



**Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting**  
Meeting Minutes – 07 April 2023

<b>Meeting subject:</b>	Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting
<b>Time &amp; location:</b>	9 am – UNHCR Krakow Sub-Office
<b>Chaired by:</b>	UNHCR; Open Krakow Coalition
<b>Minutes prepared by:</b>	UNHCR
<b>Participants:</b>	Małopolski Urząd Wojewódzki; Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Małopolskiego; All Hands and Hearts; Americares; Faros Elpidas; Fundacja Instytut Polska-Ukraina/UAinKrakow.pl; Fundacja Kocham Debniki; Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center; IB Polska; IOM; Małopolski Fundusz Ekonomii Społecznej; Polish Red Cross; Project Hope; Salam Lab; UNHCR; UNICEF; Zustricz;
<b>Agenda:</b>	<p>Introduction and updates from the co-chairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates from refugee and Ukrainian-led organizations</li> <li>• Updates from the Voivodeship</li> <li>• Mapping of potential activities by partners to support refugees leaving collective sites (UNHCR)</li> <li>• Findings from information campaign on PESEL registration (Fundacja Instytut Polska-Ukraina)</li> <li>• Findings from UNHCR participatory assessment with refugees (UNHCR)</li> <li>• AOB</li> </ul>
<b>AGENDA POINT</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>Introduction and update on points from last meeting</b>	Participants were welcomed to the sixteenth Małopolska Coordination Group meeting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNHCR thanked IB Polska for having served as the meeting co-chair representing Open Krakow Coalition for the past three months. UNHCR likewise introduced Zustricz Foundation as the new meeting co-chair for Open Krakow Coalition. Zustricz Foundation will assume meeting co-chair duties in May.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agenda point 1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundation Institute Poland Ukraine / UAinPoland.pl provided updates about recent activities. The Foundation is currently renting two apartments for the use of women who have experienced domestic violence. Partners can contact the Foundation to make referrals.</li> <li>• Zustricz Foundation shared that from 1 April, Zustricz, Salam Lab and IB Polska have taken over the community center on Zyczkowskiego street from UNHCR. Zustricz has also completed a mobile pilot program with UNHCR in Myślenice. This program has shown some challenges and opportunities outside of Krakow and the need to engage with Ukrainian communities in smaller locations.</li> <li>• UNHCR added that in addition to the project with Zustricz, Myślenice was also one of five smaller locations around Krakow city in which UNHCR and REACH conducted an Area Based Assessment (ABA). The goal of the ABA was to highlight gaps, challenges, and also opportunities in smaller towns and villages. Myślenice and these four other locations were chosen because of their proximity to Krakow. The ABA findings showed the differing situations in each of the five locations. The full report will be shared with participants as soon as it becomes available.</li> <li>• Małopolski Fundusz Ekonomii Społecznej provided updates about recent activities. The organization is currently changing locations. However, the provision of Polish language courses continues. Online language groups have been started, and there are also plans for further stationary lessons. Stationary lessons in beginner English are planned as well. Language courses have been identified as an ongoing need and the organization is trying to get additional funding. As well, career guidance sessions in partnership with IOM are still available and integration meetings for members of Polish and Ukrainian communities are being held. Finally, psychological assistance and psychological support groups are planned. Participants are invited to follow Małopolski Fundusz Ekonomii Społecznej on Facebook for updates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agenda point 2</b></p>	<p>The Representative of the Voivode provided updates about the situation in Małopolska.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Representative noted that in recent meetings partners had asked about the new legislation under which refugees need to begin paying for their stays in collective shelters.</li> <li>• In Krakow city, 711 refugees are currently living in 7 student dormitories. From this group of 711, 44 people have stated that they are willing and ready to participate in the cost of their stays. At the Voivodeship Office, 431 applications for exemptions</li> </ul>

for payments under one of the six criteria outlines in the legislation were accepted. Most refugees filing applications were ultimately exempt from payment. Of these 431 applications, only 4 were rejected.

