

UKRAINE REFUGEE RESPONSE
Regional Sub-Working Group on Child Protection
Meeting Minutes – 9 May 2022

Meeting objective:	Discuss the pertinent child protection (CP) issues at the regional level and the work of CP coordination structures established at the field level in Hungary, Moldova Poland, Romania and Slovakia.
Time & location:	Every second Monday, starting 25 April, at 15:00-16:15, online
Participants:	<p>Danielle Beasley, UNHCR Olga Vorontsova-Mykhailova, UNHCR Selina Nguti, UNHCR Igor Vorontsov, UNHCR Vera Dragovic, UNHCR Caroline Dulin Brass, UNHCR Katarzyna Kubicius, Polish Red Cross Terry Smith, European Guardianship Network Sarah Abitbol, Eurochild Anita Queirazza, Plan International Ulrike Julia Wendt, IRC Daniel Redondo, IOM Randi Saure, Save the Children (SC) Zuzana Konradova, Eurochild Eda Onde, UNHCR Leila Fasseaux, TDH Nicole Constantine, IRC Łukasz Tomik, Happy Kids Sergii Lavrukhin, UNHCR Aaron Greenberg, UNICEF Nadia Akmoun, IOM Phenny Kakama, UNICEF Rebecca Smith, SC Severine Chevel, Catholic Relief Services (CRS)</p>

Agenda:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction (UNICEF) 2. Introduction and update from European Guardianship Network (EGN) 3. Debrief on CP Mission to Romania (Danielle Beasley, UNHCR) 4. Updates on CP 5. AOB
AGENDA POINT	DISCUSSION
1) Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour de table
2) Introduction and update from European Guardianship Network	<p>EGN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No engagement at present in Slovakia or Hungary. • Network has been running since 2018, initially on a grant from EU; now under Framework Partnership agreement with the EU. • The Network is comprised of NGOs who are often responsible for delivering guardianship, and often working with municipalities. • Focused on getting the stakeholders together to develop good practices, continue to build the network and engage with new stakeholders and the children and get their input. • Tangible outputs: agreed a set of standards and principles on guardianship services; working in tandem with FRA to roll out the manual for guardianship; developing better cross-border cooperation; looking at rolling out an assessment. • Close to 50 members in EU MS+ (some MSs have more than one member). • EGN not operational in Ukraine but some of its members are. No mandate to deliver guardianship directly in Ukraine. Two online meetings with members working on the frontline have been held thus far. Full network meeting taking place next week to decide how to move forward. • EGN seeks to support members with guidance and help. Fed DG Home with contact points and also in contact with DG Justice on good practices. In 2021, implemented a Survey on children in alternative care. • Created space on EGN website with resources on Ukraine. • Being clear on what the legal frameworks are and directing them to towards the neutral landscape of best interest (BI) is going to be very sensitive. EGN plays a critical role and will keep the CP SWG informed of developments. <p>UNICEF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted mapping of legal and policy frameworks for UASC in 13 countries (key members states and countries with evacuated children); next moving to custodian practices, TPD analysis, etc. Discussed with FRA, the CoE, etc. who agreed to be on the reference group. • What is coming from DG Home and DG Justice is going to be subject to interpretation. UNICEF is aiming to follow-up on monitoring missions of Ukrainian Ministry of Social policy to Poland, Germany and Italy, accompanied by UNICEF, and having in mind the MoUs signed with these countries. The said Ministry is drafting recommendations based on their missions and UNICEF is trying to influence these recommendations.

