kindergartens or schools are beneficiaries, and projects for which open calls for applications are announced. The second group allows for consortia between schools, NGOs, municipalities, and others. We recommend monitoring the agency's website for new opportunities. There are also open procedures at the moment, see HERE. UNICEF draws attention to one of them – for the prevention of bullying in schools (only schools can be beneficiaries here, but you can encourage those you work with to apply). More info HERE.
- UNHCR reports on a project by the Employment Agency called "I Choose Bulgaria." It covers rental costs (406 BGN per month) and enrollment in Bulgarian language courses, among many other services. Persons who have received international and temporary protection are the target group. However, there are additional criteria:
    - They must have resided for at least 12 months in the last 18 months in another country from the date of submission of the application for inclusion in the project
    - They must be recent graduates, i.e., they must have completed their education in another country within the last 12 months from the date of submitting their application to join the project.
- Prof. Siika Chavdarova-Kostova is finalizing the organization of an event dedicated to a project studying the determinants of social inclusion of refugees. It will take place on November 24 at Sofia University.

More info HERE.

Next date for the WG meeting: January