- Starting at the end of April, the seven dormitories will successively be closed for cleaning and refurbishment. More than 200 people have indicated that they would like to relocate to a new location - the Ibis hotel in Krakow city. However, over the past month, many individuals have also come to the Voivodeship office in person to ask to be exempt from payments and to ask to be relocated to hotels in Krakow city. When it was explained to them that relocation in Krakow may not always be possible, and alternatives were suggested – such as high quality locations in Wieliczka – many people rejected these proposals and stated they wanted to remain in Krakow only. There were also positive outcomes, and in coordination with the City of Krakow, the Voivodeship relocated a group of individuals with disabilities to a center equipped for their needs.
- The Representative also provided updates about the database of refugees living in collective sites or other sites funded by the Voivodeship. There has been a large decline of people in this database and therefore of people living in these funded sites. This is in comparison to previous months, where the number had remained stable. The decline of refugees living in government funded sites is potentially due to the introduction of payments. It is possible that this introduction of payments has shown individuals that it is time for them to become independent and pursue employment opportunities.
- The Representative did not share specific figures about border crossings, as there have not been any drastic changes since previous meetings. Crossings from Poland into Ukraine and from Ukraine into Poland remain approximately equal. We are now entering a holiday period, so it is natural that number of crossings may increase, but the net number of crossings should continue to remain stable.
- No information was yet available about how many refugees living in collective shelters in Małopolska are exempt from payments. Counties (powiats) had until 5<sup>th</sup> April to send this information. It will probably be compiled and ready to share by the next Coordination meeting.
- The Małopolska Marshall's Office asked if refugees had provided reasons for their reluctance to relocate outside of Małopolska.
- The Representative of the Voivode noted that various reasons had been given. Refugees have said that their doctors are in Krakow, that they do not want to be stuck in traffic jams, that there is no where nice to move outside of Krakow, and that there are no school or preschool opportunities for children. When these points are made, Voivodeship officials try to explain that this is not the reality and it is possible to live outside of city centers. However, partners working directly with refugees are also encouraged to share this information with them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Americares asked what actions the Voivodeship has taken to ensure refugees access to medical care.</li> <li>• The Representative explained that the right for access to medical care does not come from the Voivodeship level, but rather from the Ministerial level. Ukrainian refugees are included Polish medical system and have the right to the same services as Polish people. There are no special solutions outside of this system. Like Polish citizens, Ukrainians refugees need to use their regional medical clinics and hospitals.</li> <li>• Zustricz shared an additional observation from the pilot program in Myslenice. In smaller locations, there may sometimes be difficulties in access to medical care. This could be for language reasons. However, there have also been reports that some Ukrainians have been declined medical treatment.</li> <li>• UNHCR asked about applications for exemption from payment for refugees living in collective sites. It was mentioned that refugees have been approaching the Voivodeship office in person. In this regard, UNHCR asked if any specific information had been sent out to refugees in collective sites about how to file applications. UNHCR offered that in the case there is a need to communicate with refugees how to fill out the forms, then group members could help with this task, as this kind of information sharing and support is one of the goals of these meetings.</li> <li>• The representative responded that meetings in each of the student dormitories took place and that informational efforts with Zustricz and IB Poland had also been undertaken. There were no problems with filling in the forms and no questions about this from individuals coming to the Voivodeship office in person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agenda point 3</b></p>	<p>UNHCR presented an initiative to map partners' potential contributions to support refugees leaving collective shelters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNHCR noted that the support to refugees to find alternatives outside of collective shelters has been discussed at length already previously, and will likely continue to remain a topic of discussion going forward. In a previous Coordination meetings it was mentioned that a national level meeting would take place with representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Expert Committee of the Minister of Integration. During this meeting, initiatives were presented to try to decongest larger cities and encourage refugees to move to smaller locations. A call for proposals for the Minister of Integration's pilot project on this topic closed on 28<sup>th</sup> March. The goal of the meeting was to discuss what support NGOs, INGOs and International Organizations could provide to support the activities under the pilot and decongestion efforts more broadly. If one of the pilot locations selected is near Krakow, then it would be an opportunity for explore what support the Malopolska Coordination Group could offer.</li> </ul>

- Two concrete action points resulted from the meeting. First, the government will share an assessment of the situation in collective sites, including the profile of refugees living in these locations and the percentage of refugees contributing to payment. Second, international agencies will conduct a mapping of how they may eventually be able to support decongestion initiatives.
- In regards to action point 2 above, a document will be circulated in which partners can note their activities which may be able to support decongestion efforts. Filling out this document is just for informational purposes and not a commitment for partners to provide support at this stage. All partners are encouraged to fill out the document and may contact UNHCR with any questions.

**Agenda point 4**

Foundation Institute Poland Ukraine (FIPU) shared a presentation on a recent survey done regarding refugees’ understanding of their access to rights under the Special Act. The survey was done in cooperation with UNHCR and Halina Niec Legal Aid Center.