<p>3) Debrief on CP Mission to Romania (Danielle Beasley, UNHCR)</p>	<p>UNHCR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selina Nguti is taking over as CP Officer in Romania, also supporting the Blue Dots, a joint initiative with UNICEF. • Nearly 900,000 arrivals from Ukraine to Romania in the past two months, but mainly transiting; just over 90,000 remained in Romania, 40% of which are children. • Impressive response of the Govt and the society as a whole and our work is there primarily to complement the work of the Govt. One of the first things is that Govt did in mid-March was to issue an Inter-Ministerial order, publicized by the National Child Protection Authority, that determined the procedure for identification and referral of UASC to local child protection authorities. • At end-March, the Govt Coordination Mechanism, which had already had Working Groups established for the Covid-response, including one focusing on addressing the needs of children and youth, decided to use these groups for the refugee response coordination. UNHCR, UNICEF and others were able to participate in these WGs and provide inputs to Govt measures, reflected in the National Plan of Action, which aims at responding to the needs of Ukrainian nationals and TCNs in the coming three years. This Plan of Action is now with the office of the PM, and UNHCR is hoping that it will be passed in the coming two weeks, with the UN aiming to support the roll-out and implementation at the counties' level. • In addition to the Govt coordination structure, there is an interagency response coordination structure in place, and a CP SWG co-lead by UNHCR, UNICEF and the National CP Authority, which has had five meetings and consists of 29 local and international organisations and 40 members. ToRs have been finalised, working out an Action Plan and complementing the mapping of CP services at national and county level using the Govt referral pathways as a basis. • Under the umbrella of CP SWG, initiated additional thematic groups, such as CB initiatives, cash assistance (esp. concerning children), etc. There may be other thematic groups formed once the National Action Plan is out. • National CP Authority's helping to take the lead on CP SWG was critical for insight in CP systems at national and local levels, and for shedding light on the profile of children arriving, the institutional care and on how the SWG members can support the children and the authorities. • The Regional CP SWG is important in terms of informing of what is happening across the region and encouraging harmonization of the work at country-level. <p>UNICEF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principle of having the national authority on board is the principle that all CP structures should uphold.
<p>4) Updates on CP</p>	<p>UNICEF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF is trying to influence the MoU that the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine has sent to all governments in Europe as refugee (children)-receiving govts. As far as UNICEF is aware, only one government has signed the MoU thus far, having first rephrased it into "an agreement" and that is Lithuania. • DG Justice and DG Home are analysing the MoU proposed by the Govt of Ukraine, in order to provide advice to EU MSs. • From UNICEF's side, there are sticking points in the MoU: one is an Article which basically strongly suggests that children should remain together in childcare institutions and not in foster homes. UNICEF asked for an official clarification of this Article, while at the same time proposing the text of the clarification to say that "the Article actually advocates for a single UASC registry at the local level and to keep, as far as possible, children in the same area/region". UNICEF is hoping that the clarification will come out soon.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Govt of Poland is asking the EC for permission to reopen its collective care institutions, based on this MoU. Germany is not going to open large childcare institutions, but for Poland this is a concern. Govt of Ukraine are suggesting that the children’s habitual residence and guardianship remain with Ukraine in essence. They also want the children returning to Ukraine with the abolishment of the Martial Law. Partners need to continue discussing how the BI of the children can be assured, especially when it is known that the EU is heading for a common registration platform for TPD. <p>UNHCR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are specific concerns regarding the interpretation of the MoU from a refugee law perspective, not only in terms of returns being informed by the BI of the child, but also that the returns should be voluntary and informed, and that conditions must be conducive to returns. The lifting of Martial Law is not be a definitive factor in this assessment. In addition, mandatory information-sharing with the Ukrainian Govt in relation to the personal data of refugee children raises concerns about data protection and confidentiality. If we now open up for temporary arrangements for Ukrainian children, what does that mean for legal provisions in the national laws which ban currently institutionalization and the progress that has been made in moving away from institutionalization of refugee children in Europe. <p>IOM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a Directory with resources and hotlines of the national responses for Ukraine. <p>UNICEF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signing a large cooperation agreement with 116 111 Child Helpline in Europe, including a Cloud-based solution, that would provide 24/7 Ukrainian-speaking help for children anywhere in Europe. <p>CRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-facilitating Global WG on Care in Ukraine, which brought together a lot of actors responding in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries on the issues of childcare; providing TA and producing guidelines which we are happy to share with this SWG and ready to support in advocacy, messaging, tools/resources. <p>SC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issued a statement supporting the Ukraine Govt’s moratorium on inter-country adoptions (ICA); have since opened up for more agencies joining in and supporting this statement; signatures are being received through Alliance for CP in Humanitarian Action Steering Group and agencies are welcome to join in.
5) AOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Next Regional CP SWG meeting will take place on 23 May 2022 at 3 PM.

No.	Action	FP	Status
1.	IOM to share with CP SWG members for inputs the directory of resources and helplines in response countries	Daniel	pending
2.	UNICEF and IOM to discuss information-sharing for purposes of Child Helpline for Europe	Daniel/Aron	ongoing

3.	Co-chairs to share the revised ToRs once comments from partners have been integrated	Sergii/Anna	pending
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