Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

# Podkarpackie Coordination Group (PCG)

Date: 25 January 2024
Time: 11:00am – 1:00pm
Venue: Voivode's Office in Rzeszów

## General Discussion Highlights:

| Welcome and Introduction. | Action Points |
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| **Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office:**<br>Our goal is to strengthen coordination of actors involved in the refugee response. Currently, we are in a transitional context, as we collaborate more with public authorities on social inclusion and integration. That is also why we are joined today by the Municipality of Rzeszow to discuss the integration strategy issue further. This forum is coordinated in conjunction with the Voivodeship Office, and we hope that for the next meeting, its representatives will join us to collectively work towards humanitarian response in Podkarpackie. | UNHCR: Engagement with representatives of new Voivodeship Office |
| **Integration Strategy for the City of Rzeszow.** | **Action Points** |
| **Andrzej Burnat, Department of Social Policy in Municipality of Rzeszów:**<br>We aim to develop a comprehensive, long-term integration strategy that addresses the evolving challenges since the outbreak of the war. These challenges are not only related to the influx of refugees but also encompass various forms of migration. On January 30th, we will convene a meeting with all interested organizations to participate in crafting this strategy. While we have identified certain areas to include, it is imperative for us to adopt a participatory approach in its development. The final voice regarding this strategy should not solely come from officials; rather, civil society and organizations should play an integral role both in the planning and execution stages.<br><br>The implementation of the strategy will involve collaboration, utilization of Municipality's resources, external funding, and cooperation with the state. As part of the strategy's implementation, we plan to establish an Integration Center in partnership with UNHCR and external donors. This center will host various activities tailored for refugees and immigrants and will serve as a space for both the Municipality and NGOs. These activities will facilitate the integration of refugees with the local community and vice versa. For example, we already have the Polish-Ukrainian Seniors Club, initially launched in UNHCR's Protection Hub and now continued in the Municipality's Senior Center.<br><br>**Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office:** | UNHCR: mapping on services available in Rzeszów. |

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| As a coordination mechanism, we can offer a mapping of the services and the current activities offered by organizations working on integration. This would be invaluable in guiding refugees to specific services they require.<br><br>Regarding the Seniors Club, it serves as an excellent example of how specific activities can become more sustainable, with local authorities taking the lead.<br><br>**Alicja Bobola, PCK:**<br>I agree that comprehensive information about the services offered by organizations would be highly beneficial. At PCK, for instance, we are currently implementing the Livelihood Project. Through this initiative, we offer job counseling to refugees, provide guidance on utilizing their skills and competencies, and conduct training sessions on specific areas. We strongly believe that focusing on such integration efforts should be our priority moving forward.<br><br>**Ewa Rodziewicz, IOM:**<br>How do you think this tool should work? Should it be based on the 3W mechanism, or should it be a simple tool where everyone would be able to provide input?<br><br>**Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office:**<br>We were considering a simple tool that would help us understand each organization's services, locations, and criteria. We would like to hear your thoughts on whether this would aid coordination. We need to avoid duplicating services for the same audience.<br><br>**Alicja Bobola, PCK:**<br>We have encountered situations where refugees inquire about services from different organizations. I believe it would be useful to establish a physical space where refugees can go to inquire about the specific services they require.<br><br>**Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office**<br>I believe we need to establish a tool with specified criteria outlining how refugees can address their specific problems. For example, simply listing 'job counseling' or 'language courses' without providing profiles or criteria would not be useful. We need to keep it simple yet include detailed information that is useful for both other organizations and refugees.<br><br>**Sana Vitviska, Q Fundation:**<br>We have two years of experience working in integration, organizing various activities and trainings. Currently, we are searching for financing for this year's activities, and it would be helpful to have information about grant opportunities for such projects. | |

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| **Andrzej Burnat, Department of Social Policy in Municipality of Rzeszów:**<br>The Integration Center could serve as the hub for all services, but it will only cater to residents of Rzeszów. We cannot avoid the need to update information regarding the activities provided by organizations. It is also important for us to verify the credibility of the entities we refer people to.<br><br>**Alicja Bobola, PCK**<br>In Przemyśl, the situation appears slightly different. People are still contemplating their onward journey and are uncertain whether they want to remain in Przemyśl or relocate to another location.<br><br>**Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office**<br>We have taken note of the needs you have mentioned, and we will propose a relevant tool as a coordination mechanism. | |
| **Socioeconomic inclusion. Refugee needs. Projects and activities on integration for 2024** | **Action Points** |
| **Jose Luis Hernandez, UNHCR Protection Officer**<br>Last month, we organized a workshop in collaboration with the Municipality of Rzeszów to discuss the challenges and opportunities related to the socio-economic inclusion of refugees. The workshop consisted of four working groups, each focusing on different topics:<br>• Challenges and opportunities in accessing jobs in Rzeszów, with a specific focus on the obstacles faced by women and men. For example, women highlighted the issue of childcare as a barrier to accessing employment, while men cited a lack of job opportunities due to the older age of Ukrainian refugees seeking work. Other general challenges mentioned included problems with certificate recognition (*nostrification*) and inadequate language skills.<br>• Entrepreneurship and how to start a business in Poland. Many refugees acknowledged the availability of relevant information but expressed difficulties in navigating the procedures necessary to start a business.<br>• Access to meaningful employment. Refugees noted a lack of information about their legal rights, suitable accommodation, and language courses.<br>• Social inclusion and challenges in integrating into Polish society. Refugees reported feeling discriminated against due to the perception that they could take jobs from Polish citizens and should only be given lower-income positions.<br>We believe that these findings will contribute to the integration strategy of the Municipality of Rzeszów. We are planning additional workshops and engagement with authorities and the private sector to raise awareness among employers about the rights and needs of refugees. Our planned activities also include providing mobile services for information provision, empowering RLOs and local NGOs, strengthening | UNHCR: Share the Workshop findings with partners. |