- UNHCR noted the background context of the survey. Through various discussions with refugees, it became apparent that many do not know which rights they are entitled to with a PESEL number. This is why UNHCR and FIPU decided to conduct this survey about refugee’s understanding of their rights. UNHCR further noted that initiatives such as the above survey are important because it cannot be assumed that reliable information is accessible to all refugees. The answers to these survey questions highlight the importance of communication with refugees and for continued information sharing and awareness raising about access to rights.
- Foundation Institute Poland Ukraine explained the survey methodology. The telegram channel of UAinKrakow.pl was chosen as the platform to conduct the survey. This is the platform where UAinKrakow has the most subscribers who are refugees. One true/false survey question a day was posted over a period of 7 days. The day after a question was posted, the answer was then posted. After the survey, it was possible to see how many respondents had answered each question correctly or incorrectly. Comments could also be left, which allowed specific questions and concerns on each topic to be collected and analyzed.
- The survey questions covered topics such as whether a PESEL number was necessary for children to attend school, and whether PESEL numbers are mandatory for all Ukrainians who came to Poland as a result of the war. For the 7 questions, the majority of respondents were correct on 4 questions, and for the remaining 3 questions the majority of respondents were incorrect. This highlights potential information gaps.
- During the presentation, a connection was also made to earlier points about access to healthcare. There were many comments posted on the question related to healthcare. Many respondents noted that even if they had Diia.pl, they had

been rejected from hospitals because their status in the application was not up to date. This demonstrated that even if legally all refugees have access to healthcare, in reality the situation may be different.

#### Agenda point 5

UNHCR shared a presentation about the findings of the Participatory Assessment exercise which took place in Southern Poland in late 2022. The findings in the presentation were part of a larger countrywide exercise, the results of which will be shared with partners soon.

- Following the presentation, UNICEF asked if there were incentives for refugees to take part in the Participatory Assessment exercise.
- UNHCR responded that there were no incentives, and participation was on voluntary basis. However, one methodology to encourage participation was to schedule some Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) after group activities.
- IOM asked if the FGDs in the Participatory Assessment were held with refugees living in collective sites or refugees living outside of these locations.
- UNHCR responded that one focus group was from a collective site. However, efforts were made that most groups were not from collective sites, and to reach out to refugees in different locations to capture the diversity of all perspectives.
- UNICEF asked about discussions on the theme of mental health, women and domestic violence. When these topics were discussed, were there some things specifically identified by Roma women and was this from a specific FGD held with Roma women?
- UNHCR responded that there had been efforts to discuss this topic during FGDs with Roma women. However, women responded that these were issues that are discussed and solved within the community and there is high reluctance to access external MHPSS or other support.
- Americares noted that Voice Amplified had asked a local Roma NGO to come present at a recent meeting and that Roma NGOs can act as channels of communication with the Roma community. ODIHR from the Organization for Peace and Security in Europe (OSCE) also previously had an individual employed as a focal point for work with Roma communities.
- Americares noted that in personal experience trying to find an apartment in Krakow, many landlords asked directly if the potential tenant is Ukrainian. Americares inquired whether such behavior legal and if there a way to report it?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNICEF noted that if this is a systematic issue then it needs to be documented and sent to the ombudsman.</li> <li>• IB Poland highlighted that housing law in Poland is very difficult for landlords and that evicting tenants in case of non-payment – especially mothers with children – is very difficult. While this does not mean rejection of potential Ukrainian tenants is not discrimination, it is also a situation that is difficult for landlords. IB Poland further shared that in the Migrant Information Point many questions have also been received from landlords. Landlords have reported having tenants who have not paid for many months.</li> <li>• Zustricz added that even in Myslenice concerned landlords came to a meeting and inquired whether there is a system of guarantees. Such a system would allow landlords more security when renting to refugees. This would likely result in a larger number of apartments available to refugees and increased possibility to accommodate refugees from collective shelters. However, unfortunately so far, no such system exists.</li> <li>• IOM noted that in individual cases there have been some cases of guarantees, wherein a Polish family has agreed to serve as the guarantor of a Ukrainian family. However, this is on an individual level and a systemic solution could prove helpful.</li> </ul>
<b>AOB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no updates provided under the given agenda point.</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION POINTS SUMMARY</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Status (as of )</b>
1.				
2				