



Feasibility Study on Employment Opportunities, Skills Development and Social Cohesion for Ukrainian Refugees and Vulnerable Moldovan Individuals in the Republic of Moldova

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List of Abbreviations

AAH	Action Against Hunger
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
ALMP	Active Labor Market Programs
BMA	Bureau for Migration and Asylum
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HEKS/EPER	Swiss Church Aid
ICLA	Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISD	Inclusive Systems Development
IT	Information Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MdM	Médecins du monde
MHPSS	Mental Health Services and Psychosocial Support
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MoHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection (MoHLSP)
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
MSD	Market Systems Development
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NEA	The National Employment Agency
(I)NGO / NPO	International Non-Governmental (Profit) Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OPTIM	Opportunities through Technologies and Innovation in Moldova
PiN	People in Need
PSS	Psychosocial Support
SCLR	Survivor Community Led Response
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SKAT	Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development
ToR	Terms of References
TS	Territorial Subdivisions

(T)VET	(Technical) and Vocational Education and Training
UDOC	Urban Displacement / Camp Management Settings
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	US-Dollar
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. Management Summary

Helvetas Emergency Response in the Republic of Moldova together with HEKS/EPER conducted a comprehensive feasibility study focusing on employment opportunities, skills development and social cohesion of vulnerable refugees and Moldovan individuals by collecting qualitative and quantitative data. The findings, intend to provide concrete evidence to contribute to the operationalization of the nexus by bridging gaps between the field of humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, and peacebuilding.

Due to various existing crisis and challenges in the country, which equally affect Ukrainian refugees and the local population, the target group was split 50:50 into **Ukrainian refugees** and **vulnerable Moldovans**. This approach intends to analyze elements of social cohesion rather than to create the feeling of disadvantaging one group. **In total 495 individuals** were surveyed and a series of qualitative interviews with various stakeholders were conducted.

Research findings show that structural issues in the educational system of Moldova (shortage of qualified teachers and difficulties in adjusting curricula to markets-needs) hinder economic growth, by denying the labor market the supply of an adequate educated workforce. Complicated and expensive processes, bureaucracy and a lack of capacity further hinder the alignment of training content to the needs of the private sector and therefore to contribute to a reduction of the TVET training quality. In addition, demographics (shortage of young people), brain drain through emigration, low productivity in various economic sectors and rising food and energy prices are reasons for many Moldovans to experience difficulties in finding employment and earning a decent salary.

Ukrainian refugees on the other hand are having difficulties integrating into the local labor market, due to missing information for jobseekers, insufficient childcare capacities or a lack of access to short-term courses (e.g. Romanian language courses). Additionally, social inclusion and psychosocial wellbeing of refugees in the Moldovan society and the establishment of positive relationships between refugees and hosts hinder economic and social integration, take time and must be actively supported. Refugees struggle with long term perspectives due to unclear legal status and are thus living (or transiting) in the country based on the **state of emergency**, which is being extended every 90 days since the Russian attack on Ukraine. Although a **temporary protection scheme** (passed by the government on 18, January 2023) improved the situation by allowing unemployed refugees to enjoy the same rights as the Moldovan nationals, there is skepticism that low capacity and no allocated budget in the relevant Ministries and the National Employment Agency (NEA) jeopardize the realization of this legislation.

Findings led to the suggestion of (continuously) implementing interventions in the areas of Economic Integration & Inclusive Systems Development (ISD), Humanitarian Assistance and Social Cohesion.

Concrete interventions are proposed alongside the following thematic areas:

- Skills Development (technical skills, soft skills, languages)
- Entrepreneurship as a career choice
- Capacitate institutions (NEA) and service providers (career counselling, job seekers, accreditation process of the ANACEC etc.)
- Childcare capacity
- Social cohesion/inclusion
- Psychosocial wellbeing
- Humanitarian assistance

Research findings also showed that **various organizations** are active in offering support to the target groups. Support, which is at times uncoordinated, repetitive, and either not or only partially respecting local ownership structures, thus leading to market distortion or inefficiencies. In addition, limited budgets, short durations and non-systemic (external) interventions are not contributing to increase stability, self-determination and predictability of the foreseeable future for the target groups.

2. Introduction

As one of the poorest countries in Europe, the Republic of Moldova (Moldova) is not only struggling with issues such as a low productivity, demographic challenges, and skills mismatch, but also with global crises like the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine. Its fallout, which is changing Europe's energy systems, increased inflation, and triggered the interlinked mass migration of refugees from Ukraine, are putting significant stress on the country and its institutions. According to the UNHCR, Moldova registered 770'354 (12.02.2023) border crossings from Ukraine and 108'885 (06.02.2023) individual refugees from Ukraine are currently staying in the country. This situation is putting additional tension on the already scarce resources available to the country of about 2.6 Mio. people¹². In general, weak state structures, an oligarchic system, corruption, traditional and patriarchal values, and the general disillusion and mistrust in political leaders and parties hamper social cohesion, inclusion, and development in Moldova.

The study was designed to contribute evidence for the development of nexus approaches in Moldova and to contribute to the nexus discussion in the (I)NGO community. Thus, qualitative and quantitative data was collected between November 2022 and February 2023. Recommendations are closely aligned to the nexus approach which means **combining skills and economic development (development cooperation) with the emergency needs of refugees (humanitarian aid) and elements of social cohesion (peacebuilding)**, which also includes elements of mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS).

The nexus approach implies a broad collaboration across organizations, sectors, and stakeholders, especially working with existing structures and institutions and thus strengthening country ownership and local civil society. To practically apply the nexus, the so-called **Diapraxis** methodology is a promising tool. Diapraxis means – dialogue through practice. With this methodology diverse (or adversary) groups of people, in this case, the Ukrainian refugees and Moldovan host communities, are collaborating with a shared goal or to fulfill a shared need. Another concrete approach to promote and support localization of humanitarian interventions is the **Survivor and Community Led Response** (SCLR). This approach identifies, builds, connects, and supports local self-help groups, civic initiatives, and volunteer structures, provides microgrants to them to scale up collective action, and builds on these community and locally led structures for the rapid provision of additional assistance.

OECD DAC Definitions of nexus

Nexus refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions. The approach refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence, and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict. Collective outcome refers to a commonly agreed measurable result or impact enhanced by the combined effort of different actors, within their respective mandates, to address and reduce people's unmet needs, risks and vulnerabilities, increasing their resilience and addressing the root causes of conflict.

Figure 1: Nexus definition Source: OECD

2.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the study is manifold

1. Assessment of the **access** to high quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and micro **entrepreneurship schemes** for the target groups in Moldova.
2. The identification of the biggest **constraints** for the target groups to make use of **existing employment opportunities/in-demand skills**.
3. **Social cohesion assessment** to verify the feasibility conditions to improve decent living/coexisting conditions and simultaneously creating growth-opportunities for the Moldovan market and the economic inclusion of the vulnerable Moldovan population and the Ukrainian refugees by respecting their psychosocial well-(or ill-)being.

The individual sub-objectives are further described in the following:

¹ UNHCR: [Country - Republic of Moldova \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/country-republic-of-moldova)

² National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova: Statistical Yearbook, 2021. [Anuar statistic editia 2021.pdf \(gov.md\)](https://www.stat.gov.md/Anuar_statistic_editia_2021.pdf)

Objectives	Description
Needs	The ability of the target groups to meet their basic needs, their coping mechanisms, the description of their sources of income and the expenditure gap. The time the refugees want to remain in Moldova and reasons for moving on (if no desire to stay in Moldova).
Stakeholders	A description of all relevant stakeholders and the role they have in creating an enabling / constraining environment for the roll out of TVET and entrepreneurship programming.
Target Groups	A description of the average household (source of income, coping strategies, skill sets, employment motivation etc.) within the relevant target groups.
Market Structure & Analysis of Providers	A map of the overall institutional structure outlining key stakeholder and their roles on creating an enabling environment for TVET and entrepreneurship . Including initiatives offered by private and public training providers and the preference / perception of the population about the quality of such services offered.
Labor Market Overview	Main sectors experiencing labor shortages such as services and construction, and growth sectors where job seekers and entrepreneurs can find meaningful employment opportunities whether they are skilled or non-skilled. Identification of bottlenecks and skills matches / mismatches, which ideally can be addressed through additional support as means to generate sustainable employment.
Social Cohesion Assessment	Describe the social challenges, fragmentation, and tensions within the pre-conflict Moldovan society. Main developments since the conflict and consequences on existing tensions and cleavages in Moldova. Key drivers of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and Moldovan host communities, as well as uniting factors. Identification of strategies to strengthen social cohesion and opportunities for peace within the country and through the planned interventions (and/or avoid doing harm by creating or exacerbating existing tensions and conflicts through this intervention). Identify providers and capacity of MHPS services and its social acceptance amongst the target groups.
Recommendations	Derive recommendations to facilitate access to quality employment opportunities for Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable Moldovan individuals, to transition target groups from humanitarian to development assistance, to strengthen social cohesion amongst refugees and hosts and to analyze the situation of psychosocial wellbeing for target groups.

Table 1: Objectives of the feasibility study

3. Methodology

3.1. Timeline

Due to the fast-changing environment, it seems relevant to present the schedule of the milestones to put the study and the time frame of the data collection in context.

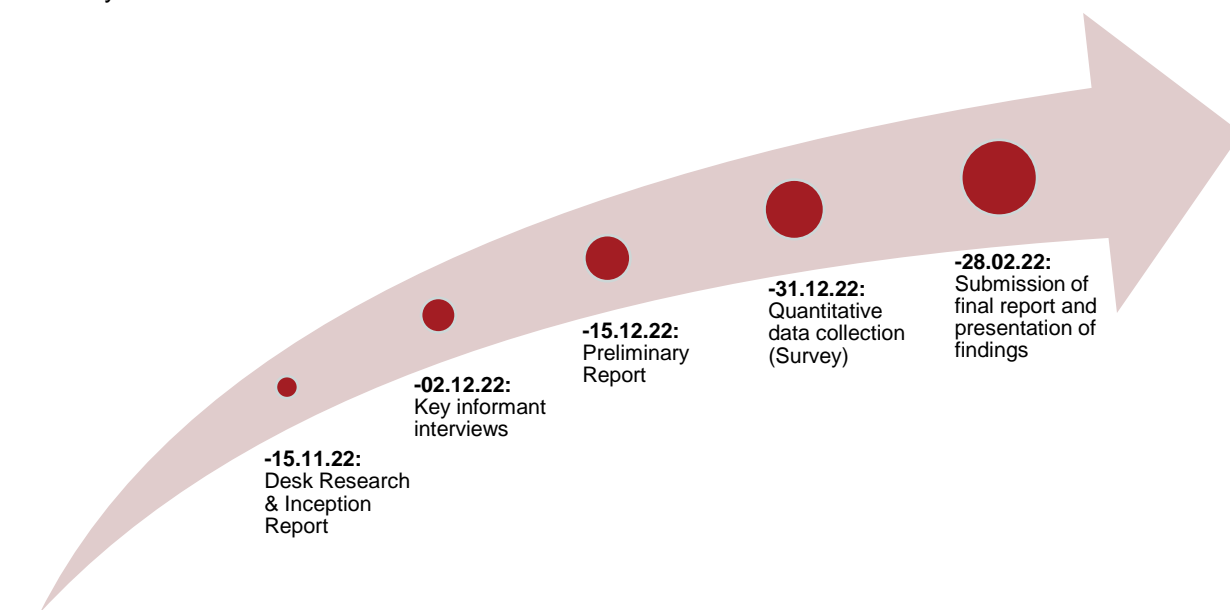


Figure 2: Milestones and timeframe

3.2. Target Groups

On the one hand, there is the conflict in Ukraine which forces people to flee their home country, on the other hand structural issues, inflation, brain drain etc. cause a difficult situation for the local population. Therefore, the target groups were divided in two; Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable Moldovans. They were further defined as follows:

- **Target Group 1: Ukrainian Refugees** (mainly women and children), youth (below 30), people with disabilities, elderly (above 65)
- **Target Group 2: Vulnerable Moldovans or “Hosts”:** women people from rural areas, youth (below 30), people with disabilities, elderly (above 65), unemployed, clustered minorities (Gagauz, Roma etc.)). Vulnerable groups are defined alongside the law on social security by the Republic of Moldova, which mentions specifically³: elderly, people with disabilities, (registered) unemployed willing to work, pregnant women or women who experienced trauma during childbirth, people who take care of sick family members or people who receive their incomes from entrepreneurial activities or agriculture in rural areas. This definition overlaps with the identified vulnerable groups of Moldovans (see chapter on Labor Market Integration of), and it was therefore used to identify the respondents of the surveys.

3.3. Data Collection

Before the primary data was collected, background information was gathered through desk research. The goal was to better understand the institutional (formal) and informal structures and allow the identification of opportunities and challenges of the labor market as well as a mapping of the relevant stakeholders in the country. Secondary data was further strengthened with **current** and first-hand information from stakeholders and the target groups themselves in a qualitative and quantitative way.

³ Republic of Moldova: [LP133/2008 \(legis.md\)](https://legis.md/LP133/2008) Chapter II, Art. 5.

3.3.1. Qualitative Data Collection - Semi Structured Interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted with key informants (see list of interview partners and guide in the Annex 3: Semi-Structured Interviews) to obtain in-depth knowledge about situations and groups which cannot be covered through quantitative methods or through desk research. Access to key informants was facilitated through the local Helvetas and HEKS/EPER teams, and the interviews were conducted in late November 2022. Most interviews were held face to face in Chisinau, but due to availability, few were also conducted virtually.

3.3.2. Quantitative Data Collection - Survey

As the situation in Moldova is unstable and fast changing, it is important to collect current primary data from the main target groups in a quantitative manner regardless of already existing, (but mostly outdated) studies on similar topics. Therefore, a questionnaire (see Annex 2: Survey Questionnaire) was developed which serves to collect relevant information to achieve the defined objectives of the study/ Quantitative data was collected by the teams of Helvetas and HEKS/EPER and local enumerators. Whilst conducting the study, several measures were taken to avoid doing harm:

- The target group was carefully selected based on available and accessible sources regarding the distribution of gender, minority- and disadvantaged-groups in the country and thus findings shed light on the dynamics of the labor market preventing the integration of refugees⁴.
- Every respondent was instructed that she or he can stop the survey at any time.
- The enumerators were properly instructed to make sure they were familiar with the objectives of the study and the background of the questions.

3.3.2.1. Size of the Sample and Distribution

In total, **495** individuals were surveyed. The distribution of the sample size was set to **50:50** between the two target groups. The reason for that is two-fold.

- To achieve **sustainable and long-term systemic changes** it is equally important to assess the needs of the local, vulnerable population (and not only of refugees), which is suffering from various crises such as inflation, post-covid, security threats, scarce resources.
- Another reason is to **avoid creating tensions in the social cohesion** between the vulnerable Moldovans (hosts) and the refugees by neglecting one of the two groups.

A further split was done based on **gender**. The sample size was split **70:30** to prioritize women in both target groups, since most refugees are women and women make up a larger part of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of the Moldovans. Furthermore, the focus lies on other disadvantaged groups such as elderly, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities (in both target groups).

⁴ Sample size not representative

3.3.2.2. Geographic Focus of the Data Collection

The geographical distribution of the sample size was designed to focus on larger urban areas, as there is a higher density of refugees in urban areas. Interventions and program activities will most likely take place in such areas. The map in Figure 3⁵ presents the geographic overview of where in the country individuals were surveyed.

3.3.2.3. Limitations

Although the methodology was designed in a comprehensive manner, there are certain **limitations**. The main ones include:

- **Size and distribution** of the sample amongst target groups: The sample size of the quantitative data collection is **not representative** in its distribution. Due to its **limitation in size and access** not all groups could have been equally included.
- **Geographical Constraints:** The sample size was 495 individuals. Although the sample size is substantial, the geographical distribution might exclude certain regions
- **Actuality of data:** There is a risk, that the interpretation of the data is not fully matching the current needs of the target groups, as the circumstances might have changed in the meantime (e.g. different needs in winter vs. summer). The ongoing conflict in Ukraine makes the **situation very volatile** and could therefore lead to unpredictable situations.

The findings from the survey are presented in Chapter 8.

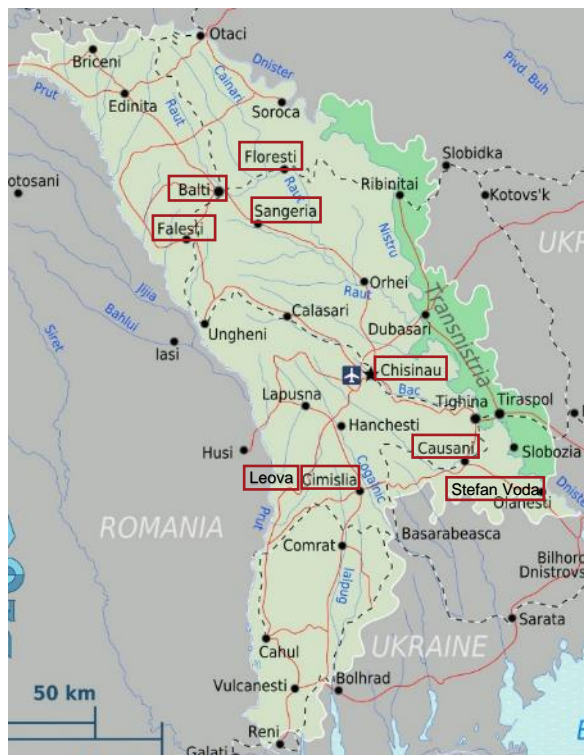


Figure 3: Geographical distribution. Source PRIF BLOG

⁵ [Breaking the vicious circle: Can the new Moldovan president Sandu succeed in balancing relations with the EU and Russia? - PRIF BLOG](#)

4. Stakeholder Mapping

The following chapter highlights the findings of the mapping of the relevant stakeholders.

4.1. Mapping of Stakeholders & Institutional Structures

The Moldovan labor market is affected by different stakeholders, which exercise influence on the target groups in their access to employment. The following graphic presents the main stakeholders according to their systemic relevance in affecting potential employees in accessing / securing employment. The most relevant stakeholders are described in the following sections, whereas the other relevant stakeholders are listed in Table 2: Relevant stakeholders.

