

TEMPORARY PROTECTION: INTENTIONS & EXPERIENCES #2

Protection Working Group (PWG)

March 2024

In mid-January 2023, the government of the Republic of Moldova (RM) approved the granting of Temporary Protection (TP) to displaced Ukrainians and certain third-country nationals (TCN) residing in the country, effective 1 March 2023. The approval of TP provided these individuals with a stable legal status in the country for a period of one year. It was recently extended for another year, until 1 March 2025. As of 11 March 2024, over 39,000 individuals had been granted TP.

To strengthen and promote an evidence-based response related to the implementation of TP in RM, protection partners have been gathering information from Ukrainian refugees about their intentions to apply for TP and, if they have applied, their experiences in doing so. The first analysis from this survey was [published](#) in mid-July 2023, along with an interactive dashboard of the TP survey results, allowing for disaggregation based on different criteria, which can be found [here](#).

The findings from the present assessment consist of two rounds of data collection. Round one encompasses data collected between March and August 2023, while the second round covers data collected from the beginning of December 2023 until the end of February 2024. The second round introduces additional questions related to respondents' awareness of the consequences of residing in the country without legal status, including potential fines and difficulties returning to Moldova should they leave, as well as access to rights for beneficiaries of TP.

DEMOGRAPHICS & INTENTIONS

Over both rounds of data collection, a total of 1,160 surveys were gathered across 29 raions throughout RM, including the Transnistrian region. Partners collected 800 surveys in the initial round of surveys and 360 surveys in the second round.

In comparison with the first round of surveys, fewer respondents in the second round were residing in Refugee Accommodation Centres (RAC) (from 35% to 22%), while those renting/owning apartments or being hosted by family and non-family members increased from 59% to 77%. Similar to the overall refugee population, the majority of respondents were female. The overwhelming majority of respondents overall were Ukrainian nationals (93%), followed by Moldovan nationals with residence permits in Ukraine (4%). ⁽¹⁾

Out of the total number of respondents in the second round, roughly 25% (82) reported having some degree of difficulty seeing, remembering, hearing, walking, or communicating (a decrease from 41% in Round 1), of which 5% reported having a lot of difficulty doing so or who could not do so at all (a decrease from 9% from Round 1). Those aged 35 to 49 were the most surveyed cohort (127), while those aged 60 and above constituted around 17% of respondents.

⁽¹⁾ The remaining 3% of respondents indicated "other – not specified".

In terms of submission of TP applications, numbers were evenly split in the first round of data between respondents who had submitted an application (51%) and those who had not (49%). In the second round, however, the percentage of those who had applied for TP rose significantly, to 89%. This is not surprising, as the deadline for ensuring lawful status for most people was in mid-August 2023. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents in the second round who were residing in the host community (renting/owning apartments or being hosted by family/non-family) who had submitted TP applications (92%) was higher than those residing in RACs (85%). Applications for TP amongst those who indicated having a lot of difficulty or could not do at all also increased between the two rounds (from 51% to 81%).

APPLICATIONS FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTION

ROUND 1

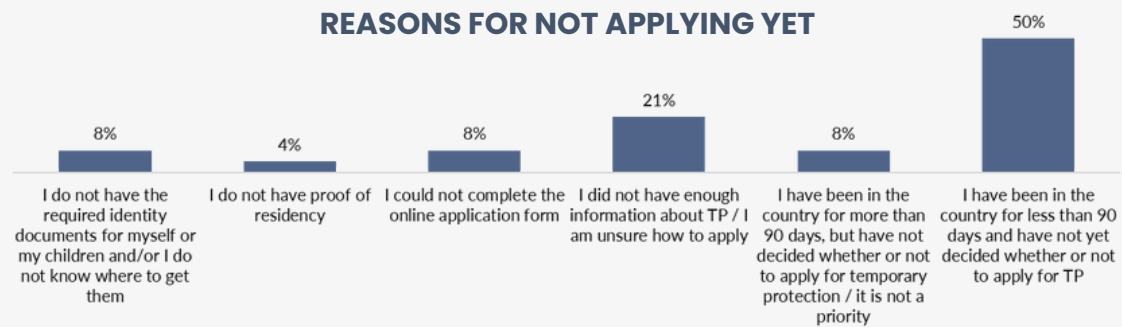
51%

ROUND 2

89%

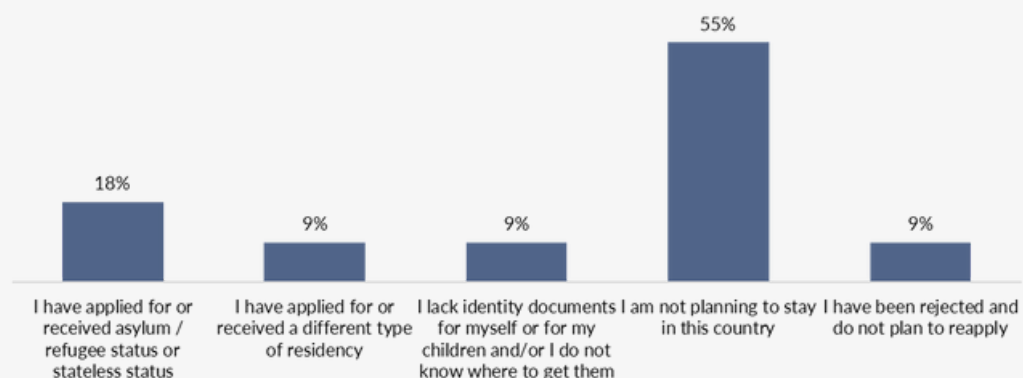
Out of the total number of respondents who had applied for TP (1,160 persons), about one half of respondents (49%) had completed the process and received their TP card and the other half (49%) had completed the online registration and were waiting for their in-person appointment with IGM. Only 17 persons had been rejected, and two had had their TP status revoked.⁽²⁾

