

### ISCG Meeting

Date: 5 June 2024 • Time: 14h00-16h00 • Venue: UNHCR Conference Room  
• Participants: RRP Sectors & Working Groups • Language: ENG

Participating Organizations:	<p><u>In-person:</u> UNHCR, IOM, Habitat for Humanity, FRD</p> <p><u>Online:</u> UNHCR Kraków, UNHCR Lublin, PCPM, NGO Forum “Razem”, UNICEF, Towards Dialogue,</p>
Chaired by:	Filippo Busconi Ricci Oddi, UNHCR
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opening Remarks</li> <li>2. Update on the Special Act and Conscription law Special Act amendments: focus on collective centers</li> <li>3. Progress of SEIS data collection and next steps</li> <li>4. Status of Migration Policy/ Integration Strategy</li> <li>5. A.O.B (“Stronger Together”)</li> </ol>

#### *Refugee Coordinator and IA General Update:*

- The Senate has passed amendments to the Special Act, awaiting the President's approval. The abolishment of Art. 13 could impact residents of collective shelters. An emergency preparedness matrix for consolidating collective sites, focusing on basic needs and activities that can be activated within a week, will be circulated. Inputs are needed within a week for IA to forward to RRP partners.
- The PSEA Network and AAP Working Group have been consolidated, with IOM, UNHCR, Unbreakable Ukraine, and Towards Dialogue elected as co-leads.
- The RMTF survey is underway to identify gaps, needs, and funding for NGOs. It has been shared with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, which has provided some questions. The government welcomed the initiative. The survey aims to compare the current situation with last year's findings. The NGO Forum has issued a letter to the Ministry for Civil Society about these funding needs and the survey, using it as an advocacy tool to prioritize services for refugees in the Freedom Fund or to create new funding pools.
- The NGOs Global Consultation will be held in Geneva from June 11-13, focusing on gender equality and inclusion. Nomada will represent the UA response in Poland, with awards given to organizations working with stateless and forcibly displaced people with disabilities.
- IA has engaged with NGO.pl, one of the largest platforms for NGOs. Using this website could amplify their message. A new report on the status of NGOs working with refugees from Ukraine has been developed and uploaded today. Both parties agreed to remain in touch for future collaboration.
- While forum primarily supports the RRP response to the Ukraine situation, and the asylum and migration pact issues, including the Belarusian Border, are not its main focus, overarching comments on these topics will be provided. Poland objected to all chapters of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and voted against it. UNHCR has met with Undersecretary of State Duszczyk to discuss these concerns, noting that the pact is more tailored to the Mediterranean context than the Belarusian context. Fifteen different Ministers, including Min. Szymoniak, expressed concerns about the current pact in a letter to Commissioner Johansson. One major concern is externalization. Some elements of the pact provide tools and safeguards from a national security and geopolitical perspective, including screening mechanisms, returns, and safer country contexts.

- A briefing in the PM office for Ministers Sikorski and Bodnar addressed restoring the rule of law and lifting Article 7 from Brussels. UNHCR raised issues on refugees and IOM on migrants, emphasizing that strong border management is essential for secure borders. The ministers highlighted the hybrid warfare nature of current border issues, which has been politicized ahead of European elections. A meeting with the border guard on Friday will discuss the screening mechanism and the extension of the buffer zone, aiming to negotiate border-related safeguards.
- UNHCR's assessment indicates that the frontline situation is not improving, necessitating preparedness. However, there has not been a dramatic increase in border crossings. Last year, an average of 19,000 people per month registered for temporary status, whereas this year, the number has decreased to around 13,000 per month.
- A meeting with Minister Leśniakiewicz took place a month ago regarding civil society law and how the 103 RRP partners can support civil society actors. The contingency planning matrix has been shared with the Ministry of the Interior.
- Efforts to arrange a meeting with the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy have not materialized. The focus of the upcoming Stronger Together event will be on resource mobilization and local actors. Discussions are ongoing about directing funds from Brussels to local actors, as significant funding is available.
- Discussions with Minister Duszczuk have addressed issues related to travel documents and accommodation in collective centers. UNHCR will share the outcomes in a letter.
- Poland will join the WHO executive board and has contributed to the UNHCR response in Sudan and Gaza. The annual meeting in Geneva will cover topics such as tuberculosis and vaccinations.