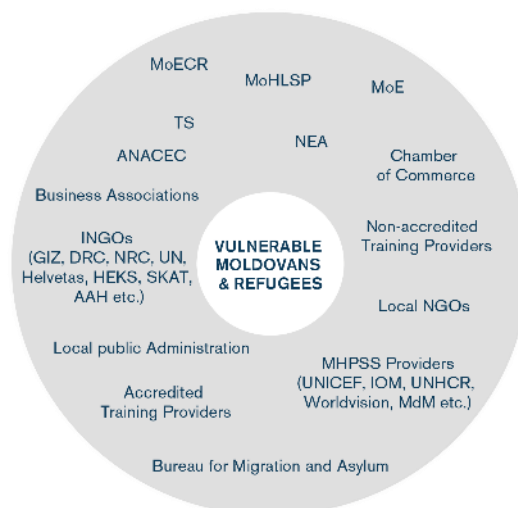


Figure 4: Overview of Stakeholders & Relations. Not conclusive. Source: Author

4.1.1. The National Employment Agency

The NEA is the central stakeholder in terms of labor market integration and access to skills development trainings. Historically the NEA identified job vacancies and their respective needs in the market and collected the data in a central database. Simultaneously it collected information about unemployed people and their skills, and conducted a matchmaking of labor market supply and demand. It also allocated a specific skills-related selection of available training courses to the unemployed individuals based on their previous sector experience. This centralized approach is a left-over from former Soviet structures. Currently the NEA is undergoing reforms and is implementing a new system as the old one did not foresee people to change their careers but rather intended to keep them in the sector where they were coming from. The new system foresees the distribution of vouchers to the registered unemployed people, which allows to choose freely from all accredited training courses available and to therefore re-direct one's professional career if desired (or necessary).

The NEA selects the skills development training providers through public tenders. It is not directly involved in the content of the curricula, but rather in the management, design, and the strategic guidance of the requirements of the training providers. Although the tender process creates an open, competitive market, the NEA **focuses mainly on the financial bid offered rather than the content** (due to the lack of capacity), therefore increasing the risk of low quality and actuality of the training content provided. The NEA is responsible for managing the services of vocational and on-the-job training, traineeships, employment subsidies, self-employment grant, local initiatives grant, mobility grant, and vocational rehabilitation and work-place adaption for people with disabilities. Amongst others the NEA, or the Territorial Subdivisions (TS) respectively, provide the following services to the unemployed and jobseekers in the country:

- Information about the job market (number of vacancies, unemployed, barometer etc.)
- Information on how to find jobs
- Career counselling – through the TS
- Support to the unemployed if they desire to open a business
- Businesses who are about to close or lay off employees are required to inform the NEA. The affected employees receive counselling on how to register as unemployed and where to receive further information regarding their rights and obligations
- Intermediary between companies and job seekers - candidates are identified and directly referred to a company
- Organization of job- and recruiting fairs
- Reintegrate and oversee reintegration and rehabilitation of unemployed people with disabilities

- Employment assistance for people with disabilities. Refer people with disabilities to an employer and subsidize the business' necessary adjustments to the workplace (if accredited and if equipped with the necessary staff to oversee this activity)
- People with training but no experience (mostly young graduates) and vice versa, receive support from the agency through internship possibilities (this service reveals the existing skills gap between the education and market)

The NEA, with the support of SDC and UNDP recently launched a centralized job-seeking platform called "angajat.md", where employers can register companies and post vacancies, and jobseekers can upload and develop their CV⁶. The platform was launched in November 2022 and is not yet well known in the public. It appears that the NEA has several programs in place to offer support to the unemployed and **is struggling to efficiently manage all of them**. In addition, the NEA is not future oriented. Thus, it must adjust its training portfolio (or contracted training providers) in a strategic manner to better reflect market needs and skills that are in high demand.

4.1.1.1. Territorial Subdivisions

The NEA oversees the 35 TS throughout the whole country and functions as centralizing unit. The TS are responsible for delivering NEA programs to jobseekers through service providers. They are also responsible for monitoring such service providers as chosen by the NEA. It is evident, that the capacities of the TS are scarce and, therefore, the services offered cannot be provided to the extent that is required. Rural areas (with deficiencies in occupational opportunities) are in particular need of the services provided by the TS.

4.1.2. National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), as an administrative authority subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Research and established by the Government and financed both from state money and their own revenue, is a relevant player in the skills development landscape in Moldova⁷. To take part in the tenders of the NEA, training providers need to be officially accredited by ANACEC. According to various key informants, It is a long, costly and complex process that hinders the evolution of the skills development market in Moldova. In fact, as a result of the onerous process, many private training providers offer courses without official accreditation.

4.1.3. Training Providers (Formal and Informal – Centralized vs. Municipal)

A range of training providers exist in Moldova. Many of them originate in associations from different business sectors and offer non-accredited but more market-oriented courses at a high quality because their members (businesses) can clearly address their skills-demand of their future employees. The IT sector, as one of the few growing industries in the country, is rather well organized in this regard and offers courses through associations or individual businesses. Trainings are constantly adjusted to the fast-changing skills-demand of the private sector making them an attractive option for future job seekers. As a result of not going through the ANACEC accreditation process, many training providers operate without accreditation, therefore the registered unemployed cannot benefit from attending training courses for free (or only a small percentage of the actual costs), thus excluding these individuals from attending such trainings (unless they have the means to cover the costs by themselves).

4.1.4. Providers of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services

Mental health problems can lead to challenges in social and economic integration. Therefore, MHPSS providers are another relevant group of stakeholders, particularly within the context of the conflict of Ukraine as refugees may be dealing with trauma and issues related to family separation. There is currently a lack of providers of MHPSS in Moldova. The use of MHPSS is socially not well accepted and users are often stigmatized. Thus, there are scant low-threshold services for the wider population and only a few specialized

⁶ UN Moldova: [The National Employment Agency launches angajat.md, a portal for employers and jobseekers | United Nations in Moldova](https://www.un.org/moldova/en/employment/angajat.md)

⁷ [Home | ANACEC.md](https://www.anacec.md/)

mental hospitals for critically ill persons. More often, MHPSS services are provided by health institutions (with no special focus and professional staff for mental health) or for children at schools.

From the government side, the MoHLSP is accountable to monitor, provide and organize mental health services⁸. From the NGO side, a new MHPSS technical reference group was built in 2022 to strengthen inter-agency coordination and increase the access to and quality of MHPSS in the Ukraine response. More than 40 organizations, including Helvetas, IOM, and UNHCR, are members of the MHPSS technical reference group⁹. Organizations like UNICEF and WorldVision provide targeted psychosocial support to traumatized refugee children. Médecins du Monde (MdM) is one of the few organizations providing direct MHPSS also for adults that include individual and group psychosocial support sessions for Ukrainian refugees, as well as targeted psychosocial support for Ukrainian and Moldovan NGO responders working on the Ukrainian crisis in Moldova. MdM is planning to provide MHPSS in community health centers as well as to volunteers and other Moldovans serving the refugee communities in 2023. Despite all these efforts to improve the cooperation and quality of services, the referral systems are still weak. Improving the cooperation and referrals with different actors working on MHPSS is therefore key and will be fostered through the current intervention. In addition to that, MHPSS actors require training to improve their capacity to work with humanitarian crisis.

4.1.5. (I)NGOs / International Organizations

Various international organizations and (I)NGOs are present in the country implementing different projects and activities in the sectors of skills development, matchmaking, labor market inclusion, and offering humanitarian assistance. Amongst other, relevant actors are the following:

- Action against hunger (AAH)¹⁰: Provision of meals and development of health and nutrition country strategy. Support with maternal health and breastfeeding.
- Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)¹¹: ACTED implements actions to support refugee reception centers, distribution of meals and of goods to cover basic necessities and the installation of sanitation facilities.
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)¹²: Supports delivery of humanitarian aid within three sectors, namely Protection, Economic Recovery, and Camp Coordination & Camp Management mainly through local partners.
- GIZ: Implements large projects on regional and urban economic development, strengthening economic development structures, policy work and VET related activities.
- HELVETAS (OPTIM Project and RECONOMY)¹³: In addition to its engagement in humanitarian assistance, Helvetas is working with partners from the private sector to work towards lifting systemic constraints in the market systems, thus allowing women and men, particularly those from excluded groups (youth, returning migrants, ethnic minorities) and those living outside the capital Chisinau to benefit from a more sustainable and better functioning market structure.
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)¹⁴: Works with local partners around topics such as information, Camp Management, Emergency assistance, education, youth, WASH, and MPCA.
- People in Need (PiN)¹⁵: Provides development support in agriculture, economy, social inclusion and protection and civil society empowerment.
- UN: Is present in Moldova with many of its sub organizations and heavily involved in different sectors. UNHCR is coordinating and implementing refugee related activities. UNDP is active in the programs related to livelihoods and strengthening of inclusive markets. UN Women are supporting (refugee) women to attend training courses and offer childcare support to facilitate access to markets.

⁸ [Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova \(gov.md\)](https://gov.md)

⁹ MHPSS [Technical Reference Group Moldova](#).

¹⁰ AAH: [Moldova | Action Against Hunger - Hunger Relief in Europe](#)

¹¹ ACTED: [Ukraine conflict: how we support refugees in Moldova \(acted.org\)](https://acted.org)

¹² DRC: [Moldova | DRC Danish Refugee Council](#)

¹³ OPTIM: [OptimProject](#)

¹⁴ NRC: [NRC in Moldova | NRC](#)

¹⁵ PiN: [Moldova - People in Need](#)

- WorldVision¹⁶: Is supporting refugees in Moldova by providing basic necessities, protection for children and their families, cash assistance and by supporting hospitals.

Other relevant stakeholders in Moldova are listed in the following table.

Stakeholder	Description
Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection (MoHLSP)	The MoHLSP is responsible for the promotion and implementation of state policies and to ensure a quality and equitable system, accessible to all citizens of the Republic ¹⁷ . The ministry develops strategies and policies in the field of employment and monitors its implementation through the various agencies – mainly the NEA.
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR)	The MoECR is responsible for the development and implementation of education legislation. The ministry coordinated the development of the strategy of the Smart Specialization and TVET and reforms of the educational sector.
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)	The MIA is the central executive authority in Moldova, which is responsible for crime prevention and law enforcement. The MIA coordinates the local police and the carabinieri but also the border guards and the bureau for migration are under its jurisdiction. It is therefore the first touching point for many of the Ukrainian refugees crossing the border into Moldova ¹⁸ .
Bureau for Migration and Asylum (BMA)	The BMA is accountable for developing and implementing the state migration and asylum policy as well as the integration procedures ¹⁹ . The BMA therefore can affect the integration of refugees into the local labor market.
Associations / Chambers (Employers / Businesses / Women)	Associations of different economic sectors as well as the chamber of commerce and industry partially fill a gap in providing market-oriented trainings. The NEA's resources and knowledge about the market's needs are often too little to design market-oriented curricula's in the public training offer and therefore the associations and chamber, who are in constant exchange with their members establish their own, market-based training courses. These however are often not accredited.
Local and international NGOs (representatives of vulnerable groups)	Several NGOs but also less institutionalized local civic, community, volunteers, and self-help groups are active in the country. Some of them are newly emerged due to the current crisis, others have a long history (since communal volunteering is ingrained in Moldovan/Ukrainian society). Both, international and local NGOs are working on topics of supporting refugees and disadvantaged groups and by providing information for refugees such as the government funded information website "dopomoga.gov.md".

Table 2: Relevant stakeholders

4.2. Findings from the Stakeholder Mapping

The identified local stakeholders (NEA, ANACEC, MoHLSP etc.) are lacking capacity to properly fulfill their responsibilities. Although many organizations are offering much needed support, not every support is improving the situation. While immediate actions are necessary to help the most vulnerable and to ease momentary suffering, it is relevant **not to forget about the long-term perspective** of the actions and to **include systemic and sustainable aspects** into every intervention.

Based on the information received from key informants, it seems that MPCA for example bears the risk of not working well if managed by different actors and in an **uncoordinated manner**. If such activities are being continued an increased coordination amongst donors is necessary to avoid creating false incentives and to target the right recipients only. Leveraging experiences made with the MPCA approach and expand it into other activities (e.g. skills development trainings) could increase the impact. Activities which seem to be working well are the ones directed on infrastructural rehabilitation (WASH, small scale reparations, construction etc.), however as these actions traditionally fall into the responsibility of the government, they are not contributing to the development of the institutional capacities and its respective ownership. In general, interventions need to be carefully analyzed not to repeat mistakes and to increase their impact. In a context where many actors, rapidly take up action and bring in large sums of money, markets can easily be distorted and ownerships of services shifted, thus not supporting the development of the country in the longer perspective.

¹⁶ WorldVision: [Ukraine | Emergency | World Vision International \(wvi.org\)](https://www.worldvision.org/ukraine/emergency)

¹⁷ [Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova \(gov.md\)](https://www.gov.md/en/ministry-of-health)

¹⁸ OSCE: [Moldova | OSCE POLIS](https://www.osce.org/polis)

¹⁹ European Commission: [Moldova - EMN NCP Info \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eas/moldova-emn-ncp-info)

5. Labor Market Assessment and Overview

The labor market assessment analyzed the Macro, Meso and Micro levels to obtain a holistic overview about the system and to subsequently support the design of recommendations.

5.1. Background

According to the National Bureau of Statistic (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova, only about 40% of its labor force was active in the labor market in 2021. Although Moldova has a low unemployment rate, the low labor market participation indicates that many people are (seasonally) employed abroad and therefore not participating in the local labor market²⁰. Moldova's economy relies on remittances received from its migrant population. An aging population is making further economic growth more difficult, due to a decrease in consumption and private sector investments in other sectors cannot make up for that loss.

Although the youth unemployment rate is shrinking, so is the youth population reflecting another severe obstacle for the Moldovan economy of tomorrow. **Growing sectors are significantly slowed down due to the shortage of labor force** and are, therefore, starting to search for skilled personnel to fill this gap outside of the country's borders. Specifically, IT companies lowered their standards and increased their salaries significantly to recruit new employees. However, many of the well skilled young people are leaving the country, headed for other European cities where they can earn more and have a more stable life. This situation is further accelerated through the multi-level crises taking place in the country. The tremendous increase of energy costs (due to complete dependency on Russian gas), the increase of food prices, as well as increasing prices for housing or office space (due to the increase in demand through the influx of refugees), is making it much more difficult to live on lower or medium salaries in the country.

Since the conflict in Ukraine, Moldova faces the additional need of integrating not only its own citizens into the labor market, but also Ukrainian refugees, who decide to remain in Moldova (even if only momentarily) and who are willing and capable of finding employment. Although recent surveys and information from interviews reveal that many Ukrainian refugees are willing to work, only very few of the refugees have been successfully employed (due to factors such as legal / administrative restrictions, language barriers, and transit only). According to the MoHLS 1'000 refugees are currently (December 2022) registered as employed in the local labor market, however NGOs suspect that this number is much higher, due to underreporting.

An additional issue is that Moldova does not have a public childcare service for small children before the age of kindergarten. Thus, making it very difficult and expensive for women, who are traditionally still expected to look after the children, to attend training courses or pursue employment if they do not have the necessary financial resources or support from family members (parents). This situation is equally hindering women from both target groups to pursue employment.

5.2. Active Labor Market Programs

According to the European Training Foundation (ETF) the sector of continuing education and lifelong learning (LLL) is underperforming and underdeveloped in Moldova. To overcome this issue, the MoECR developed a national lifelong learning strategy, which mapped the main training providers in the country, and is connected to the reorganization of the NEA. The strategy contains a series of Active Labor Market Programs (ALMP), which are currently being implemented through the NEA²¹. Any person who is older than 16 and younger than the official retirement age, who is not working, nor receiving a pension, and who is not enrolled in a full-time education program, can register with the TS as unemployed, provided she will be actively looking for a job (this includes Ukrainian refugees). That person will lose the status of unemployed if she finds a job, starts receiving a pension, enrolls in a full-time education program, refuses two appropriate jobs in a row, or stops actively looking for a job. Although these ALMPs are well designed, the impact of the ones already implemented is negligible or was not mentioned by any of the key informants interviewed.

²⁰ The Worldbank: [The-Future-of-Labor-Market-Programs-and-Services-in-Moldova-Functional-Review-of-Public-Employment-Service-s-Systems.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/publications/workingpapers/papers/The-Future-of-Labor-Market-Programs-and-Services-in-Moldova-Functional-Review-of-Public-Employment-Service-s-Systems.pdf)

²¹ Worldbank: [The Future of Labor Market Programs and Services in Moldova : Functional Review of Public Employment Service's Systems \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/publications/workingpapers/papers/The-Future-of-Labor-Market-Programs-and-Services-in-Moldova-Functional-Review-of-Public-Employment-Service-s-Systems.pdf)

Therefore, it is likely that the limited capacity of the NEA is not yet sufficient to fully promote and anchor these programs in their portfolio. The following list provides an overview of the ALMPs:

1. **Vocational training:** aims to match the skills of jobseekers with the needs of the labor market. This kind of program could either benefit individuals with low education (upskilling) or with skills that are not in demand (reskilling/requalification).
2. **On-the-job training:** similar to vocational training with a strong focus on practice in a firm. This kind of program could either benefit individuals with low education (upskilling) or with skills that are not in demand (reskilling/requalification).
3. **Vocational traineeship:** refers to internships. Individuals with no prior work history are eligible for this measure. This kind of program will be mostly targeted at young people with no experience. The trainee receives accommodation and transportation grants and receives 30 percent of the average salary in the year preceding her traineeship.
4. **Employment subsidies:** employers who hire unemployed individuals may benefit from employment subsidies. That subsidy amounts to 30 percent of the average salary of the previous year.
5. **Subsidy to create and adapt jobs for people with disability and professional rehabilitation for people with disability:** two measures will be available to integrate people with disabilities in the labor market: A subsidy to adapt the working place to people with disabilities, and a professional rehabilitation grant for people with disabilities.
6. **Support to start a business:** jobseekers who want to start their own business can apply to a self-employment grant if they submit a business plan. Successful applicants will receive a grant and vocational training in running a business.
7. **Support for local initiatives:** any individual who needs to acquire additional equipment, machinery, tools, for business development in rural areas, is eligible for the local initiatives grant. She will have to co-finance at least 35 percent of the total amount requested.
8. **Workforce mobility:** this measure aims at promoting mobility for jobseekers. E.g. contribution to commuting costs (Rural to Urban)

The TS are expecting each jobseeker once per month at their office to follow up on their situation. If not complying, the jobseeker will be dismissed from the programs. Unfortunately, there is no monitoring of the performance of the TS services and its caseworkers, who design the participation of the jobseekers in the ALMPs.