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| advocacy efforts, and capacity building on integration with local authorities. Additionally, we aim to enhance coordination and cooperation with local universities and research initiatives.<br><br>**Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office**<br>The numbers of PESEL UKR registrations do not accurately reflect the transient population passing through Podkarpackie. We must not overlook the fact that people arrive every day at different BCPs with the intention to transit, yet they still require various services.<br><br>We recently met with the Director of the Statistic Office, who informed us that not all Ukrainians register with PESEL UKR. Therefore, we may have a larger population and greater needs than what the registration numbers suggest.<br><br>**Alicja Bobola, PCK**<br>I would also like to emphasize the importance of humanitarian actors understanding the Polish system well. We have encountered cases where Ukrainians were not informed that they are entitled to social benefits or healthcare based on their PESEL registration, on the same basis as Polish citizens. It is crucial for refugees to be aware of their rights and the services available to them as a result of their PESEL registration.<br><br>**Oksana Zawalska, Alight**<br>In regard to the needs of refugees, I would like to emphasize the importance of providing information on higher education in Poland, including conditions, procedures, and requirements.<br><br>**Volodymyr Mykhalyshyn, Folkowisko Fundation**<br>What I have observed is that indeed, there are quite a lot of people who are not registering for PESEL UKR. Many individuals believe that they will return home to Ukraine soon, so they are uncertain if obtaining a PESEL is necessary for them. Since I am involved in integration matters within the organization, I often need to refer to specific groups within the Ukrainian community. To do so, I typically visit places where they gather most often, such as the church. | |
| **Mobile outreach and information provision through Podkarpackie 2024** | **Action Points** |
| **Jose Luis Hernandez, UNHCR Protection Officer**<br>This initiative will be organized jointly by the PCG organizations and local authorities under the umbrella of the Podkarpackie Coordination effort. Our goal is to collaborate with all humanitarian actors and local authorities to provide refugees with the information they require. Based on our remote visits in | UNHCR: Share Mobile Support Strategy. |

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| Podkarpackie, refugees have expressed the need for information on legal counseling, documentation, access to education, healthcare, available humanitarian assistance, and socio-economic inclusion.<br><br>We will prioritize locations based on the needs and where refugees are located. As humanitarian actors, we will work hand in hand with local authorities to support refugees. We encourage everyone to join this initiative. Please let us know if you are interested so we can proceed with the planning.<br><br>**Filip Bujnowski, Save the Children**<br>I think this is a valuable initiative. Information provision is crucial for us as well, so we are open to cooperation.<br><br>**Ewa Rodziewicz, IOM**<br>I agree, I think it is a good idea. We would be grateful if you could share the mobile strategy with us. It is difficult now to tell you how we can contribute; we need to assess the needs, funding, and structure first.<br><br>**Alicja Bobola, PCK**<br>It is a good idea, but I think these spaces would be most useful in smaller locations like Lesko and Ustrzyki, where access to organizations is limited.<br><br>**Yolanda Ines Zapata Henry, Head of UNHCR Rzeszow Field Office**<br>The idea is to leverage existing resources and activities that you have already planned for 2024. We will return with a plan and can discuss logistics based on your assessments of your capacity. It may not be necessary for all of us to convene in one location; the approach can vary depending on available resources. | |
| **Referral pathways in Podkarpackie** | **Action Points** |
| **Agnieszka Kubiak, UNHCR Child Protection Associate**<br>The Referral Pathways on Child Protection is a collaborative effort between PCG, UNHCR partners, humanitarian organizations in Podkarpackie, and local authorities. This document serves as a comprehensive guide containing all services related to Child Protection in the region. It was developed in response to the needs identified by the managers of collective shelters and changes in activities for refugees.<br>Key components of the Referral Pathways include:<br>• Definitions<br>• Identification of risks<br>• Basic communication tips for interacting with children in emergency situations | UNHCR: Send the referral pathways to partners. |

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| • Description of services and contact details<br>• Case management scheme covering emergency intervention and additional services<br>This document is intended for:<br>• PCG members<br>• Humanitarian workers<br>• Organizations and institutions supporting refugees<br>• Public authorities<br>If you have any suggestions or recommendations for its content, please feel free to contact us. Additionally, referral pathways regarding GBV will also be presented in the near future. | |
| **AOB** | **Action Points** |
| **Alicja Bobola, PCK**<br>The POSiR center in Przemyśl, which we oversee as coordinators, has recently commenced operations as an integration facility. This center offers accommodation for refugees, but specific criteria must be met for eligibility. It caters to individuals who have not previously resided in collective accommodation centers or apartments available on the commercial market. The facility is intended for those who have recently arrived in Poland and are facing challenging circumstances. Guests may stay for a duration of up to 6 months.<br><br>**Marzena Sochacka, Consilium**<br>I would like to stress the requirement for all the institutions which deal with children - Standards for the Protection of Minors. | |

**Participants:**

| Organization | Name | Surname |
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| Caritas Rzeszów | Krystian | Snopkowski |
| Caritas Przemyśl | Monika | Laska |
| Consilium | Honorata | Elińska |
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