

## UN REFUGEE RESPONSE COORDINATION IN ROMANIA

### Education Working Group meeting

April 19, 2023, 9:30 – 11.00 am

Venue - Online (Zoom)

#### Agenda

1. Introduction and welcoming of new Education WG members (UNICEF)
2. Feedback from recent meetings or events: with MoE and other working groups or constituencies (UNICEF); with ISU working group on Education (JRS)
3. Updates from WG members (including on situation, needs, progress & upcoming events)
4. Discussions on new '50/20' programme and preparations for meeting with MoE
5. Validation of key advocacy messages (as joint contribution for the Protection WG)
6. AOB

*Participants: WV, JRS, TdH, NRC, SCI, Plan International, CNRR, IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR, Fundația Națională pentru Tineret*

#### **2. Feedback from recent meetings or events: with MoE and other working groups or constituencies (UNICEF); with ISU working group on Education (JRS)**

UNICEF shared updates on recent meetings with MoE (Mr. Lixandru) and PM/Mrs. Turza's office (Mr. Radu Szekely) and indicated that a joint meeting should follow to discuss the new 50/20 programme, status and continuation of learning hubs, and integration of Ukrainian refugee teachers/educators in particular.

JRS shared updates on the school enrolment situation in some of the counties (Braila, Prahova, Valcea, Arad). It was mentioned that the next meeting of the ISU working group will also focus on university-level education. At the same time, focus from now on will be put on implementation of the new Ordinance, registrations with the school inspectorates.

#### **3. Updates from WG members (including on situation, needs, progress & upcoming events)**

- UNICEF shared that there are issues around the capacity of county school inspectorates (ISJs) to register new enrolment requests, and this is being prioritised. It was mentioned that activities have been initiated in Bucharest already (Education desk at Romexpo, in collaboration with ISMB). Support for digitalising the registration process and extending it to other counties is being considered as well.
- Fundația Națională pentru Tineret shared that they started an assessment of universities, currently mapping the situation and enrolment conditions for young Ukrainians. From current data available, about 525 Ukrainian refugee children/youths are currently enrolled at university level in Romania. They are preparing for the summer an extensive awareness program regarding registration in the education system. On their side, they do not have challenges in having adolescents/young Ukrainians attending Romanian language classes

(there are a bit more than 200 people enrolled, mainly in Tulcea, Suceava, Botosani and Timisoara). Going forward, they are thinking to create recommendations for other entities to increase their Romanian language classes quota & to start online Romanian learning classes, as well. It was agreed that the assessment report would be shared and possibly presented at the next Education WG meeting.

- **JRS** shared information on their meeting with the School Inspectorate of Bucharest regarding enrolment, mentioning that the digital version has to be further implemented – they would like to know exactly how many children are enrolled in school activities and to make the Inspectorate aware of all those running such activities. They are still trying to replicate this approach in Constanta.
- **IOM** shared details on the training session organised for educators in public schools: they had one in Brasov and another one will follow (April 21-23) in Constanta. The sessions focus on how to teach Romanian language as a foreign language and are held by IOM lectors and lectors from their partners.
- **UNICEF** also shared that they are trying to extend further support at decentralized/county level – besides the MoUs concluded recently with an additional 11 ISJs – collaborating with local authorities to ensure sustainability (e.g. in the cases of relocation to public schools of education hubs that were organised in private spaces).

#### **4. Discussions on new “50/20” programme and preparations for meeting with MoE**

- **UNICEF** offered brief recap of what the new “50/20” programme includes, such as new provisions include conditionalities on education and employment, amounts provided in terms of support for accommodation and food (for the first 4 months), conditionalities on enrolment and acquisition of status as audience in public schools and kindergartens – a number of questions are being raised, so currently they are working on collecting them to address them as part of a Q&A with the MoE and authorities.

*Main questions: 1. date when this enters into force; 2. how to continue providing alternative programs (hubs); 3. registration process and enrolment capacities of schools.*

- **JRS** raised three points:
  - one issue of terminology, regarding the reference in the text of the Ordinance to individuals enrolled in an “accredited” school in Romania → according to current legislation, we have to make reference to the “state/private pre-university education units accredited or provisionally authorised according to the law”. **JRS** stressed it is very important to have private schools mentioned as well (as there are also a number of Ukrainian children registered in private schools)
  - according to the mechanism, the local authorities are checking the database in **SIIR** (the Integrated Information System of Education in Romania), but there are issues with this system even with the children enrolled as audience – it needs to be clarified if the audience system will be maintained
  - suggestion related to the fact that we have models of the request that need to be submitted to the authorities available only in Romanian, so they are looking to have Ukrainian and English translations.

- Another issue was raised, that of recordings of personal names not done properly – there are spelling issues. There is also the issue of having different databases and no correspondence of the names, so technical considerations and capacities need to be considered.
- Regarding **SIIR**, **UNICEF** also raised the question of what documentation should be provided as proof for education, as it is not clear in the Ordinance.

## **5. Validation of key advocacy messages (as joint contribution for the Protection sector WG)**

- **UNICEF** provided a follow-up on the previous SWG session – started to work on the messages/map them out taking into consideration the issues and suggestions raised in the previous WG session by the members.
- A **UNICEF** member asked for clarity on the purpose of the messages and if they are addressed only to the Romanian MoE, as they cover some issues not under the authority/control of the MoE → for example, the recognition of studies/diploma, which involves an inter-ministerial agreement (Ukrainian-Romanian). At the same time, it was advised not to set unrealistic expectations, for example in the case of ensuring enrolment capacity for all levels – for creches (*clarifying that creches are not a clear conditionality under the new 50/20*). It was suggested that complementary services are needed, with properly trained staff. Overall, the text should be refined and if directed at MoE, to keep only those points of interest to the MoE.
- **Fundația Națională pentru Tineret** stressed the need to include a component on access to high education for Ukrainians and maybe a clear message to better coordinate under the Erasmus programme for students.
- **JRS** discussed on the medical examination and counselling provided in school (health-related issues), pointing that the job is not on the MoE to cover for this, but the MoH. On awareness campaigns, it should be considered that kindergarten and zero class enrolment is done in April-May-June, so for refugees coming after that will be problematic, which is why this issue should be taken into consideration when doing the campaigns. JRS also suggested to keep in mind the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees.
- It was agreed that **UNICEF** would finalize in considering these comments and submit the contribution on behalf of the Education WG.

## **6. AOB**

- **JRS** are exploring project idea with some of the teachers based in Odessa, in partnership with the Mihai Viteazul College in Bucharest– planning a study visit in May -a pilot project - to take the pupils out of the warzone. They are considering for the next academic year the expand this project, maybe extending it outside of Romania as well. **JRS** asked for support for accommodation and meals.
- **World Bank** shared that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> point of advocacy message - to accelerate the acceptance of diplomas... - this needs a budget allocation from the Ministry for schools to hire them and it is linked with the distribution model. They also shared on a pilot program running in Cluj, as the new EO will be encouraging enrolment to schools and conditioning the money

to the parents being employed, but there is a need to coordinate with different actors to cover the full time working hours of the parents.

**Next meeting: May 3, 2023, 9:30-11:00 am, online (Zoom)**