UN REFUGEE RESPONSE COORDINATION IN ROMANIA
Education Working Group meeting
May 3, 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. Discussions on new 50/20 provisions (education-related considerations)
4. Updates from WG members (including on situation, needs, progress & upcoming events)
5. 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 that there have been several discussions already on the Education WG contributions to advocacy messages compiled by the Protection WG which have now been submitted as far as education is concerned. It was also shared that there is a meeting scheduled on May 4 with the MoE and the PM's office on the topic of the implementation of the new 50/20 programme.

JRS shared the following feedback from the last Education coordination meeting organized with ISU:

- On advocacy, they discussed together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MAI) and MoE and shared that the proposal of including educational hubs / learning centres was included in the final text of the document and later approved by the Government.
- On last week's meeting with the MoE, they shared the following points: currently, the MoE is still looking into solutions for registration and collection of data, situation of students in schools, intensive language learning, recognition of diplomas, situation of staff, medical cabinets in schools – all considered relevant by the MoE. However, the discussions got blocked regarding financial support under the MoE's budget (TdH also shared that there will be funding issues regarding the points discussed, including for the continuation of learning hubs / alternative learning models).
- Next meeting will have the State Secretary on university-level education. (UNICEF pointed out to the study/mapping on access to university/higher education currently being implemented by the National Youth Foundation, which should be worth considering then)

3. Discussions on new 50/20 provisions (education-related considerations)

UNICEF shared the newly adopted Government decision which confirms the introduction of a conditionality linked to education, but which also broadens its application to alternative learning models (including education hubs), beyond just enrolment in Romanian schools. The issue of documentation will be more acute for hubs that are not hosted in schools. It was suggested to continue connecting hubs with local authorities and county schools inspectorates (ISJs) so that they can submit enrolment certificates in due course, when the methodology is clarified (Meeting scheduled with MoE on May 4 in that respect).

UNHCR (Galati) shared that they are trying to organise information sessions in Blue Dots, and that they noticed that even authorities have difficulties in interpreting and implementing the new provisions.

As JRS shared that they are facilitating registration with county school inspectorates, and that several NGOs are also considering issuing their own certificates as far as children participating in education hubs are concerned, unless methodology is clarified by MoE. A question was raised as to whether attendance documentation should be renewed and submitted every month. On this point, UNICEF pointed out to the text of the Government Decision, which refers to both enrolment and attendance, and promised to seek clarification from MoE.

UNICEF further shared their experience in Sibiu and Brasov – where arrangements have been made with County School Inspectorates and local NGOs (Susinima in Sibiu, Cattia center in Brasov) whereby the latter will centralise all requests for enrolment to school inspectorates. Enrolment capacities are also very limited in a number of cities with several public schools operating in double/triple shifts already. Enrolment in other locations near such cities will certainly be considered, but will be probably easier in cities like Brasov which have made arrangements for free transportation compared to others where such arrangements are not existing (e.g. Sibiu).

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

UNICEF shared other issues to be raised with the MoE, as well as separately with Ukrainian Embassy e.g. regarding the examinations and corresponding arrangements for this year. JRS mentioned that in Sighetu Marmatiei, they were informed they will organise the tests – however, it is not clear what is the status, whether officially approved or not.

Caritas (Bucharest) raised the issue that they have been seeing lately many children at their hub with families deciding to return to Ukraine – so they would like to know what would happen to the children who are integrated here in Romania, and leave mid-year, will they be integrated in the

school system in Ukraine? On this, UNICEF mentioned that, to their knowledge, the authorities in Ukraine will facilitate their integration. UNHCR also mentioned that all international organisations are working closely with Ukrainian authorities on reintegration. UNICEF further raised the issue of certificates that can be used by the Ukrainian authorities, which has to be discussed further. On this, TdH asked that UNICEF includes in their discussions with the Romanian authorities the question of whether there are ongoing discussions with the MoE in Ukraine to recognise the studies in Romania.

JRS shared the following points:

- They already started helping Ukrainians to start registrations with the school inspectorates (in Constanta, Bucharest, Galati).
- Fake information and rumours are being spread in the community on the processes, so they will have a meeting with the School Inspectorate of Galati to provide more accurate information to parents. Furthermore, they encourage Ukrainian refugees to contact the hotline set up by the government to ask for official info.
- They shared the possibility to organise language classes during the summer break.
- They discussed the possibility to include for the next academic years the teachers already employed to offer support.
- The association of Ukrainian teachers, together with the Embassy of Ukraine, will have a meeting with the MoE to explain their position towards Ukrainian children studying in Romania.
- An issue to be underlined is that the MoE has recognised that audience cannot be registered in SIIR, so for all children as audience they have to ask for certificates to be used for registration - there is no practical solution at this moment.
- With regards to the recognition of different educational entities, their approach is to register children as audience
- MoE also started the campaign for registration for 0 class – it will be going on for two weeks, as children need to get enrolled now in order to secure a place in a school near their house for the next academic year.

Furthermore, Caritas (Bucharest) shared that based on a survey on 1.000 Ukrainians they did in April, 55% of them are planning to return to Ukraine when the situation gets better, so they do not necessarily want to integrate in Romania, which brings some challenges.

UNICEF promised to share the latest information available from Ukrainian authorities on how to prepare for return / restore linkages with Ukrainian schools / education system. UNICEF also reminded participants on the importance to integrate mine risks education in current activities as part of preparations for return, in order to start preparing children for a safe return (when the situation allows at least), using materials already shared with WG members.

Next meeting: May 17, 2023, 9:30-11:00 am, online (Zoom)