5.3. Educational System of Moldova

To fully understand the Moldovan labor market, it is important to understand what system future employees go through before entering the labor force. Therefore, structure and design of the Moldovan educational system is presented briefly in this section. There are two different tracks students can pursue in their educational path (see Figure 5: Moldovan school system. Source:)

- Academic path: After nine years of mandatory education (primary school and gymnasium), students go to the Lyceum

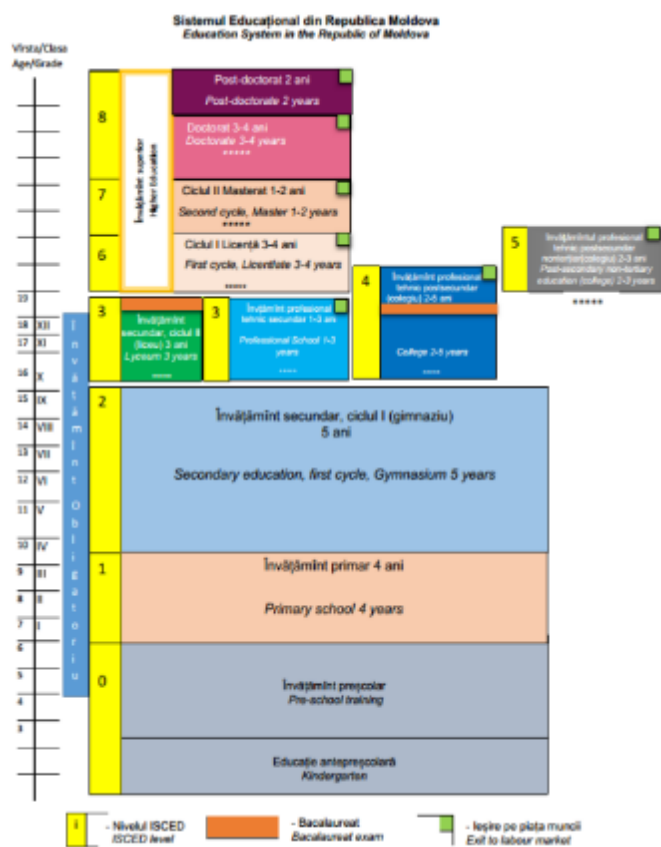


Figure 5: Moldovan school system. Source: University Institutional Autonomy in Moldova

for three years and then pursue an academic degree at a university faculty. This path is still perceived as the most prestigious in the society.

- Professional path: Students can pursue a professional career by choosing to go to either a professional school, a college, or a Center of Excellence after the nine years of mandatory education (primary school and gymnasium). The difference between the three VET schools is that they offer trainings for different types of professions and its respective necessary skills. The more complex the profession, the longer the duration of the VET school. The students either exit into the labor market from there or pursue an academic degree and enroll in the university to continue their educational path.

5.4. Economic Sector Overview

Figure 6 presents an overview of the most current data (2021) of **the main economic employment sectors** from the NBS in Moldova. The Moldovan economy still produces many jobs, which consist of **manual and repetitive tasks**, and do not require the intensive use complex skills. Especially in rural areas, agriculture and unskilled manual occupations are important fields of occupation for the local population.

Agriculture, Industry, Trade, Accommodation, and food service activities currently employ most working Moldovans. Sectors, which are characterized by unproductivity, are highly informal (65%), and add no or only a small value to its produced goods²². As a result, these sectors pay low wages and is not attractive for young people trying to find employment. Nevertheless, these sectors still employ a large share of the working population and, thus, are highly relevant. It is of notice that the percentage of people employed in these sectors is slowly but steadily in decline.

On the other side, there are attractive and booming sectors in Moldova. The most attractive **are ICT, Financial and Insurance** activities, **Electricity and Gas** supply, and **transportation and logistics**. These sectors require higher skilled personnel, which are paid above average salaries, which is often related to the fact that many specialists are working for international companies with higher salary standards. These sectors are in dire need of labor force and are struggling with the country's demographic challenges and the lack of young (and skilled) people. Industry experts estimate that the ICT sector will stagnate due to the lack of people available in the labor market. Many companies already started to recruit people from CIS countries or Romania with the promise for high salaries and low costs of living. The ICT sector makes up for a large share of the GDP in relation to the number of people it employs. Furthermore, **the public and educational side cannot keep up with its fast-paced and innovative environment** and provide adjustable and agile training models to train future employees. These dynamic results in a skills gap between graduates and employers, and also in a **poor-integration of up-to-date training content in state accredited trainings** (which are accessible to the unemployed).

The attractiveness of the sectors is also reflected in the percentage of sectoral employees' participation in VET trainings. Whereas in the agricultural, Industry and construction sector 2%, 15.9% or 9.2% of the employees attend continuing VET trainings, 63.3%, 54.6% and 29.7% of the employees in the Electricity and Gas, Financial and Insurance and in the ICT sector attend continuing trainings²³.

Sexe, medii, activități economice Sex, area, economic activity	Total	Grupe de vârstă / Age group					
		15-24 ani / years	25-34 ani / years	35-44 ani / years	45-54 ani / years	55-64 ani / years	65 ani / years +
Total	843,4	44,1	199,6	223,2	196,7	160,4	20,6
Agricultură, silvicultură și pescuit Agriculture, forestry and fishery	181,2	9,2	29,3	42,9	51,1	42,4	6,4
Industria Industry	121,6	7,7	29,1	34,9	27,9	20,5	0,0
Construcții Construction	65,1	4,3	17,3	21,1	13,3	8,8	0,0
Comerț cu ridicata și cu amănuntul; Activități de cazare și alimentație publică Trade, Accommodation and food service activities	147,5	12,2	41,1	41,1	31,5	19,6	0,0
Transport și depozitare; Informații și comunicații Transportation and storage; Information and communication	80,2	0,0	19,9	15,4	10,9	10,9	0,0
Administrație publică, învățământ, Sănătate și asistență socială Public administration; Education; Health and social work	193,5	4,6	39,8	47,1	46,2	49,0	6,8
Alte activități Other	74,3	4,2	23,1	20,6	14,9	9,2	0,0

Figure 6: Employed population by age, sex and economic activity, 2021.
Source: NBS

²² European Training Foundation: [Skills mismatch measurement in Moldova | ETF \(europa.eu\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/skills-mismatch-measurement-in-moldova)

²³ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova: Statistical Yearbook, 2021. [Anuar statistic editia 2021.pdf \(gov.md\)](https://anuar-statistic.editia-2021.pdf.gov.md)

5.5. Legislative Overview

The main law that regulates the labor market in Moldova is the Labor Code (2003 with subsequent modifications)²⁴. The Code regulates all necessary individual and collective relationships and controls its applications. According to the ETF Report, the Labor Code defends the rights of employees and adheres to international best practices. Apparently, some businesses argue that the code is even too protective of employees. In Moldova the labor code defines a minimum wage which was set at 117.00 EUR per month in 2018. Public sector salaries are regulated by the state, the minimum wage is calculated by the NBS, and the private sector determines the salaries itself in relation to the average salary.

Regarding entrepreneurship, there is legislation in place which intends to support entrepreneurship and provides subsidies (upon presentation of their business plans) for entrepreneurs who want to open businesses. However, in the last two years only very few grants were issued. It is at this stage unclear if this is due to low quality business plans presented or administrative red-tape or non-transparency. Regarding the legal status of Ukrainian refugees, see 5.7.1 Legal Status.

5.6. Labor Market Integration of Vulnerable Moldovans

There are various vulnerable groups in Moldova. One thing most of them have in common, is **poverty** (and high vulnerability). Poverty amongst these groups can again be traced back to a **lack of access to public services (education, healthcare etc.) which creates a downward spiral**. The main groups and their access (or restrictions) to the labor market are listed below. The list describes challenges faced by vulnerable Moldovans, as well as marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The list is based on a study conducted by the embassy of Sweden in Chisinau in 2020²⁵. Ukrainian refugees form another group and are described in the chapter 5.7 separately.

Groups	Description
People in Rural Areas	The gap between the urban and the rural population raises significant challenges. The rural population (about 1'853'807 ²⁶) cannot access the public services as easily as the urban population. Reforms and efforts to centralize the educational system by creating regional centers (of excellence) and fewer village-based schools and the demographic trend of an increasing older and a decreasing younger population further widened this gap. Economically, the rural population is traditionally involved in agriculture, a not very profitable sector due to the lack of capacity for value-adding activities, and, therefore, is not attractive to the youth. As a result, they move to cities or emigrate leaving the elderly behind. The NEA is supporting programs to cover costs for people commuting from rural areas to the cities and back, as well as for entrepreneurial activities in rural areas.
Women	Women have less political representation and suffer from a pay gap. Additionally, women are more restricted from accessing educational programs and, thus, from the labor market as well. The limited capacities and availability of childcare services (especially small children), makes it difficult for mothers (who are traditionally taking care of the children) to get full time positions.
Youth	There is a general deficiency of skilled labor force in the country and the youth (about 1'150'000 ²⁷) suffer exceptionally from the skills mismatch. Without the right skills, it is difficult to find employment and a decent pay. Therefore, many emigrate for economic reasons, thus, increasing the local demand for employable people.
Elderly	The estimated 304'000 ²⁸ elderly in the country often rely on remittances because their pensions often don't cover the basic needs (housing, healthcare etc.). Many of them were trained in the Soviet Union and at the time placed in employment. They have difficulties in integrating themselves in the labor market of a market economy. They are amongst the most disadvantaged .
Children to Migrant Workers	Due to the emigration of a large part of the workforce, many children remain in the country with their grandparents or only one parent. As many migrant workers come from the rural areas, children left-behind face difficulties receiving access to the necessary public services (education etc.) and finding decent employment.

²⁴ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova: lex.justice.md/md/326757/

²⁵ SIDA: [Multidimensional Poverty Analysis - Moldova 2020 \(sida.se\)](https://multidimensionalpovertyanalysis.org/moldova-2020/)

²⁶ Republic of Moldova: Census 2014 - [Generator de Infografice | Recensământ \(statistica.md\)](http://generator.de.infografice.ro/recensamant/statistica.md)

²⁷ ibid

²⁸ ibid

LGBTQI+	According to the SIDA report, the LGBTQI+ community faces a fierce intolerance and is often discriminated and stigmatized. In Transnistria “same-sex activities” are banned as illegal.										
Roma	The Roma community is the most disadvantaged group in the country experiencing discrimination and stereotypes. Roma children face difficulties in accessing education and for this community it is more difficult to make use of the public services and to access the labor market. The NEA funds programs to mediate between the Roma community and potential employers to break down prejudices. According to the census in 2014, the number of Roma in the country is 9’323 ²⁹ . However, this number is disputed and estimated to be much higher.										
People with Disabilities	According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ILO, approximately 180’000 people with disabilities live in Moldova ³⁰ . Children with disabilities require support and assistance for adequate inclusion in schools. There is a need to also include refugee children, including those with disabilities, in public schools.										
Gagauz	Gagauzia a region, which has a specific status inside Moldova. The Gagauz people are an ethnic minority and estimated to 126’010 ³¹ . Moldova passed a law on Gagauzian’s special legal status in 1994.										
Victims of Domestic Violence and/or Human Trafficking	The NEA is collaborating with many international organizations and NGOs to work with this group. Additionally, several government programs are targeting the reintegration in society of former detainees.										
“NEET” – Not in Employment, Education or Training	<p>The NEET group is not actually a disadvantaged group in the classic sense, as it is made up of people from different ethnicities, geographics or gender. However, they all have the fact in common that they are difficult to identify and to integrate in the local labor market. They often require the need for psychological support and are scattered throughout the country - not specifically only in the countryside. The below table shows that young women are severely more disadvantaged. The countries percentage is twice as high as the EU average.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Total % of NEET youth</th><th>27%</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Men</td><td>23.2%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Women</td><td>30.9%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Urban</td><td>25.3%</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rural</td><td>27.8%</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Table 3: NEET (age 15-29) in Moldova. Source: UNDP: Inclusion of Youth: NEET.³²</p>	Total % of NEET youth	27%	Men	23.2%	Women	30.9%	Urban	25.3%	Rural	27.8%
Total % of NEET youth	27%										
Men	23.2%										
Women	30.9%										
Urban	25.3%										
Rural	27.8%										

Table 4: Vulnerable groups in Moldova

The overview of the sector, as well as the information received from the key informants, show that there is **a tremendous need for skills development in the country**. Especially the young and the rural population seems to be left behind in terms of supply with education and economic opportunities. Providing access to high-quality trainings will support labor market integration. As such efforts fall under the jurisdiction of the NEA or the TS respectively, it is assumed that their capacity is insufficient, and resources are not enough to provide services. **To have the largest possible outreach, programs with physical attendance in rural areas (amongst others), possibly also in minority communities, with a cost-covering component could foster labor market integration and reach the most vulnerable.** Research, mandated by Helvetas’ RECONOMY program (focusing on the ICT sector), identified the following needs of improvement for labor market integration³³:

- Companies need to create a more inclusive work environment for women, and women need to be able to access trainings and education easier as the labor market supply is scarce. The government and other international stakeholders must do more to support women’s access to decent paying work.
- Universities need to better connect with the private sector. At the moment, the primary driver of company-university collaborations is the search for potential recruits. However, students should be encouraged to graduate before being taken into full-time employment. Universities must work

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ UN Moldova: [Beyond silence - another success story of including people with disabilities in the Moldovan labour market | United Nations in Moldova](#)

³¹ Republic of Moldova: Census 2014 - [Generator de Infografice | Recensământ \(statistica.md\)](#).

³² UNDP: Inclusion of youth not in employment, education or training | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)

³³ RECONOMY: Research on Tech education, tech talent and employer needs in Moldova, 2022, Mihai Avram

together with companies to ensure that this balance is restored. At the same time, more company employees (experts) should seek to become professors or part-time professors. More practice-based programs need to be developed in partnership with industry stakeholders.

- Companies should explore externalizing their learning efforts and part of their employee training to specialized course providers (such as business associations / chambers etc.). To advance the whole sector and to share costs, which is especially relevant for MSMEs.

Based on the findings from the key informants, before mentioned needs are not sector-specific and can be transferred to other economic sectors as well.

5.7. Labor Market Integration of Ukrainian Refugees

The situation for Ukrainian refugees is complex in many ways. This chapter provides an overview of the difficulties Ukrainian refugees face, when trying to access the Moldovan labor market.

5.7.1. Legal Status

First and foremost, the legal status of the refugees is of utmost relevance. Ukrainian refugees can travel to Moldova without a visa or any registration for up to 90 days. Under the currently effective nationwide **state of emergency**, refugees can work, stay in the country and access some basic services (e.g. health-care) without having to pass any administrative hurdles. If desired, refugees can apply for asylum. Once granted, they can ask for a temporary residence permit which facilitates access to additional public services such as the services of the NEA, and, thus, help with labor market integration.

The government has been working on a legislation called “**temporary protection scheme**”, which grant Ukrainian refugees a special status, allowing them to make use of the services of the NEA (see NEA in the section 4.1 Mapping of Stakeholders & Institutional Structures) in a similar manner as Moldovan citizens. Under this legislation Ukrainian refugees can be registered as “unemployed” without having to pass through asylum and residence permit processes first. However, as the services offered through the NEA are many and costly to the government (due to a sudden steep increase in demand by the refugee population), it is unclear whether the NEA will be able to include refugees. On January 18, 2023, the government passed the temporary protection scheme which grants refugees the right to work without a permit. According to the MoHLSP and the NEA, no budget has been set aside to further support refugees under the scheme.

Based on information provided by key informant interviews, there are various issues connected to the refugee’s legal status.

- The unclear legal status makes it difficult for **employers** to plan their budget for the foreseeable future. As consequence, they are reluctant to hire refugees.
- Re-skilling training courses offered by the different organizations often have a duration of approximately three months. Although the trainings are for free for refugees, the lack of a defined legal status, makes it unattractive for refugees to invest in trainings due to the risk of being sent back home once their course is completed.
- Unclear legal status, or not enough support from the government, leaves refugees in a helpless uncertain state, where they are fully dependent on political decisions or goodwill from organizations. This **can lead to frustration and psychological issues**.

5.7.2. Skills Assessment

Concerning the skills level of Ukrainian refugees, UNHCR’s regional bureau for Europe provides a profile of Ukrainian refugees. UNHCR surveyed 4’900 refugees throughout various countries (amongst them, Moldova with more than 700). Thus, it can provide some valuable information on the current situation of refugees in their respective host countries³⁴. Findings show that more than half of refugees hold a university degree or higher, and 25% completed technical or vocational education. Only 4% of refugees were unemployed before leaving Ukraine. Before the conflict, 76% of refugees were working in a profession with most of them employed in education, wholesale and retail trade, as well as in the medical and health sectors.

³⁴ UNHCR: [Document - Lives on Hold: Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine #1 \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/publications/docs/2022/12/Document-Lives-on-Hold-Profiles-and-Intentions-of-Refugees-from-Ukraine-1)

The need to learn the local language is crucial to access the job market and educational opportunities in Moldova. There are sectors which can absorb refugees even with no, or only very basic Romanian skills, such as

- Retail: Shop assistant etc.
- Medical / Health Sector: Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists etc.
- Hospitality / Gastronomy: Waiting tables, Cook, Hotels etc.
- Industry: Electricians, Welders etc. (However not too many vacancies)

However, as **language becomes more relevant, it is more challenging to access meaningful employment**. As many of the refugees hold higher educational diplomas and were working in managerial positions before, it becomes more difficult for them to be hired. Such positions are highly desired amongst the local population. Thus, competition is higher. Additionally, **local language skills are necessary to manage people**. Refugees coming from public administration cannot do the same work because in Moldova a Moldovan citizenship is required to work for the Government. This leads to the conclusion that **there is a big need for people to be re- or upskilled to find employment** in other sectors, or to learn the locally needed skills (languages, soft skills).

5.8. Findings from the Labor Market Assessment

The findings from the assessment of the labor market, can be summarized mainly in the following topics:

One of the main issues in the Moldovan labor market starts with the quality and availability of education and further training. The sector of continuing education and LLL is underdeveloped in Moldova. The educational structures are rigid and do not align well to the needs of the labor market. Additionally, many people are leaving the country in search of better economic conditions slowing down high growth sectors due to the shortage of a qualified labor force. Agriculture, Industry, Trade, Accommodation, and food service activities currently employ most working Moldovans. Sectors which consist of manual and repetitive tasks, with only little or no value added are characterized by unproductivity and high informality.