REASONS FOR NOT APPLYING YET



Of interest was the reason cited by respondents for not applying for TP, especially during the second round of data collection, after the mid-August deadline for ensuring lawful status for those who had arrived in Moldova before mid-May 2023 had passed. For those respondents (second round of surveys) who indicated plans to apply for TP, nearly 50% said that they had not yet applied because they had been in the country for fewer than 90 days. A further 21% stated that they did not have enough information about TP or were unsure how to apply (a decrease from 35% in round 1). Difficulties in completing the online application form (8%) and lacking required identity documents (8%) were also reported. Lack of proof of residence, which was the main reason for not applying for TP during the first round of surveys, decreased to 6% in the second round. This decline was expected, as, in September 2023, the Commission on Exceptional Situations (CES) issued a decision simplifying the "proof of residence" requirements for purposes of TP. Under the CES decision, later codified into the government decision on TP (GD 21/2023), refugees are able to self-declare their residence in Moldova, significantly streamlining the process.

REASONS FOR NOT APPLYING AT ALL



Regarding those surveyed who indicated they had not applied for TP and were not planning to do so, more than one-half (55%) stated that they were not planning to stay in the country, a similar reason reported in the first round of surveys (23%). Notably, those who stated they were waiting to see if the situation in Ukraine improves decreased significantly from 23% of respondents in the first round to 0% in the second round. This change could also be reflected in the intentions of those surveyed in the second round, with 81% stating that they had no plans to return to Ukraine in the next three months.⁽³⁾

⁽²⁾ One individual exceeded the 45-day limit for staying abroad, while the TP application of the other was revoked after obtaining a different legal status in Moldova.

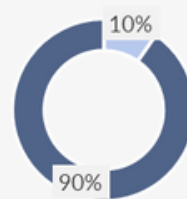
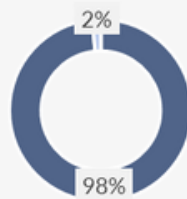
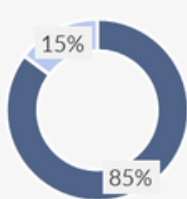
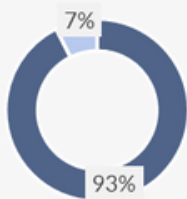
⁽³⁾ Statistics on intentions are only available for the second round of data collection. However, evidence from both UNHCR's protection monitoring and results from the 2023 Participatory Assessment show an overall decrease in intentions to return to Ukraine in the next three months, in favor of plans to remain in Moldova.

AWARENESS & ACCESS TO RIGHTS

Since September 2023, UNHCR and partners have observed that Ukrainian nationals who have fallen out of legal status and who have sought to exit the country, for example, to visit Ukraine, are being fined 600 Moldovan lei (~USD 30). **(4)** Additionally, a number of Ukrainian nationals have faced difficulty re-entering Moldova due to their over-stay in the country. Some have chosen to apply for asylum to re-enter Moldova, while others have decided to remain in Ukraine.

To address these new realities, additional questions were introduced in the second round of the TP survey, focusing on the awareness of individuals who had fallen out of legal status in Moldova on the 90-day lawful period of stay limitation and potential issues they might face for over-staying. Overall, survey results indicated a high awareness among those surveyed without legal status (93%) of the 90-day period of lawful stay. **(5)** Awareness of potential fines for overstaying was slightly lower (85%) but still generally high.

AWARENESS OF RIGHTS AND FACING DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING RIGHTS



Aware of their rights under TP Aware of 90-days lawful period of stay Aware of potential fines Have difficulties accessing their rights
■ yes ■ no ■ yes ■ no ■ yes ■ no ■ yes ■ no

Evidence from the second round also showed that almost all respondents (98%) **(6)** were aware of the rights entitled to them under TP, demonstrating the success of awareness-raising efforts. When asked about facing difficulties in accessing their rights in Moldova, only 10% stated that they had encountered some kind of difficulty. These included difficulties with accessing healthcare, social services and assistance, and employment. For healthcare **(7)**, the main difficulties faced by respondents were the fees associated with care/medication/transportation. One respondent cited lack of information about the healthcare system. Regarding access to social services and assistance **(8)**, those who responded stated that they had tried to access winter allowance and energy subsidies, with the majority citing delayed payments as a difficulty. As for difficulties in accessing employment **(9)**, reasons cited included lack of opportunities matching skills; lack of education/skills; lack of employment opportunities; and refusal of employers to provide a formal contract. Surprisingly, only one respondent stated that lack of knowledge of a local languages was an obstacle.

(4) UNHCR and partners have not observed any individuals who had fallen out of legal status being fined when coming forward to apply for TP within Moldova.

(5) As reported by 28 individuals who responded to the question.

(6) The question was answered by 159 respondents.

(7) As indicated by the 4 respondents who answered the question.

(8) As indicated by the 11 respondents who answered the question.

(9) As indicated by the 3 respondents who answered the question.

PARTNERS

We are grateful for the involvement and support of our partners who took part in this assessment, in particular the Law Centre of Advocates (LCA/CDA), HelpAge, Church World Service (CWS), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), INTERSOS, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM),

Disclaimer: The analysis in this report does not necessarily reflect the perspectives and mandates of the partners collecting the data.

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