The most attractive sectors are Financial and Insurance activities, Electricity and Gas supply, and the transportation and logistics sectors, which pay above average salaries. In addition, due to geographical independence, universality of coding languages and high demand, the ICT sector is also attractive and can potentially support the labor market integration or offer continuous employment for the Ukrainian refugees, but also attractive job opportunities for re-skilled or well-trained Moldovans³⁵. All of these sectors require higher skilled personnel which the local education system is not producing at the moment, or only in small numbers. The sector overview, as well as the information received from the key informants, show that there is **a tremendous need for skills development in the country**. Especially the **young and the rural population seems to be left behind** in terms of supply with education and economic opportunities.

Ukrainians struggle with their legal status in the country. Refugees are staying in Moldova under the emergency declaration and soon the temporary protection scheme. However, it is still unclear what services to find employment they can access. There is a big need for people to be re- or upskilled to find employment in other sectors, or to learn the locally needed skills (languages, soft skills). Sectors which can easily absorb people (even without training and only limited Romanian skills) typically are:

- Retail: Shop assistant etc.
- Medical / Health Sector: Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists etc.
- Hospitality / Gastronomy: Waiting tables, Cook, Hotels etc.
- Industry: Electricians, Welders etc. (However not too many vacancies)

Many of the refugees have university degrees and come with professional skills gained in previous employments in their home country. The ICT sector, although still small is a sector where refugees could find employment, due to the universality of coding languages, irrelevance of physical location, and the possibility of doing freelance work.

³⁵ Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe: Technical Proposal Vibrant ICT/BPO sector for engagement of Ukrainian citizens (including refugees) to work remotely from Eastern Partnership countries for ICT/BPO companies in the global markets as freelancers" submitted to Helvetas Swiss intercooperation.

6. Social Cohesion

The Moldovan economy is heavily connected to Russia and Ukraine. Therefore, the conflict has had a direct and severe impact. The local population is suffering from too few jobs and ever-increasing prices for food and energy. This situation, combined with agendas of opportunistic politicians, can lay the foundation for spurring social tensions between the local population and refugees. Although solidarity with the refugees is overwhelming and refugees do not seem to be perceived in a hostile manner, it is evident that both groups are being affected. Most the refugees have never worked in Moldova since their arrival and are living of the support from INGOs (Cash Assistance etc.). However, as soon as humanitarian assistance ends, many people will be left outside of the labor market without any means of livelihood. The integration of the children into school systems to avoid educational gaps is also critical. According to key informants, many refugee children are still attending (online) classes from Ukrainian schools. This supports the mobility of refugee families and provides a minimum of school attendance, but it is not contributing to social inclusion since children are not learning the local language and the quality of the education provided to the children is unclear. Homeschooling also hinders the mother's employment prospects as due to the lack of childcare services, women cannot leave the child at home alone to pursue waged work. Attending Russian speaking schools in Moldova is another issue for refugee children, which has similar negative effect on social inclusion, and has the potential to increase tensions between the two groups as the available places are limited.

Even before the conflict and the influx of Ukrainian refugees, social cohesion in the Republic of Moldova was fragile: the **society was and is divided along ethnic and linguistic lines**. It is assumed that the widespread nepotism and clientelism leads to the distribution of jobs along ethnic and linguistic lines. There is a deep-rooted cleavage between people who are –economically, politically, in terms of language and worldviews- oriented towards Russia, and those oriented towards Europe and the West. Moldova is **traditionally a multi-ethnic country** with different ethnic groups that have lived together mostly in peace. According to the 2014 census, Moldovans make up 75.1% of the total population, 7.0% self-identified them as Romanians, Ukrainians accounted before the war for 6.6%, Gagauz for 4.6 %, Russians for 4.1%, Bulgarians for 1.9%, Jews 0.11%, Roma 0.3%%, and other nationalities for 0.5%. Despite peaceful living together and a common cultural heritage, there is no such thing as “one” Moldovan identity, that can easily unite people and build a strong social fabric³⁶. Especially excluded are Roma people: A vulnerability study showed that every second Roma lives in extreme poverty, they lack equal access to employment, education, health care, and decent housing, and are stigmatized by mainstream society³⁷.

In general, the weak state structures, the oligarchic system, corruption, traditional and patriarchal values, and the disillusion and mistrust in political leaders and parties hamper social cohesion and development in Moldova. Previous assessments of HEKS/EPER evidenced that the massive emigration (especially of men) led not only to a lack of workforce, but also to an increasing proportion of women in the society and disruption of familial ties, especially in the rural areas, where mainly women, vulnerable, and less educated people remained.

Since the beginning of the conflict, some people see the safety in Moldova at risk and fear that Russia's ambitions could escalate to Transnistria at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. Aside from that, with the influx of refugees, **many of the existing challenges and tensions within the country have increased**. Especially, challenges related to governance issues, poverty, unemployment, the cleavage between Russian and Western oriented persons and the increasing proportion of women in society. In the current situation, the fact that many Ukrainian refugees **do not speak and understand the national Romanian language** and competition for the scarce resources are seen as the main drivers of conflict between host and refugees (see 8.6).

Due to the presence of refugees, the proportion of women in society increases and vulnerabilities gain momentum in Moldova: Approximately 75% of the Ukrainian refugees in Moldova are female, many of them traveling with children, elderly or vulnerable family members. In addition, 18% of the interviewed

³⁶ IPRE 2018

³⁷ Government of Moldova et al. 2011

refugees traveled with a person with vulnerabilities (out of them 15% with a person with special needs, 16% with a chronic disease and 3% with a pregnant or lactating woman)³⁸. The fact, that most of the refugees are female, many of them responsible for dependent, vulnerable family members, must be considered. Livelihoods and economic inclusion play a vital role in ensuring refugees become more resilient, self-reliant, and reduce risks and vulnerability. However, given the context, a dedicated focus of the refugee response in Moldova should be not only placed on basic needs, economic inclusion, and access to essential services, but also on **fostering social cohesion within and between refugees and host communities**.

³⁸ IOM (Oct 2022): [Republic of Moldova – Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs](#).

7. Summary of Findings from the Secondary Data and Interviews

To support the country's modernization, the efficiency, quality, and access to public services and skills development need to be strengthened. The goal is to boost productivity in many parts of the economy³⁹. Multiple **structural** and **sector related issues** are hindering the development of the high growth and labor-intensive sectors and that were identified through this research.

7.1.1. Shortage of Educational Personnel

The ICT sector reports that due to the dire need of companies to employ qualified personnel, they increased salaries to high levels and lowered expectations in terms of qualifications. University or professional school professors are being recruited by ICT companies where they receive a higher salary and don't face pressure to pursue academic titles and conduct research. This creates a gap in qualified teachers who could train the next generation of employees. Demographic trends complicate this situation as the young population in the country is shrinking and not being well trained.

7.1.2. Urban vs. Rural

Chisinau, the capital, is responsible for more than 50% of the national GDP, which reflects the large gap in labor market opportunities between the rural and the urban population. Quality education and employment outside of Chisinau is hard to find and the rural population is mostly working in agriculture. In 2017, the UN estimated that rural poverty is 4 times as high as the urban one in Moldova⁴⁰. With a GDP per capita (2021) of only 5'231 USD, the need for additional support in labor market integration and economic development is clear.

7.1.3. Missing Data and Lack of Capacities

To identify and monitor the skills gap between the market demand and the skills supply, the NEA regularly conducts a repetitive labor market survey (barometer). However, there is only little contextual knowledge about the individual sectors needs in terms of skills within the NEA. For some sectors, only few or no courses are provided to the public, and no sectorial knowledge exists within the Agency. This is also partly due to the reason that the NEA is "only" managing the tendering process of trainings and is not too much involved in the content design. Another issue in the Moldovan labor market is the matchmaking and centralized sources of information on vacancies. Although different platforms exist, it is often unclear to the public which platform contains information about specific sectors.

7.1.4. Neglected Soft Skills

It has been repeatedly mentioned in the key informant interviews that soft skills are very relevant. However, most of the training providers focus on delivering technical (or hard) skills. Private sector companies (especially international ones) mention that they are teaching their new employees the necessary technical skills on-the job, but not soft skills. Sales, management, workplace organization, etc., are examples of skills, are seen as highly relevant, but often neglected.

7.1.5. Rigid and Outdated Curricula and Non-Transparency through Bureaucracy

Information from interviews revealed that the curricula of the formal education are often rigid and outdated. Private training providers offer better quality and market-oriented training courses (especially in innovative and fast-changing sectors, such as ICT). These courses, however, are not for free and, therefore, not accessible to everyone. To obtain accreditation, certifications, access to universities, or professional VET, institutions often require many bureaucratic processes which can become prone to corruption.

³⁹ Worldbank: [World Bank Document](#)

⁴⁰ UNDP: [Rural poverty in Moldova is 4 times higher than urban one, UNDP report | United Nations Development Programme](#)

7.1.6. Lack of Childcare Capacities

In the interviews it was repeatedly mentioned that Moldova struggles with a lack of childcare capacities. The capacities available are intended for children three years of age and older, which poses additional problems for mothers of very young children trying to go back to work or find employment. This structurally weak system also makes it harder for Ukrainian refugees to integrate into the labor market or even to participate in skills development and language courses. Most Ukrainian refugees are women with children. Thus, they are dependent on childcare services if they want to find employment. The fact that refugee kids stay at home following online classes from their former schools in Ukraine also creates difficulties for mothers as they cannot leave their children at home unattended. These dynamics hinder the opportunity of Ukrainian women to pursue employment.

7.1.7. Social Tensions

The conflict and influx of Ukrainian refugees bears the risk of increasing existing tensions and challenges that already existed in Moldova before (e.g., tensions between people oriented towards Europe vs. the Pro-Russian populations, or between Romanian/Moldovan- and Russian-speaking persons, the conflict around Transnistria, the poverty and lack of income, the increased share of women in the society).

Moldova has a long history of peaceful, multi-ethnic living together. Moldovans and Ukrainians share an interest in a peaceful and decent living, common values, traditions, worldviews, and most of them understand or talk Russian as a common language for communication. Measures to strengthen social cohesion and positive relationships between refugees and hosts shall therefore build on these “connecting factors”. As the Moldovan society is polarized, the potential for deterioration of the relations with Ukrainian refugees could increase if assistance is provided to only to one group. This is particularly relevant if employment services are made available to Ukrainian refugees as it has the potential to create the perception that Ukrainians are benefiting from jobs that should have been offered to Moldovans.

7.1.8. Other Findings

A **gender-based perception** of professions and the labor market is another issue the country is dealing with. Moldova’s labor market is still struggling to become more market based and less centrally directed as it was the case in the Soviet Era. For example, ICT, a booming industry, is very male dominated (not only in Moldova, but also in Ukraine and Russia). Due to the Martial Law in Ukraine, men are not allowed to leave the country. Therefore, potential experts, which could support the gap in personnel in this sector in Moldova are only available in small numbers amongst the refugee population from Ukraine. Additionally, **language** is an issue for refugees to find employment. Although many Moldovans speak Russian and so do many Ukrainians, it is often required to know Romanian to find employment, especially for white collar jobs.

8. Survey Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the survey.

8.1. Introduction

Visualizations of findings from the collected data is presented to provide a better understanding of the situation in Moldova, and to support or challenge findings from the desk research. The analyzed data supports the design of the proposed interventions combined with the findings from the qualitative interviews and the desk research in chapter 9. The detailed questionnaire can be found in annex 11.3 for more details.

The survey data was structure into the following topics, alongside which the data has been analyzed and is presented in the following sections:

- Overview
- Household information
- Income information
- Mobility
- Education, Skills and Employment
- Trainings and support received
- Childcare
- Social cohesion
- Psychosocial wellbeing

8.2. Overview

The following table presents the detailed distribution of the survey by rayon, gender, nationality, refugee status (self-declared) and place of residence (urban vs. rural).

Rayon	Total	Rural	Urban	Women	Men	Refugees	Vulnerable Moldovans
Chisinau	187	3	184	137	50	83	104
Balti	29	1	28	21	8	13	16
Causeni	50	11	39	26	24	23	27
Cimislia	26	8	18	15	11	8	18
Falesti	43	28	15	32	11	19	24
Floresti	39	4	35	34	5	15	24
Leova	41	34	7	27	14	26	15
Sîngerei	37	25	12	32	5	20	17
Stefan Voda	43	25	18	23	20	23	20
Total	495	139	356	347	148	230	265

Table 5: Survey sample distribution

Most of the Moldovans are somewhere between 20 and 60 years of age, whereas the refugee respondents include a slightly higher number of people older than 61 years.

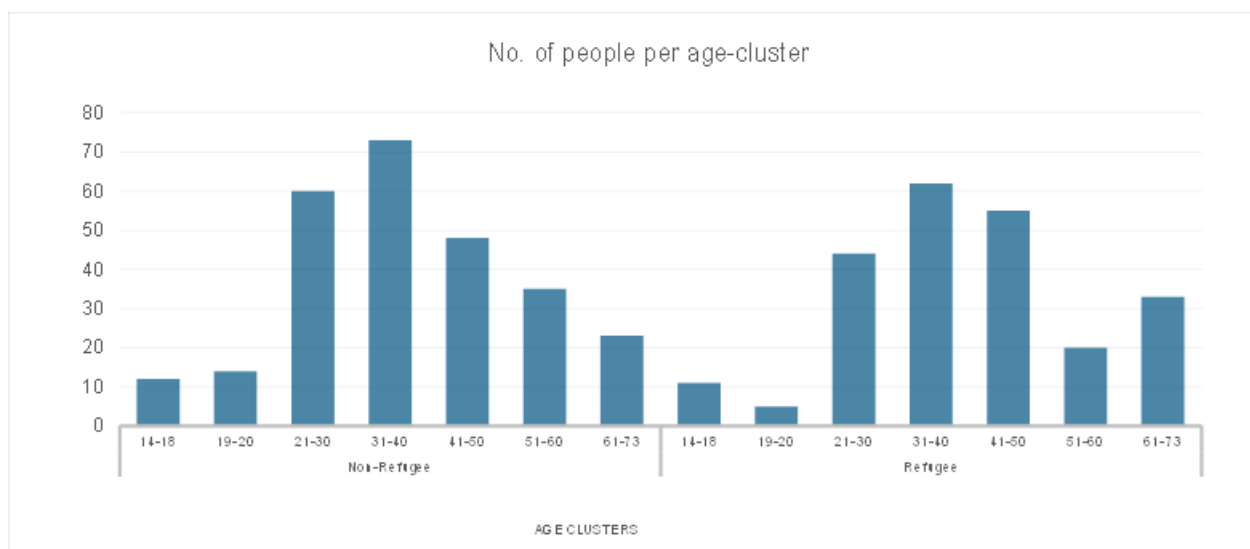


Figure 7: Age cluster

Looking at the ethnic distribution of the respondents, only very few of the individuals consider themselves part of ethnic minority groups. As most of the respondents stated that they are of either Moldovan or Ukrainian origin (with only very few different nationalities and ethnicities), findings are presented for two clustered groups: "non-Refugees", which consist of 96% Moldovans and "Refugees", which consist of 93% Ukrainians (plus 11 Moldovans who consider themselves as refugees) only. The individual ethnic affiliation is not presented in the findings of the different sub-topics, as the sample size of these ethnic minorities are too small to allow any conclusions.

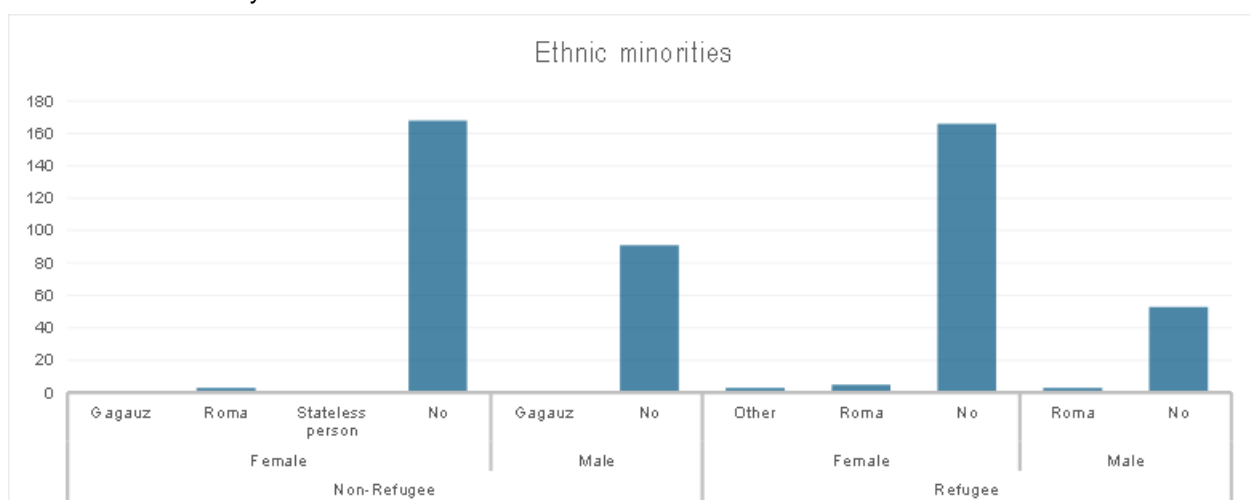


Figure 8: Ethnic minorities

8.3. Household Information

A first set of information is given by the data concerning the household situations of the respondents. Most of the refugees live in 2, 3 or 5 person households, whereas most Moldovans live in households of 3 or 4 persons.

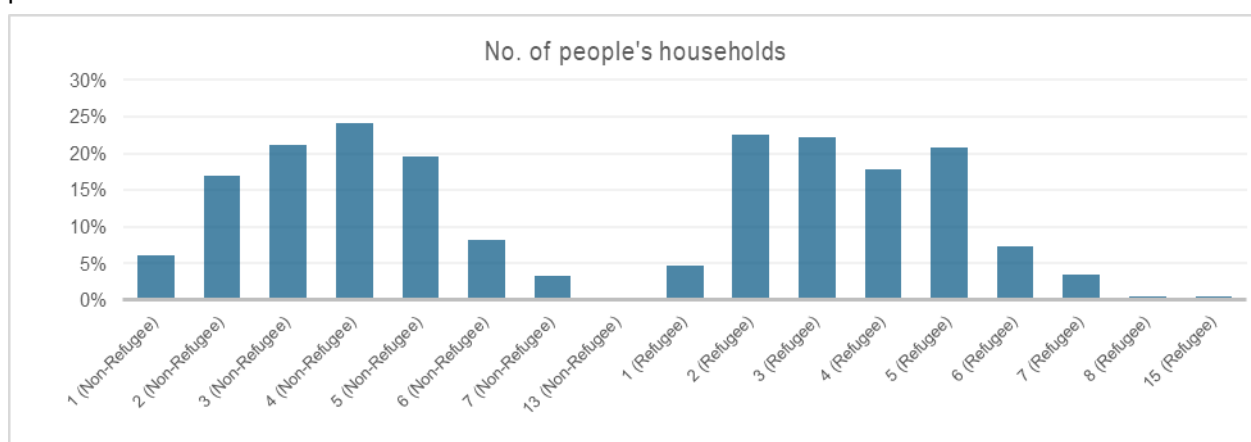


Figure 9: No. of people's households

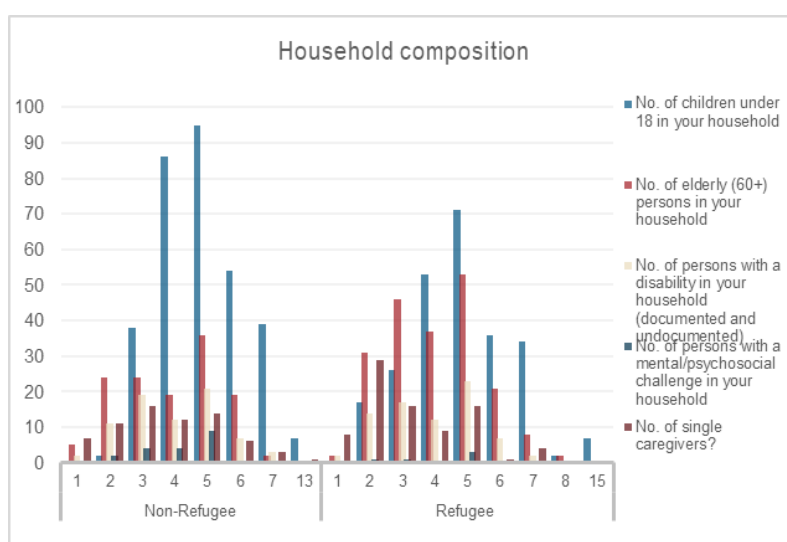


Figure 10: Household composition

The composition of the households is similar amongst Moldovans and Refugees. In Moldovan households of 4 or 5 persons tend to live more children under the age of 18, whereas refugee households of 3, 4 or 5 consist of a higher number of elderly people. There is a significant **higher number of single caregivers in refugee households of 2**. These are mainly women who have fled with small children. The number of children in households of 2 is also significantly higher for refugees than Moldovans. Data shows that women are single caregivers (refugee 72 women out of 83 / Moldovans 57 women out of 70).

Summary

- More children under the age of 18 in Moldovan households
- More single caregivers amongst refugees (especially in two-person households) – women with children
- Equal distribution of people with physical disabilities amongst refugee and Moldovan households
- Higher number of people with mental/psychosocial challenges in Moldovan households
- Higher number of elderlies in refugee households

8.4. Income Information

Most refugees rely on savings, social welfare or other (unknown) sources of income. Ukrainian men receive a regular income more often than Ukrainian women, whereas Ukrainian women are likelier to receive remittances when compared to men. Most Ukrainian women are heavily reliant on their savings.

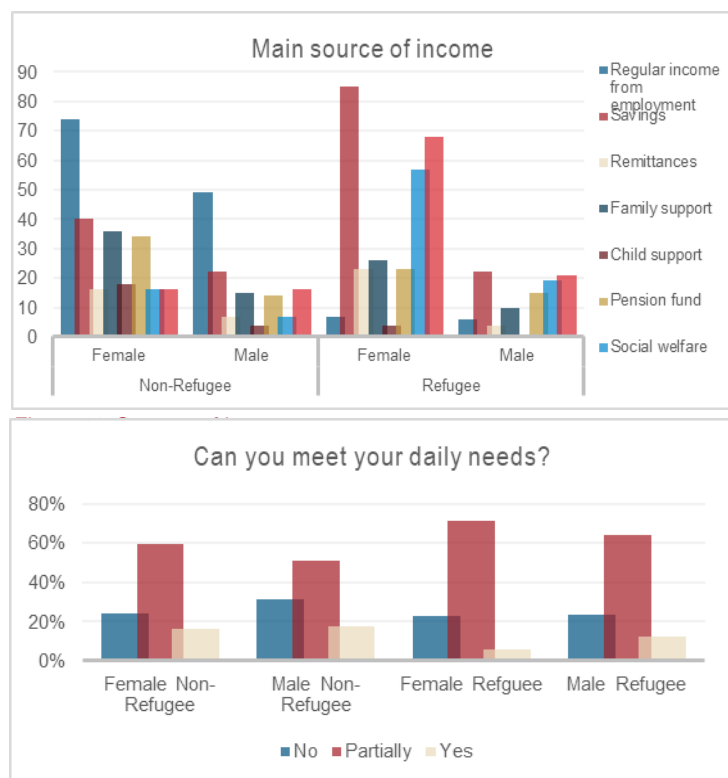


Figure 12: Ability to meet daily needs

"I ate less, porridge without meat, no butter. We only eat fruit on holidays or when we receive parcels with humanitarian aid, if they are in the parcel."

"I can't feed my children with more expensive products - meat, vegetables, fruits"

People often receive help from relatives or take up loans to get by, which bears the risk of people falling into a **"debt trap"**. Some refugees receive support through donors or charity, however on a very limited scale. While **government support is insignificant** for both groups.

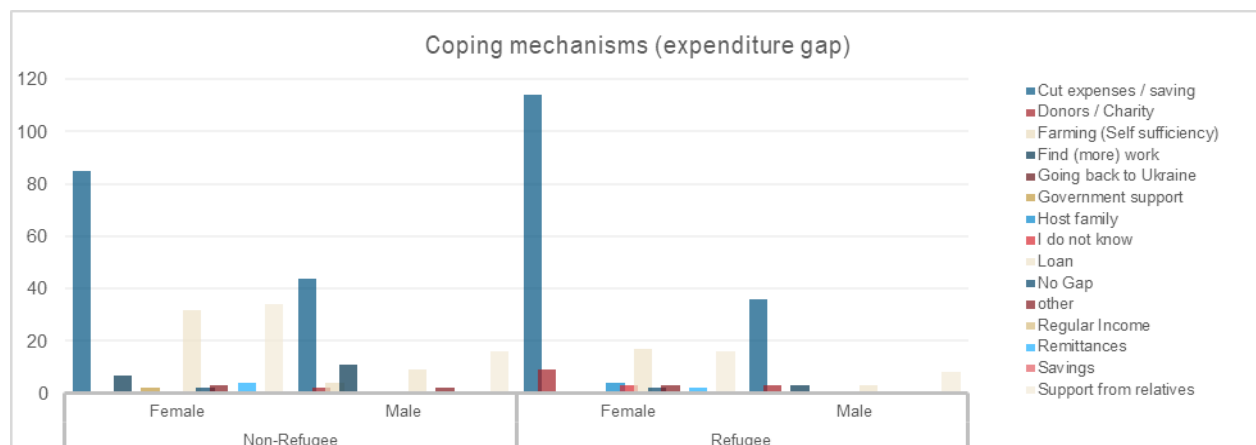


Figure 13: Coping mechanisms

Moldovans mostly live of their regular income or (elderlies of their pension). However, many Moldovans are also reliant on savings or family support to get by.

Although people do receive regular incomes or financial support, when asked if this amount is sufficient, an alarming situation reveals itself.

Most of the Moldovans and almost all refugees are not able to meet their daily / monthly needs with the money at their disposal. Although men and women are both affected, **women are more severely impacted by income gaps** than men. To cope with the income gap people, apply different negative coping strategies to get by. The first measure is to cut down on expenses. Sometimes drastically. Statements like the following were given as response:

Summary

- Most refugees live of savings, social welfare, or other sources of income
- Most Moldovans live of a regular income, savings, family support or pension funds
- Almost all respondents can only partially or not cover their basic needs
- To compensate the expenditure-gap most people engage in negative coping strategies such as cutting down on their expenses (partially with drastic measures). They also take up loans or ask for support from relatives

8.5. Mobility

When asked if people want to stay in Moldova, only 45 Moldovans answered the question. Some of which intend to stay in Moldova, others wish to go abroad. However, when asked directly if people want to go to another country, then more than 80 Moldovans said “yes”. Refugees are similarly split. Of interest is that, although 76 of the surveyed refugees intend to not stay in Moldova, 53 wish to stay and 56 are still undecided. Proportionally, **a large number of refugees are, therefore, considering staying in Moldova**, at least for the immediate future. Only a small number of refugees was able to provide an answer regarding the expected duration of their stay in the country. Most of which don't know and only few were able to certainly say that they wanted to stay for a longer period (more than 120 days).

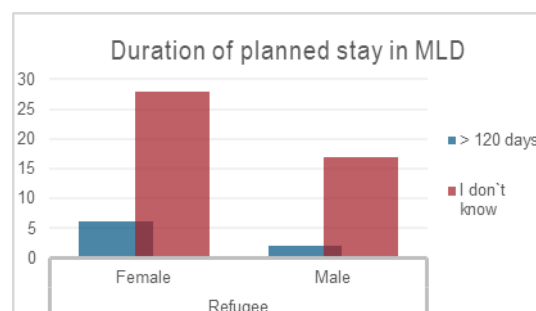


Figure 14: Duration of stay

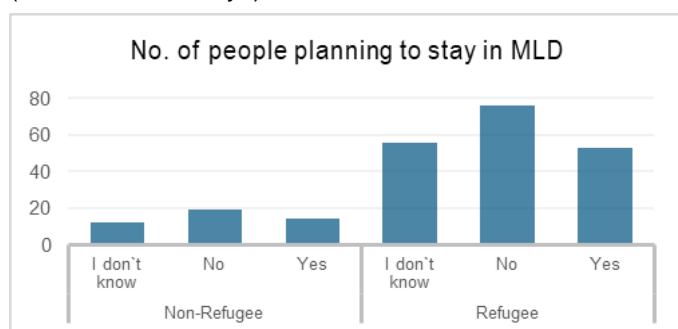


Figure 15: People planning to stay

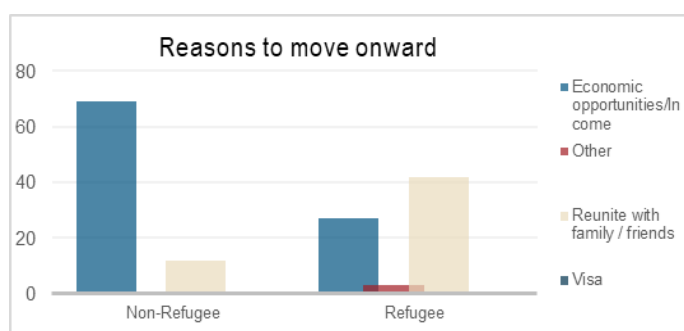


Figure 16: Reasons to move onward

Reasons for Moldovans not wanting to stay in the country are the lack of economic opportunities, whereas for refugees it is more important to reunite with family members and friends. However also the refugees are keen in finding better economic opportunities and higher incomes abroad.

Summary

- 82 Moldovans want to move to another country out of 256 Moldovans asked in total is substantial
- 53 of the Ukrainian refugees wanted to stay in Moldova and 56 were still undecided
- Whereas Moldovans want to leave the country due to economic reasons, Ukrainians leave it mostly to reunite with family

8.6. Education, Skills and Employment

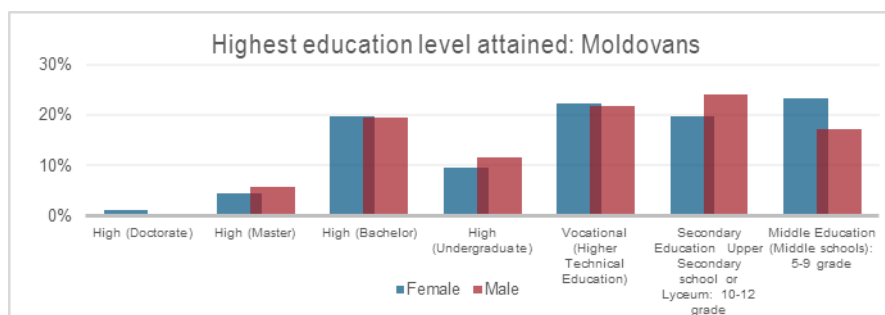


Figure 18: Educational level Moldovans

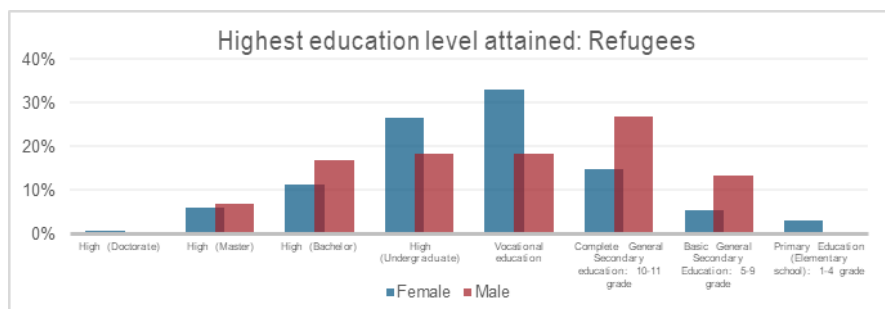


Figure 17: Educational level refugees

The occupational overview reveals that out of the 495 people interviewed 135 are employed (4 of which are self-employed). **Most of the refugees are currently not employed and seeking employment (216 out of 230)**, and many have professional experience from previous employment. This correlates with the previously mentioned sources of income, which only rarely was stated as coming from employment.

The situation for vulnerable Moldovans is slightly different as a much larger number of people is currently employed. Interestingly enough, not too many of the surveyed Moldovans seem to have professional experience and many of them are also looking for employment. The situation seems to be similar between men and women in both groups, although more Moldovan men bring previous work experience to the table.

When asked about reasons for not finding employment most refugees state that **the language barrier** is an issue or that there are no jobs available. Refugees also often mention that they **don't know where to look for a job or have no one to help them with finding a job**. They are further hindered by administrative/legal issues and, therefore, not able to work. Moldovans also struggle with the lack of jobs available or the low salaries offered. Additionally, they see a bigger issue in **not having the right skills for the jobs**.

While there is no clear difference detectable in terms of education between men and women of the surveyed Moldovan group of individuals. The Ukrainian sample shows a difference in the percentage of women with vocational education and undergraduate degrees compared to Ukrainian men. A high percentage of respondents have at least completed their middle education (5th -9th grade) and most hold a secondary or tertiary degree.

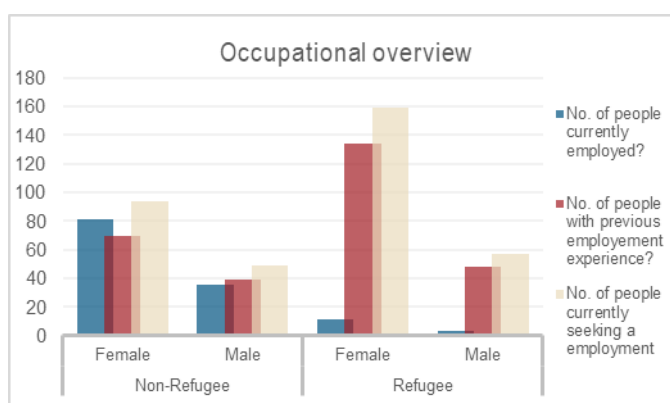


Figure 19: Occupational overview

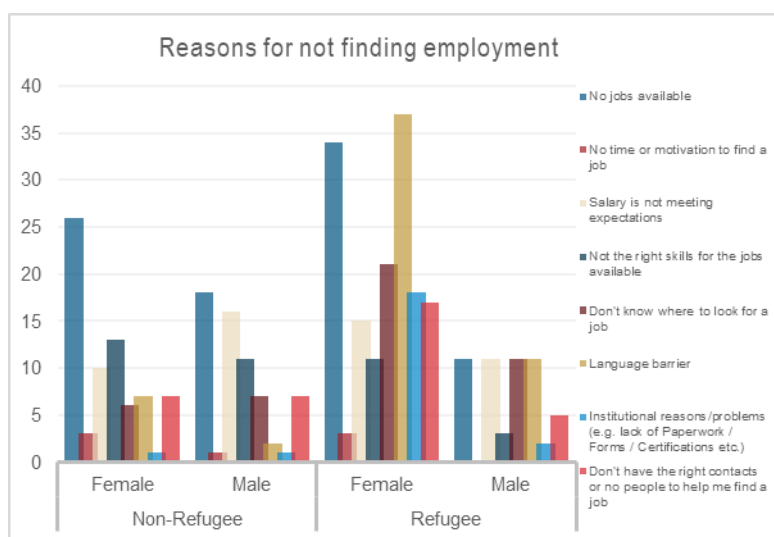


Figure 20: Reasons for not finding employment

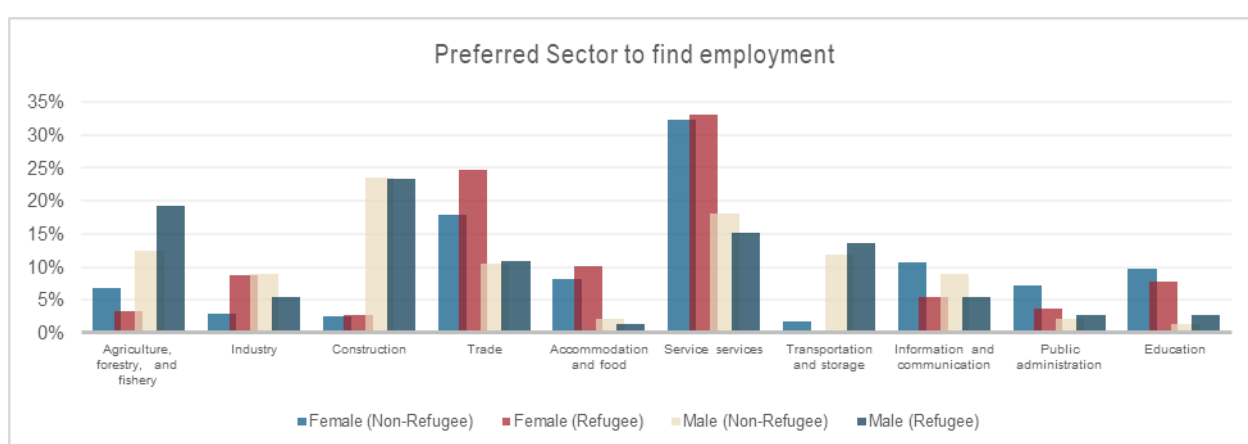


Figure 21: Preferred sectors to work in

The desired sectors to work in are split alongside gender rather than the legal status (refugee vs. non-refugee). Women would like to work predominantly in the service sector (accounting, consulting services, clerical work, etc.) trade and education, whereas men look for work in construction, transportation and logistics, and agriculture. ICT, a small, but vibrant sector in Moldova is mostly interesting for locals as potential employer.

By far, the most desired skill to improve amongst refugees is to **learn the Romanian language**. Technical skills are desired mainly by male refugees **and a surprisingly (because based on their level of education not too many respondents ought to be illiterate) high number of refugees are also interested in improving their literacy skills**. This finding is similar amongst the Moldovans. However, the gap between men and women clearly shows the educational disadvantage of vulnerable Moldovan women. ICT skills are in high demand with locals, which correlates to ICT as one of the desired sectors to work in and languages (except Romanian) are in demand throughout all respondents.

Summary

- Out of the 495 people interviewed 135 are employed (4 of which self-employed)
- Out of 230 refugees only 14 were employed - in different sectors
- Preferred sectors for women the service sector (accounting, consulting services, clerical work, etc.) trade and education. Men look for work in construction, transportation and logistics and agriculture. ICT is in higher demand by Moldovans
- The most desired skill by far is to learn Romanian (for refugees). Other desired skills are technical, literacy, ICT and other language skills

- Most of the Moldovans work in service activities (e.g. consulting, accounting services etc.), education, construction, transportation, IT and health and social work

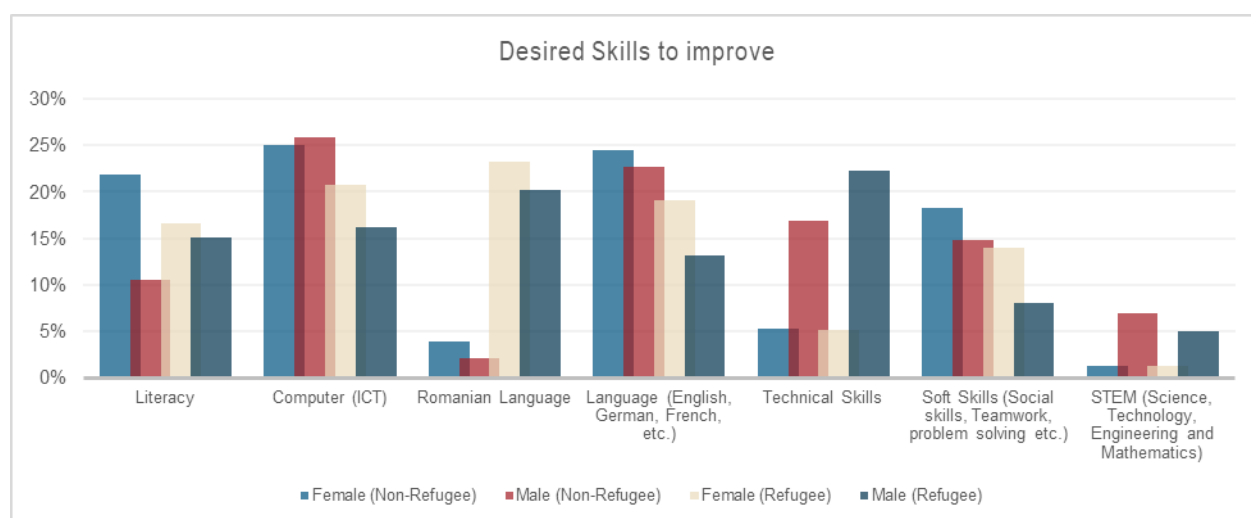


Figure 22: Desired skills

8.7. Trainings and Support

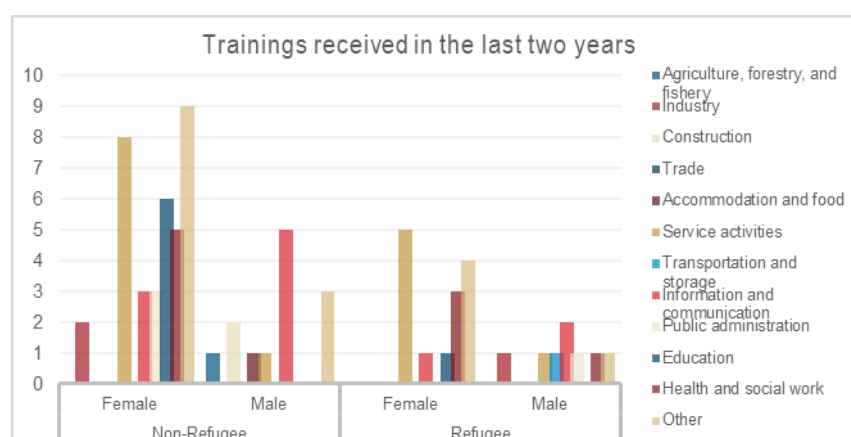


Figure 23: Trainings received

In total, 47 Moldovans (34 women and 13 men) and 22 Refugees (14 women and 8 men) have received a vocational and/or skills training in the last two weeks which lasted one week or longer. Most women were trained in service activities, health and social work, education or other fields. Most men in ICT, construction or other fields. The number of trainings people attended is generally low. However, it is

interesting to see that many people (mainly Moldovans) who attended trainings, held a university degree (bachelor) or similar, **which reveals the poor quality of the educational system.**

Asking people why only few of them attended trainings in the past and what is needed to increase this number. Most stated that **financial support is lacking**. Unfortunately, the data does not go into more detail on this issue. Which could mean, that people do not earn enough to stay away from work to attend trainings, trainings are too costly, they do not have the necessary money to pay for childcare during training hours, school material, transportation etc. Often the **non-availability of electronic materials** is also an issue for people to attend training –it can be assumed that this is also due to a lack of financial means (or possibly, but less likely, a lack of availability of devices). Furthermore, a clear gap in relevance between men and women is detectable when inquiring about **childcare as a reason to attend (or not to attend) trainings, which**

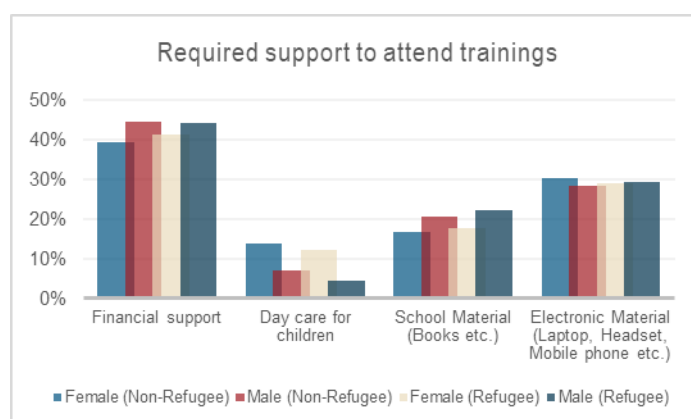


Figure 24: Needed support

reveals the double burden of women once more.

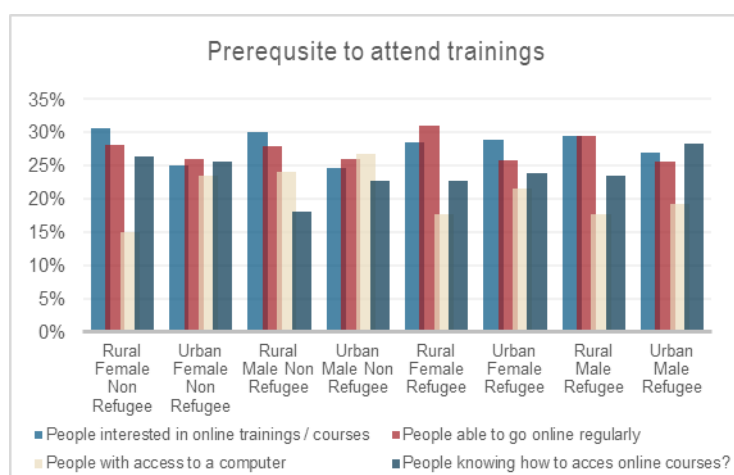


Figure 25: Prerequisites for training attendance

To get people to attend trainings, online courses are a preferred method. People are easy to reach, regardless of their current location, curricula can be updated easily, numbers of attendees are irrelevant and it is cheaper to hold courses online than renting facilities and having people commute. It is therefore relevant to assess the necessary prerequisites for potential training-attendees. The prerequisites, however, are different when comparing the rural and the urban population. Respondents from rural areas (regardless if refugee or not) generally have less access to a computer or the knowledge on

how to access an online course, although their interest in online courses is generally a bit higher than that of the urban population. This suggests that **basic computer courses for the rural population** might be a necessary prerequisite to increase the effectiveness of online training courses. Furthermore, the access to computer needs to be guaranteed.

Summary

- Only few of the respondents have attended trainings in the last two years
- Most women were trained in service activities, health and social work, education or other fields. Most men in IT, construction or other fields
- Quality of the secondary or tertiary education seems to be poor
- Lack of financial support is the biggest constraint for people to attend trainings
- No available childcare is a bigger obstacle for women than for men to attend training
- The rural population is less internet- & tech savvy than the urban

8.8. Childcare

Many of the surveyed households care for one or more children. Therefore, the issue of childcare is relevant for many of the respondents, especially for women who identified it as a constraint that hold them back from integrating into the labor market, and, thus, creates additional challenges to cope with.

In terms of childcare, both groups predominately rely on relatives to look after their children. Refugees have fewer options in terms of childcare. Many Moldovans also make use of neighbors to look after their kids. Both groups are using public institutions only on a very limited basis. This fits into the statements made by the key informant interviews, regarding the scarce availability of publicly provided childcare.

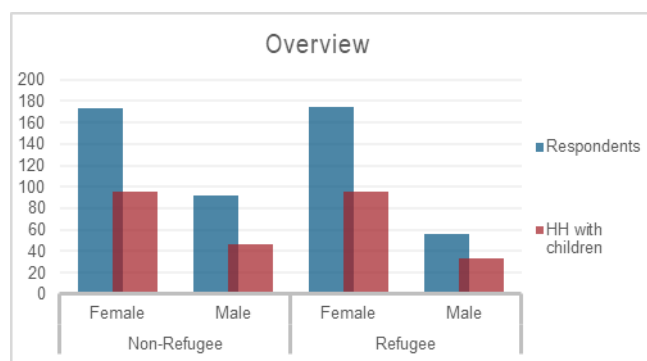


Figure 26: Households with children

When inquiring about the desired childcare situation, people seem to be content with family members taking care of their children. However, **many of them wish for their children to be cared for as part of after-school programs or in public or private institutions**, thus a clear demand for additional capacity and availability has been established.

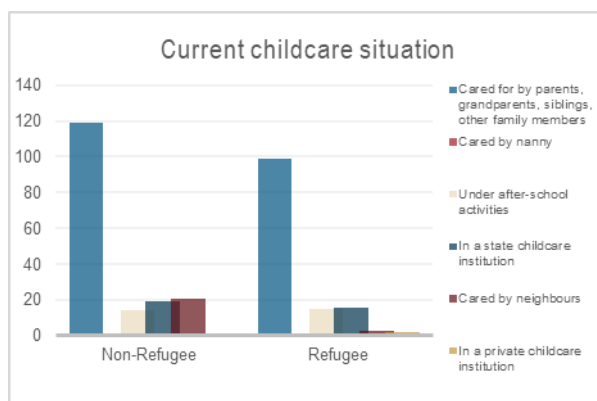


Figure 27: Current childcare situation

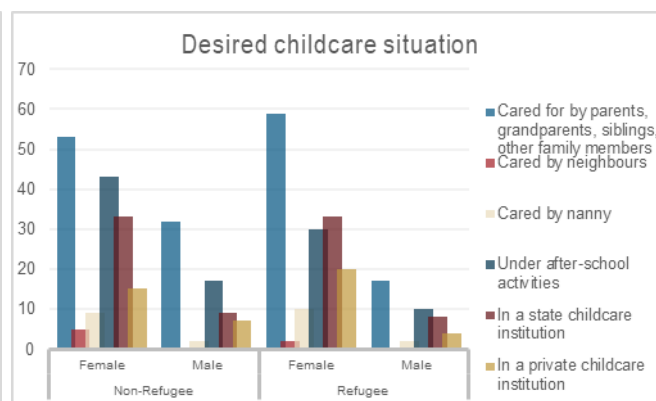


Figure 28: Expected childcare situation

Summary

- More than 50% of the respondents (271 of 495) live in households with children
- Both groups rely mainly on relatives to look after their children
- Public options are scarce and barely used
- Public childcare, either as part of after-school programs or public institutions is identified as a clear need

8.9. Social Cohesion

75% of Moldovan host communities describe the relationships with Ukrainians using such words as good, normal, positive and friendly. Similarly, 84% of Ukrainians describe their relationships using the same positive words.

In general, there (was at the beginning and still) is a big solidarity with refugees from the neighbouring country. However, the survey reveals that a part of the Moldovan population feels tired of hosting the refugees. It can be assumed that the longer the conflict and displacements last, the more hosts will “feel tired” or complain about the situation. Those interviewed persons, who have a rather negative appraisal of the situation, state that they have been neglected, since most of the humanitarian assistance has been provided to Ukrainian refugees, while the long-standing struggles and needs of the poor Moldovan population has not been met.



Figure 29: Social cohesion perception Moldovans

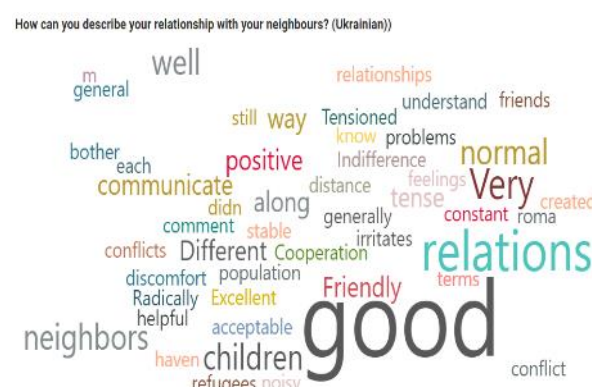


Figure 30: Social cohesion perception refugees

These misgivings should be taken seriously, especially since the survey shows that stable relationships between the refugees and the local population are not yet fully established. This can be deduced from the interview data about relationships and friendship:

In total only 16% of Moldovans reported having friends from the Ukrainian diaspora. From the Ukrainian refugees 48% reported to have Moldovan friends.

Groups of friends: Ukrainians

● Moldovan friends ● Ukrainian diaspora friends ● Other friends ● Roma friends



Figure 31: Social circle refugees

Groups of friends: Moldovans

● Moldovan friends ● Other friends ● Ukrainian diaspora friends ● Roma friends



Figure 32: Social circle Moldovans

In addition, the survey provides evidence about the main connecting factors and tensions between the two groups in Moldova. According to the respondents there are **a lot of similarities or connecting factors between** refugees and hosts.

The following “**connectors / similarities**” were mentioned several times:

- Similar values / worldview
- Common traditions / culture
- Same language (Russian)
- Common interest in family/children
- Wish for peace and a decent living

On the other hand, interviewees repeatedly mention the following “**dividers / tensions**”:

- Scarce resources / economic factors
- Different languages / lack of language skills (Romanian language)

Moreover, some of the key informant interviews stated, that existing societal tensions (e.g. Pro-Russian vs. Pro-Western population, linguistic cleavages) and challenges (e.g. increasing proportion of women, disillusionment in society) have aggravated since the beginning of the conflict and the influx of refugees. Most current working approaches and studies on conflict transformation verify the importance of dialog and trustful relationships as a basis for positive peace and social cohesion. To ensure that in the long run the inclusion of the refugees in Moldova succeeds and the social cohesion improves, **it's crucial to invest in building positive relationships** between the two groups. Evidence from various countries shows that not or not well knowing each other increases the risk of misunderstandings, negative stereotypes, and future conflicts⁴¹.

Summary

- Most interviewees (75% Moldovans, 84% refugees) state that the relationship between hosts and refugees is positive or normal
- There are many “connecting factors” and only two main “dividers” (scarce resources, language)
- Some hosts demur that refugees receive more support than vulnerable Moldovans
- Regular contact, dialog and friendship between hosts and refugees are not yet consolidated, more investment in positive relationship is needed for sustainable social cohesion

⁴¹ HEKS/EPER (2012): Implementation Concept Conflict Transformation

- Existing tensions and cleavages in Moldova are reinforced by the war

8.10. Psychosocial Wellbeing

The survey indicates that refugees, but also the vulnerable host communities, are suffering a lot from the uncertainty, the conflict and the difficult economic situation. **Psychosocial wellbeing enhances the employability of vulnerable persons** (incl. refugees). Especially, soft skills are often severely limited, if a person is mentally ill or does not feel well for a longer period. On the other side, unemployment is for most people one of the most devastating consequences for the psychosocial well-being and can lead to a vicious circle; **The psychosocial ill-being due to the war, impedes the labor market integration in the host society**, and the lack of employment and the related lack of social inclusion, further deteriorates the well-

Have you ever used existing PSS services to respond to your personal or family uneasiness?



Figure 33: PSS needs

being of the refugees. Refugees coming from Ukraine faced violence, displacement, and separation from close family members and friends. Most feel overwhelmed, distressed and have extreme fear and worries. Many of them experience strong emotions such as anger and sadness, nightmares, or sleep problems. Around half (43%) of the interviewed refugees have used available MHPSS assistance. However, professional psychosocial support (PSS) is socially not well accepted, neither in Moldova nor in Ukraine as most of the refugees are

denying their needs or are not focusing on addressing them, giving priority to the assistance to their children. According to the responses, neither refugees nor Moldovans do really understand the necessity of MHPSS assistance, there is no habit of using professional assistance of such type. When talking to the elderly respondents about MHPSS, they immediately believe, they are put into a category of mentally disabled people. The common practice still is seeking help from a friend or a relative rather than addressing a professional psychologist. However, evidence from the survey shows that younger respondents did not have a problem with the MHPSS assistance, and even found it useful.

Psychosocial wellbeing is a basis for social inclusion and labor market integration. A (psychosocially) ill person lacks the capacities, openness, and soft skills that are needed for integration – in society but also in labor market. Considering the social barriers to seeking MHPSS and the negative effects on social and economic integration, it is crucial to offer low-threshold MHPSS services to refugees but also to the Moldovan population. Such low-threshold services may include psychosocial services integrated into other (humanitarian, educational or medical) services that are easy to access and socially accepted. For those people who prefer to seek help from friends or relatives instead of MHPSS providers, self-help groups (with or without the support of professional psychologists) can be a good option.

Approximately half of the schools are offering PSS (56%). However, these services are only available for those children and youth that are going to school. The current survey shows that many refugee children are still not attending public schools and therefore do not profit from the PSS offered there.

Summary

- The uncertainty and the difficult economic situation lead to increased suffering
- Most refugees feel overwhelmed, distressed, and have extreme fear and worries
- Only half of the refugees have used PSS, which is still believed to be something negative (especially amongst the elderly), it is therefore crucial to offer integrated and low-threshold MHPSS services to refugees and the Moldovan population
- Half of the schools offer services around PSS to their pupils, but many refugee children are not attending public schools

9. Programmatic Suggestions & Preliminary Recommendations

The following section describes recommendations to address the challenges identified in the study. They are based on the findings from the interviews, desk research, and the survey. However, it must be considered that circumstances change rapidly, which might lead to other perceptions of the situation as time progresses.

9.1. Difference in (Immediate) Needs of the Target Groups

The list below table provides an overview of the most urgent needs of the two target groups.

Ukrainian Refugees	Vulnerable Moldovans
Proper, centralized and easy to access information for jobseekers (also in Russian)	
Support in coping with daily needs (especially for women)	
Skills development mainly in the fields of: IT, Other languages, Literacy, Soft Skills	
Financial support and support with electronic materials to attend skills trainings	
Increased childcare capacities (early until kindergarten)	
Increased access to low threshold, integrated and/or community-based PSS	
Need for joint actions and dialog between refugees and hosts to strengthen contact, positive relationships, social inclusion and common interests (especially Moldovans often feel like their needs come second).	
Need to have a strong community-led civil society to increase the self-determination and contribution of crisis-affected people to development and peace	
Refugees generally have less access to a computer	Rural Moldovans have limited access to a computer and possibly don't know how to access online course
Different needs in terms of childcare, financial support, care for elderly for refugee households due to more single caregivers – (women with children)	
Efficient formal / administrative processing in order to be able to profit from the services offered by NEA and to be able to access the labor market (still unclear, despite the passing of the temporary protection scheme).	
Language barrier and need for Romanian courses	

Table 6: Immediate needs of the target groups

The findings from the stakeholder analysis revealed that there is a gap of provision of services connected to these needs in a larger scale and a coordinated manner. If a proposed project should include other, already ongoing actions, it is crucial that these are analyzed in-depth to avoid repeating mistakes or to implement **alongside inefficient interventions, due to false incentives or unclear ownership** (e.g. **uncoordinated** MPCA, Market distortion through in-kind contributions, taking over responsibilities from public service providers etc.).

9.2. Recommendations

Many organizations are active in offering their support to the target groups. However, support from bilateral donors and international organizations is limited in time (and budgets), thus not contributing to increasing stability and predictability of the foreseeable future for refugees and vulnerable Moldovans. It became evident, that the **focus needs to lie on the triple nexus element** complementing humanitarian, peace, and development actions and therefore **achieve a systemic and sustainable change** and by this, leveraging the largest impact. Every organization active in the country has specific strengths and works with different target groups or sectors. **A multi-agency approach increases the outreach and improves efficiency**

and target-orientation of the interventions. The following graphic illustrates the gap where additional targeted interventions can complement already ongoing activities in the country.

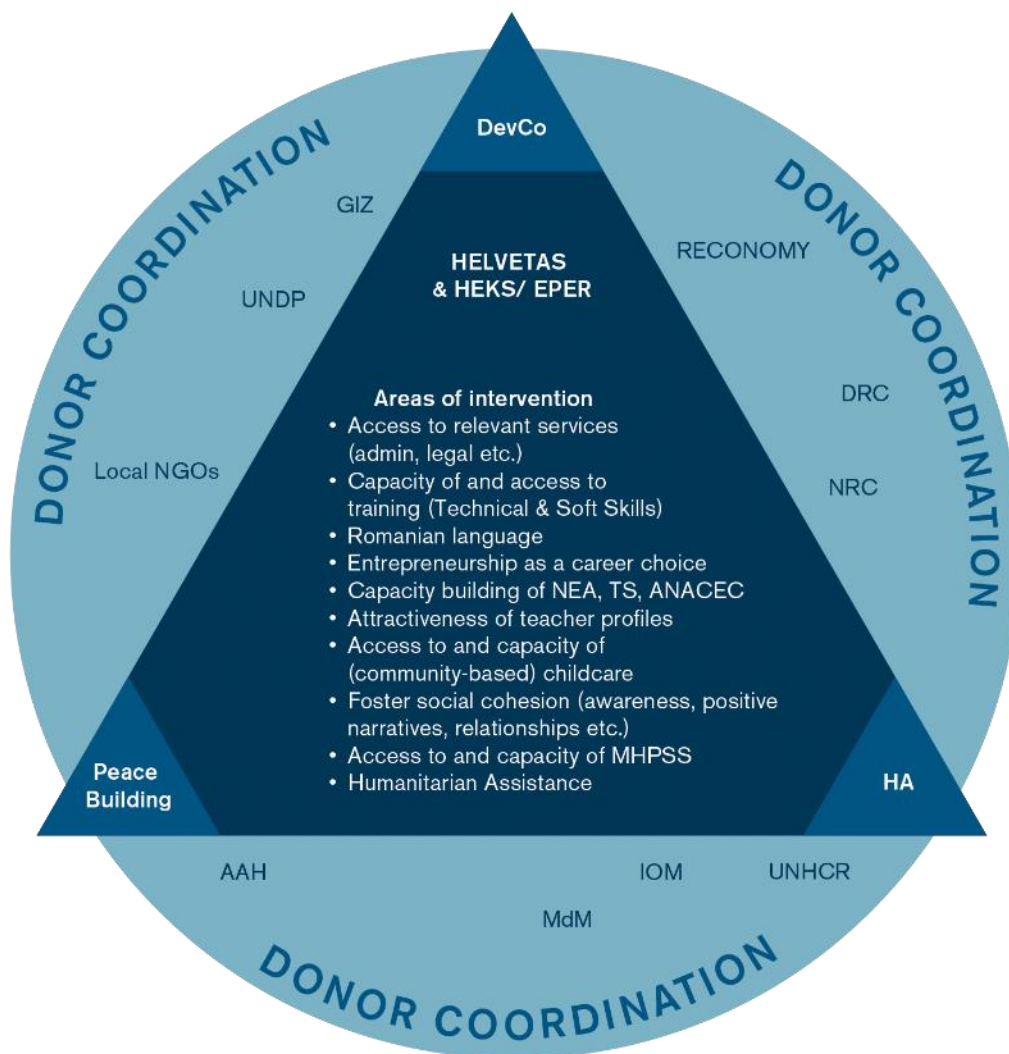


Figure 34: Gap Analysis - Possible angle of intervention. Source: Author

9.3. Proposed Recommendations

The following table described recommendations intended to promote nexus programming to reduce the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. Recommendations are based on the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data collection that will foster social cohesion and facilitate Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable Moldovans' integration into labor markets.

Recommendations are briefly described and the main target group who can benefit is stated.

Topic of intervention	Thematic area	Description of the problem	Intervention logic	Main target group
Skills Development & Romanian Language	Economic Integration & ISD Social cohesion	<p>There is a clear need for a closer collaboration between the public sector and (private) training providers to work with the private sector to adjust curricula in the formal as well as in the informal education (short courses etc.). In addition, many people are lacking basic skills (literacy, technical or language skills), which need to be developed to increase chances of labor market integration.</p> <p>The lack of financial support, as the biggest identified constraint for people to attend trainings, needs to be considered. As does the low capacity of childcare, which is a hindering mainly women from attending trainings.</p> <p>A certain level of Romanian is necessary for Refugees to integrate into the labor market, attend training courses etc. Especially for higher skilled personnel who are aiming for managerial positions and to avoid frustration amongst refugee job seekers and support the labor market integration Romanian courses must be provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with local actors (business associations, private or public institutions) to develop and promote market-oriented short-courses on topics currently not offered through NEAs portfolio and to share costs for companies. * Focus on delivering trainings for transferable skills to allow people on the move to make use of them in other contexts. Partner with local training providers to increase availability and their capacity to provide Romanian language courses. * Increase collaboration with informational platforms (e.g. Dopomoga.gov.md) and support linkages/integration to/of other relevant platforms Set the necessary prerequisites to include the (hard-to reach and not as tech-savvy) rural population in skills development trainings (possibly facilitated through the TS). Make use of experiences and synergies from other Helvetas programs (RECONOMY, OPTIM), which established skills development trainings in the ICT sector in Moldova <p>* Support the most vulnerable (young, rural, women, marginalized groups). Possibly through a voucher scheme to co-finance attendance (if offered through non-accredited providers) and in a format, easy to follow (online) to increase outreach and ease access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable Moldovans Ukrainian refugees
Entrepreneurship as a career choice	Economic Integration & ISD	Although there are several government programs to support entrepreneurship (rural / start-up funding etc.), only very few people are making use of these programs. It is at this stage unclear what the reason for that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the capacity of the NEA to increase knowledge about entrepreneurship programs to implement the already existing programs more intensively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable Moldovans (focus) Ukrainian refugees

		is, but further information on the available programs, as well as support with the design of business plans and establishing of businesses is necessary. Promote self-employment is another possible path for refugees to create income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Universities / Training providers / Entrepreneurial role models to disseminate information and to promote entrepreneurship as a career choice and inform about available support. • Promote entrepreneurship and freelancing as a career to refugees and ease access to information on available programs (source of information and in the appropriate language) 	
Capacitate the National Employment Agency	Economic Integration & ISD	The NEA does not have the necessary capacity to fully understand the markets training needs (especially in fast changing and innovative sectors).	<p>Building capacities and networks of the NEA staff will lead to the inclusion (and change in strategic acquisition) of more market-oriented courses in the NEA's portfolio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proper needs assessment in terms of identifying market-relevant skills / and needed capacities of the NEA. • Establish recurring platforms for the private and public sector to exchange. • Support the sharing of information on available skills trainings. • Develop voucher schemes for skills training attendance to foster full inclusion of the most vulnerable (Roma, Women etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans (focus) • Ukrainian refugees
Improve accreditation process for training providers	Economic Integration & ISD	The accreditation process for training providers (necessary to participate in the tenders of the NEA) is very complex, long and costly. Making such processes more efficient is possible and will allow training providers to reach more attendees and make the list of available courses to unemployed more attractive and market oriented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the ANACEC agency to analyze and improve the process. • Digitalize/improve the process to increase efficiency and reduce costs (possibly through partnership with local ICT Associations – private sector). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans (focus) • Ukrainian refugees
Shortage of skilled trainers / teachers (in ICT)	Economic Integration & ISD	Teachers are poorly paid and pushed to pursue academic research on non-market relevant topics. Whereas a career in the private sector provides them with decent income and more freedom to choose their areas of focus. To stop the loss of teachers, the profile of this job needs to be made more attractive.	Advocate (with the responsible ministry) for shorter duration and improved quality of teacher trainings, higher salaries, less academic pressure, increased exchange and collaboration with the private sector (and private training providers to align outdated curricula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans (focus) • Ukrainian refugees
Facilitative support to target groups towards services for unemployed	Economic Integration & ISD	Both target groups need to be supported in accessing all available unemployment services. It is often complex and not transparent for people not familiar with the procedure. Providing assistance could help more people making use of the whole range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate coordination with other agencies active in this field to improve efficiency and publication of information for target groups. • Support informational platforms to simplify the finding of information for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans (focus) • Ukrainian refugees

		<p>of services available and therefore increase the level of people enrolled in trainings, benefiting from entrepreneurship programs etc.</p>	<p>refugees regarding their rights if registered (as unemployed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the availability of information at strategic points and with appropriate communication means (official websites, social media, Russian, Romanian, Ukrainian etc.) 	
Jobseeker / Information platform	Economic Integration & ISD	<p>Many people stated that there are no jobs available, or they don't know where to look for jobs or have no one to help them with this. The Territorial Subdivisions (TS) are in charge of delivering the programs to the beneficiaries (jobseekers), career counseling and for monitoring the service providers chosen by the NEA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity development of existing job-platform providers. • Capacity development of the TS in terms of providing guidance to job identification and proper career counselling. – Possibly through a train-the-trainer approach • Information initiatives in refugee centers, by partnering with other humanitarian organizations to disseminate information. • Support platforms to increase transparency and to ease access to information for refugees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans • Ukrainian refugees
Childcare	Economic Integration & ISD Social cohesion	<p>Women with children are heavily reliant on childcare possibilities to participate in the labor market or to attend relevant skills development trainings. Currently public or private childcare capacity is very low.</p> <p>Besides the financial needs, it was found a clear need to support Ukrainian and Moldovan children's activities and integration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the capacity of private or public early childcare provision through partnering with local organizations, develop their capacity and develop sustainable business models. to meet the needs of national and refugee populations. • Providing multi-lingual nursery/childcare, during the skills development and language trainings, organized by Ukrainian and Moldovan mothers /grandmothers themselves (applying the "diapaxis" methodology). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans • Ukrainian refugees
Humanitarian assistance	Humanitarian Assistance	<p>Most people are having difficulties in coping with their expenditure gap and cannot cover their daily expenses.</p> <p>Based on the reality of female headed households beneficiaries should have access to gender-responsive humanitarian assistance and tailored livelihood programs. Therefore responses, must be localized and women-centered with a protection-component besides a development and integration opportunity.</p> <p>The humanitarian assistance will apply elements of the SCLR approach. This means the assistance will be provided by community and locally led structures (volunteer organisations, self-help groups). These organisations will be strengthened, connected to scale up their own collective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support programs to reach the most vulnerable and provide them with the most necessary items. • Modify non-efficient actions (e.g. increase donor coordination) and adjust ongoing humanitarian assistance to the specific (changing) needs of the target groups. • Focus the assistance on livelihoods tailored on individual households, adapting on the situation and the current lack of skills (e.g. skills development, job placements, coordinated MPCA). • Identify and use existing and emerging self-help groups, community and locally led structures (of the refugee and Moldovan communities) for rapid provision of humanitarian assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans • Ukrainian refugees

		action (see also below under social cohesion).		
Legal status	Economic Integration & ISD	<p>Although the “temporary protection scheme” was approved on January 18, 2023 it is still unclear if refugees will have access to the same services for unemployed as Moldovans. This is relevant for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses to better plan ahead when hiring refugees. • Refugees motivation to invest in trainings. • Potential tensions between the two groups to be eased with continuous labor market integration of refugees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate at the central government on offering the same unemployed services to refugees as for unemployed Moldovans and to allocate a budget to cover the expected increasing costs (due to the influx of unemployed, if refugees can register as such). • Support Business Associations / Chambers in identifying solutions to change possible retention of hiring refugees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainian refugees
Social cohesion	Social cohesion	<p>The survey shows a substantial need to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.</p> <p>As a first step the contact between both communities and positive relationships shall be strengthened. Joint activities between the host community and refugees based on common interests and “connecting” factors enhance mutual trust and appreciation. This so-called diapaxis approach improves relations between groups with different backgrounds. Given the difficult socio-economic situation and the lack of affordable care services (e.g. during the skill development and language trainings), community-based childcare is a valuable “joint interest” of Ukrainian and vulnerable Moldovan mothers (see also above under childcare).</p> <p>The perception by refugees of Moldovan host communities and vice versa is (still) quite positive, nevertheless there are a few negative stereotypes and a lack of trustful relationships and social cohesion between the two groups. The intervention will therefore raise awareness (especially among the host community) and build a positive narrative about social cohesion / refugees.</p> <p>Based on the SCLR approach, community led organizations/groups (from Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable Moldovans) and promising collective action (strengthening trustful relationships and social cohesion) are identified, connected, strengthened, and financed through small grants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective action and communal projects between refugees and host communities that foster contact and dialogue, and build on common interests/connectors (e.g. free-time activities of children/families in mixed groups, sports competitions, joint celebrations of common traditions, volunteer community services/ “subbotniks” that serve refugees and host communities, etc.) * • Awareness raising and sensitization, to establish a positive narrative about social cohesion / refugees (e.g. through exhibitions, “living libraries”, short films, TED talk, forum theater) * • Identify existing and emerging community led organizations/self-help groups (UKR/MOL), build up and strengthen their networks and capacities, (<i>link them to the small grant schemes above *</i>) and to the rapid provision of humanitarian assistance of Helvetas and HEKS/EPER <p><i>* Collective action and awareness projects could be implemented via small grant schemes (just as an option, to be further discussed with SDC).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable Moldovans • Ukrainian refugees (focus)

Psychosocial wellbeing and Psychosocial Support Services	Social cohesion	<p>There is a lack of MHPSS services in Moldova. Since the beginning of the conflict many (I)NGOs and government joined forces to build up the urgently needed services. Nevertheless, the referral systems are still weak and the coverage insufficient. The survey shows that refugees, but also vulnerable Moldovans face a very high level of stress. Nevertheless, they are hesitant to seek PSS but apply more individual/private coping mechanisms (especially elderly people). PSS services that are integrated into other services/institutions (e.g. in schools) are easier to access and more accepted by the population. Therefore, it is crucial to provide self-help groups and integrated services, improve cooperation and further strengthen an enabling environment for the psycho-social support of refugees, while strengthening the resilience of host communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine the language trainings for refugees with sensitization and information about MHPSS and coping strategies (especially for young refugees/job seekers). • Organize refugee-led support sessions and safe-spaces (e.g. for refugee parents, young single women, elderly people). • Promote coordination and establish better MHPSS referral systems among different actors (MHPSS service providers and other education, humanitarian, medical staff/ institutions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainian refugees
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Figure 35: Intervention Logic

10. Conclusion

To conclude this research, it can be stated that Moldovans and refugees both need external support to deal with the many crises currently unfolding in the country. To do so, it is necessary that the help is directed towards the right people and comes in a systemic manner to achieve a sustainable and lasting improvement. This might be through increased employability of the unemployed by skills development, support with the development of increased childcare capacities to increase chances for women to pursue employment or follow trainings or to support the humanitarian assistance in a coordinated manner to provide refugees or hosts, who opened their homes to the ones in need, with the necessary basic assistance to cope with the hardship.

The survey showed that the conflict in Ukraine and the influx of refugees enhance the risk of further dividing the society. Therefore, it is important to include the element of **social cohesion** in the current response. This includes joint events and collective actions of refugees and Moldovans, awareness raising and sensitization, strengthening community led groups, and integrated psychosocial support services for refugees. Moreover, due to the fast-changing and tense context, conflict sensitivity and adaptive management should be applied as a cross-cutting topic in all actions.

Based on the findings from interviews, literature and 495 surveyed individuals, the **greatest need seems to be the economical one** for both target groups and to learn the **Romanian language** for the refugees. Many people are struggling with paying for their everyday needs and often don't know how to cope with their income gap or how to properly feed and clothe their children.

Actions therefore need to be coming from multiple directions, tackling different issues at the same time. Creating a basis for a stable and decent income, developing the necessary (basic) skills, working with the private sector to support job placement and practical training and simultaneously creating a conducive, fair and gender equitable environment (childcare, Romanian language courses, access to information) for all (especially women and youth) to be able to participate in the labor market, regardless if coming from an urban or rural environment.

Furthermore, not all actions currently being provided seem to be effective. This might be due to various reasons (lack of coordination and ownership, false incentives, non-sustainable). All proposed actions in the intervention logic are therefore designed to circumvent inefficiencies or to improve the effectiveness of actions to an extent where the "return on investment" is expected to be higher.

10.1. Open Questions / Further Research

A series of open questions remains after this research. Additional exploration could bring interesting insights, possibly also relevant for the proposed intervention logic. Amongst others, the following list entails the most relevant unanswered questions and directions of potential further research.

Open questions:

- Is the situation in the Transnistria region different?
- Is the winter-season distorting the current hypotheses and proposed recommendations due to fast-changing situations (higher energy prices, increased migrant flows)?
- Although there are several government programs to support entrepreneurship (rural / start-up funding etc.), only few people make use of it. Further research is needed.
- Will the change of the legal status (from the current state of emergency to a temporary protection scheme) change the perception and motivation of the Ukrainian refugees to invest more in their own integration in the country (take trainings, find employment)?
- Which of the existing and emerging community led groups /structures (of the Ukrainian refugees and Moldovans) are interested in cooperation? What capacities do they already have to support social cohesion activities / humanitarian assistance, what capacity building is needed?
- Based on the needs assessment and mapping of MHPSS made by the MHPSS technical reference group, what are the current gaps in the MHPSS cooperation and referral system in Moldova?
- Evidence to proof or disproof that nepotism and clientelism leads to the distribution of jobs along ethnic and linguistic lines

Further research:

- More detailed and sector specific data could reveal hidden potential of “unattractive sectors” (construction, agriculture, industry, manufacturing etc.)
- Increased sample size (and focus on representativeness of the individual groups) could provide further insights and therefore allow more targeted designed interventions?
- Can the diverse donor activities be coordinated in a manner, where they complement rather than duplicate one another and what are the effects on the local markets?
- Developments related to social cohesion between the target groups?
- Mapping of the existing community led and self-help groups / structures, their networks, capacities, needs and interests.

11. Annex

11.1. Annex 1: List of References

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- Worldbank: [The-Future-of-Labor-Market-Programs-and-Services-in-Moldova-Functional-Review-of-Public-Employment-Service-s-Systems.pdf](#)
- World Vision: [Ukraine | Emergency | World Vision International \(wvi.org\)](#)

11.2. Annex 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

11.2.1. List of conducted Interviews

Organization	Representative	Date	Place
Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation	Hector J. Vivero & Thomas Mauget	28.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
Ministry of Health, Labor, Social protection (MoHLS)	Anna Gherganova, Head of Employment Policy Department	29.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
Association Electronic Comm and Technological Innovation (ACETI)	Ion Bodrug	29.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
National Employment Agency (NEA)	Raisa Dogaru (Director) / Lilia Plugaru (Deputy Director)	29.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
SDC Moldova	Katri Hoch	29.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
Moldovan Association of ICT Companies	Marina Bzovii, Executive Director	30.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Sergiu Harea, President of the Chamber, Inesa Iordatii	30.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
UNDP Moldova	Teodora Zafiu, Sector Coordinations Specialist	30.11.2022	Chisinau, RM
GIZ GmbH (VET program)	Vladimir Fonari / Olesea Ghedrovici – Head of VET components	01.12.2022	Chisinau, RM
Power IT (Private sector company)	Michael Gutu, CEO	01.12.2022	Chisinau, RM
College of Engineering	Sergiu Candraman	02.12.2022	Chisinau, RM
Center for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Support (CEDA)	Olga Șuleanschi, Programme Director / Dan Corcodel, Chief Technical Officer	02.12.2022	Chisinau, RM
Moldova IT Park	Natalia Dontu / Dumitru Stratan (Fundraising and Grants Manager)	05.12.2022	Virtual
Dopomoga.gov.md	Aelxandr Macuhin	06.12.2022	Virtual
CASMED	Anna Antipova - Psychologist	20.12.2022	Virtual
Chisinau Public Administration	Anonymous	15.12.2022	Chisinau, RM

11.2.2. Interview Guide

Name:

Organization:

Position / Function:

- Which skills are in high demand at the moment (Labor shortage) and why do you think that is?
 - Vocational Skills (help an individual become proficient in a trade or profession)
 - Life skills (abilities that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life)
 - Transferable skills (talents and abilities that can be used in many different jobs and career paths – e.g. languages / computer literacy etc.)

- Which of these skills are taught in the public schools (Primary, Secondary etc.)?
- Which sectors offer the most jobs (growth sectors)?
- Where do you see a skills gap?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in the formal TVET sector in Moldova?
- How open are the formal TVET programs for Ukrainian refugees / People with Disabilities / Minority groups?
- Do refugees receive any support in terms of skill strengthening? (Trainings / Courses / Information etc.)
 - Transferable Skills? (Which ones are relevant?)
 - Where is this taking place? Integrated in regular courses / Excluded – for refugees only?

- Which support do vulnerable groups receive to attend programs and trainings
 - Financial support
 - Childcare
 - Transport
 - Etc.

- Which are the main hurdles refugees or vulnerable Moldovan's face when trying to find a job?
 - Bureaucracy?
 - Language?
 - Skills mismatch?
 - Identification of vacancies?
 - Nationality?

- What programs exist to allocate people to job? (job centers / job platforms / universities etc.)?
 - Jobseeker website / Matchmaking
 - Job Counsellors?
 - There are 9 Active Labor Market Programs planned – which of these are implemented?
 - For which are refugees eligible?

- Which entrepreneurship support schemes / programs exist (ALMP)?
 - Where do these programs need improvement from your point of view?
 - "Support to start a business" – is that working?
 - "Support for local initiatives" – is that working?

- What is hindering the private sector to participate more actively in entrepreneurship and TVET programs? How is the working relationship with the private sector?
 - Work placement?
 - On/Off the job trainings?
 - How engaged is the private sector in supporting the design of curricula's?

- Where do you see hurdles for individuals / representatives of disadvantaged groups to access TVET trainings and to enter the labor market (disabilities / minority)?
- What are the main challenges of your organization?
- Who are the most marginalized groups in Moldova these days and why? Elaborate on multiple discriminations (intersectionalities).
- What are the vulnerabilities of these groups and how they increased/changed due to activization of the conflict in Ukraine?
- What are the barriers for integration of Ukrainian refugees?
- What are the main conflicts or problems (ethnic, political, economic, social, or religious) within Moldova

- What connecting factors unite Moldovan community despite all the current challenges (prompt: same language, worldview, traditions, etc.)?

11.3. Annex 2: Survey Questionnaire

Good morning! My name is _____. I am representing Consortia formed of two Swiss INGOs: HEKS and HELVETAS working in Moldova since 2000s on development and emergency projects. Currently our Consortia is working on the project proposal which is aimed to contribute to the economic development of refugees and vulnerable Moldovans. Thus, we would like to conduct a feasibility study to design the most efficient and comprehensive project meeting the needs of the target population. Your response is valuable for us and will contribute to the overall society development. In this regard, we are kindly asking your consent to take part in the study by answering couple of questions. The survey is anonymous, and your personal data will not be shared with the third parties. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Are you ready to start the interview?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If no: What are the reasons?

3. Nationality:

4. Refugee:

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Sex:

☐ M

☐ F

☐ Do not want to answer

6. Age:

7. Ethnic Minority:

☐ No (Moldovan)

☐ Gagauz

☐ Ukrainian

☐ Russian

☐ Romanian

☐ Roma

☐ Other: (open reply)

8. Number of people in your household

9. Number of children under 18 in your household

10. Number of elderly (60+) persons in your household
11. Number of persons with a disability in your household (documented and undocumented)
12. Number of persons with a mental/psychosocial challenge in your household
13. Are you a single caregiver?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Employment

14. What is your main source (sources) of income?
- ☐ Savings?
- ☐ Regular Income from employment?
- ☐ Remittances?
- ☐ Family Support?
- ☐ Social Welfare?
- ☐ Pension Fund?
- ☐ Child Support?
- ☐ Other: (open reply)
15. Can you meet your daily or monthly basic needs with your income?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ No
16. How do you cope with a possible expenditure gap? What do you do if your income is not enough? (e.g. skip a meal?)
17. How long are you planning on staying in Moldova (in Days / for refugees only)
- ☐ 10 – 30 days
- ☐ 31 – 60 days
- ☐ 61 – 90 days
- ☐ 91 – 120 days
- ☐ >120 days
- ☐ I don't know
18. Are you planning to move to the third country?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19. What is your highest education level attained (Moldovans)?
- ☐ Primary Education (Elementary school): 1-4 grade
 - ☐ Middle Education (Middle schools): 5-9 grade
 - ☐ Secondary Education): Upper Secondary school or Lyceum: 10-12 grade
 - ☐ Vocational (Higher Technical Education)
 - ☐ Undergraduate,
 - ☐ Bachelor
 - ☐ Master
 - ☐ Doctorate

20. What is your highest education level attained (Ukrainians)?
- ☐ Primary Education: 1-4 grade
 - ☐ Basic General Secondary Education: 5-9 grade
 - ☐ Complete General Secondary education: 10-11 grade
 - ☐ Vocational education
 - ☐ Undergraduate
 - ☐ Bachelor
 - ☐ Master
 - ☐ Doctorate

21. Are you currently employed?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Self-Employed (entrepreneur)

22. If yes, please specify the type of sector you work for?
- ☐ Agriculture, forestry, and fishery
 - ☐ Industry
 - ☐ Construction
 - ☐ Trade
 - ☐ Accommodation and food
 - ☐ service activities
 - ☐ Transportation and storage
 - ☐ Information and communication
 - ☐ Public administration
 - ☐ Education
 - ☐ Health and social work
 - ☐ Other

If other, please specify

23. How many hours did you work last week?

- ☐ Less than 10
- ☐ 10 - 20
- ☐ 20 - 40
- ☐ More than 40

24. If unemployed, have you ever been employed before?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please specify the type of job

25. If employed before, what was the main reason for leaving the job?

- ☐ Low income
- ☐ Poor work condition
- ☐ Social position of the job
- ☐ Poor relationship with manager/supervisor
- ☐ Little or no opportunity for advancement
- ☐ I did not have the right skills? (which ones were lacking - question 26)
- ☐ Forced relocation due to conflict
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

26. Which skills were you lacking?

27. If self-employed (entrepreneur), in which sector is your business

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry, and fishery
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Trade
- ☐ Accommodation and food
- ☐ service activities
- ☐ Transportation and storage
- ☐ Information and communication
- ☐ Public administration
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health and social work
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

28. If self-employed (entrepreneur), how many people do you have employed?

- ☐ 0 (just yourself)
- ☐ 1 – 5

- ☐ 5 – 10
- ☐ More

29. If self-employed (entrepreneur), did you receive any support?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

30. If yes, from whom?

- ☐ No
- ☐ State
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Mentors
- ☐ Peers
- ☐ Investors
- ☐ Universities
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

31. Are you seeking a job currently?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If not why not?

32. What is hindering you from finding a job?

- ☐ No jobs available?
- ☐ No time or motivation to find a job?
- ☐ Salary is not meeting expectations?
- ☐ Not the right skills for the jobs available?
- ☐ Don't know where to look for a job?
- ☐ Language barrier
- ☐ Institutional reasons/problems (e.g. lack of Paperwork / Forms / Certifications etc.)
- ☐ Don't have the right contacts or no people to help me find a job
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

33. If you could make a choice, in which sector would be your most preferred type of job?

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry, and fishery
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Trade
- ☐ Accommodation and food

- ☐ service activities
- ☐ Transportation and storage
- ☐ Information and communication
- ☐ Public administration
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health and social work
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

34. What skill or skills would you like to improve so that you can find a job or get a better job?

- ☐ Literacy
- ☐ Computer (ICT)
- ☐ Languages
- ☐ Technical Skills (Agricultural, Industrial, Construction, green skills (e.g. renewables etc.)
- ☐ Soft Skills (Social skills, Teamwork, problem solving, creativity skills etc.)
- ☐ STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify

35. What is your expected minimum monthly income if you were to find a job (assumption: full-time position)?

- ☐ Between 100 and 200 EUR
- ☐ Between 200 and 500 EUR
- ☐ Between 500 and 1'000 EUR
- ☐ Above 1'000 EUR

36. Have you received any support or services in seeking a job?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please specify the type of support service and the provider of the service

37. How would you assess the quality of this service?

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Excellent

38. In the last two years have you received a vocational and/or skills training that lasted 1 week or longer? Please also state the training provider if you remember

- ☐ Yes (in which field)
- ☐ No

39. In which field?

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry, and fishery
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Trade
- ☐ Accommodation and food service activities
- ☐ Transportation and storage
- ☐ Information and communication
- ☐ Public administration
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health and social work
- ☐ Other)

If other please specify

40. How would you assess the quality of this service?

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Excellent

41. If you would be joining a training course, how long do you think the course should last for you to be able to fully participate/complete?

- ☐ 1 to 5 days
- ☐ 1 to 2 weeks
- ☐ 2 weeks to 1 month
- ☐ More than 1 month

42. What support would you need to be able to attend these training courses?

- ☐ Financial support
- ☐ Day care for children
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ School Material (Books etc.)
- ☐ Electronic Material (Laptop, Headset, Mobile phone etc.)
- ☐ Other

If other please specify

43. Would you be interested in online trainings / courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

44. Would you be able to go online regularly?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

45. Do you have a computer, or access to one?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

46. Do you know how to access online courses?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Social Cohesion

47. How can you describe your relationship with your neighbors?

48. Do you have friends in the town/village you are living in right now?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, do you have the following among your group of friends (check as appropriate):

- ☐ Moldovan community
- ☐ Roma population
- ☐ Ukrainian diaspora
- ☐ Other groups

49. In your opinion, how does the local population perceive the displaced people?

50. What are the main conflicts or problems within your community?

- ☐ ethnic,
- ☐ political,
- ☐ economic
- ☐ social
- ☐ religious
- ☐ other

If other please specify

51. What are the main conflicts or problems between your community and the Ukrainian refugees/Roma population/Moldovan host communities?

- ☐ ethnic,
- ☐ political,
- ☐ economic
- ☐ social
- ☐ religious

☐ other

If other please specify

52. Are women/men differently involved in and/or affected by these «challenges»?

53. What connecting factors unite your community despite all the current challenges?

☐ same language

☐ worldview

☐ traditions

☐ other

If other please specify

54. What connecting factors unite your community with other communities despite all the current challenges?

55. If respondent is Moldovan or lived in Moldova before February 24, 2022: Do you feel that since the invasion of Ukraine there have been new problems in Moldovan community?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please explain what kind of problems

56. Does the war in Ukraine increase other existing conflicts and tensions within or between communities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, explain which ones and how.

Psycho-social support needs for Ukrainians refugees, Moldovan host communities, Roma population

57. What are the main issues that cause stress and/or negatively affect the mental health or psychosocial well-being of you and/or your family?

58. How has the psychosocial well-being of you and/or your family developed in the last months?

59. How do you cope with stress and psychosocial challenges? Who or what is supporting you?

60. Have you ever used existing services to respond to your personal or family uneasiness?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please specify which ones:

☐ Medical services

☐ Social services (including psychological support)

☐ Legal counseling

- ☐ Informal community help
- ☐ Help from religious institutions
- ☐ Help from NGOs

If not, why did you not use any services?

61. If respondent has children: Is the school of your children offering psychosocial support for children with special needs, displaced children, traumatized children, and their families, etc.?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, which services?

62. Is there an increase/evidence of gender-based violence (GBV) in the latest 9 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

63. Is there an increase/evidence of trafficking in the latest 9 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

64. Why do you think so?

65. What kind of help is available for the victims?

Childcare requirement

66. How do your children spend their time generally?

67. Is there a difference between boys and girls?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

68. Do all your children (boys and girls) currently go to school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If not, why?

69. What type of childcare do your children receive?

- ☐ Cared for by parents, grandparents, siblings, other family members.
- ☐ Cared by neighbors.
- ☐ Cared by nanny.

- ☐ Under after-school activities
- ☐ In a state childcare institution
- ☐ In a private childcare institution
- ☐ Other type of childcare.

If other type please specify

70. What type of childcare would you prefer for your kids (if it would be accessible, available, and affordable)?

- ☐ Cared for by parents, grandparents, siblings, other family members
- ☐ Cared by neighbours
- ☐ Cared by nanny
- ☐ Under after-school activities
- ☐ In a state childcare institution
- ☐ In a private childcare institution
- ☐ Other type of childcare.

If other type please specify

71. What are the reasons you are not getting the childcare you would like to have for your children?

72. What skills or services you would wish to have for your children, but they are not available?

73. Why are they not available?

Enumerator's notes