#### *Update on the Special Act and Conscription law:*

- Three main issues: concerns about the practical implications of Articles 12 and 13 for the protection sector; issues related to mobilization and the need for a valid travel document to register for Temporary Protection (TP); and linkages between the 800+ and obligatory enrolment.
- The conscription age has been lowered from 27 to 25, requiring Ukrainian men between 18 and 60 to register. Legislative amendments in Poland now require a valid travel document for TP registration, affecting those transitioning to new residence permits and new arrivals.
- In the first four months, 1,538 Ukrainian citizens applied for international protection, including 674 men; in 2023, 487 Ukrainian citizens submitted applications, including 268 men, indicating an increase in asylum applications. Approximately 8,000 Ukrainian men attempted to cross the green border irregularly in 2023, though this is not confirmed by the Polish authorities; very limited number of international protection applications at the border.
- Interceptions noted at the Poland-Germany border involving persons who crossed irregularly from Belarus to Poland. There is a growing need to advocate for proper procedures to be followed for returns within and outside the EU.
- Social media concerns, with discussions about "grey passports" issued by Polish authorities for foreigners, including Ukrainian residents unable to apply for passports. MoI does not see the same situation for Ukrainian refugees as for Belarusians. The office for foreigners raised concerns about people advising refugees, emphasizing the need to provide objective information without influencing decisions.

#### *Special Act amendments: focus on collective centers:*

- The definition of Collective Sites has been included in the Special Act; a collective center now requires at least 10 people. Voivodes can sign agreements with NGOs running collective sites. Small site closures will mainly occur in Małopolskie, Śląskie, and Dolnośląskie, affecting 2,000 refugees.
- Min. Duszczuk claimed he would fast-track agreements with voivodes to finance NGOs under Article 12, but Lena Grochowska Foundation reported that this has not happened, and NGOs are not interested in signing agreements. There is a struggle to get information from NGOs.
- The new law does not provide solutions for minorities, including ethnic groups. This needs to be raised with the MoI for technical guidelines and recommendations at a lower level, not the special act level.
- Article 13 has been completely abolished. Private entities can claim costs until the end of July, with eligible costs incurred until the end of June.

- The law protecting residents does not apply to Ukrainian refugees. Landlords must give written notice of no less than 2 weeks. Voivodeships must support relocations.
- PCPM and PCK cash projects will benefit 18,000 to 24,000 people (6,000 households).

*Progress of SEIS data collection and next steps:*

- SEIS remains the same as last year, maintaining the purpose and scope of the MSNA to develop evidence-based strategies and planning. It will be implemented as a regional exercise in Poland through the Information Management Working Group, with amendments based on lessons learned from last year have been incorporated. Currently in the data collection phase.
- Collaborative efforts with IOM and UNICEF as part of a collaborative inter-agency effort. The product is from the Inter-Agency forum. 1200 interviews are planned from 16.05 to 15.06 across all corners of Poland.
- Beginning of July, a data validation and preliminary analysis workshop will be held. All inter-agency technical actors will be invited to review the preliminary analysis and perform checks.

*Status of Migration Policy/ Integration Strategy:*

- A joint document based on the initial draft provided by Dir. Potocki with 10 points for future migration policy was created. NGO Forum and RRP partners consolidated documents, and the NGO Forum presented this in a meeting with Dir. Potocki. Main recommendations focus on respecting individuals' agency and recognizing the varied starting points for integration. The need to learn the language should only follow after meeting basic needs, highlighting the necessity for individualized approaches. The document should specify Poland's obligations under international law rather than broadly stating undefined responsibilities.
- Emphasis on the situation of children and the cooperation of different public institutions is crucial. Additional points specifically for the integration of children could be added.
- Dir. Potocki received the document and expressed interest in further developing the recommendations. A round table on 11.06 aims to refine these recommendations. The Polish Academy of Science (PAN) will provide a document to form the basis of the migration strategy, with NGO Forum participating in discussions.
- Timeline for the strategy: PAN document ready by August, Min. Duszczyk aims to draft the migration policy in September, followed by two rounds of public consultations. There is a possibility of the first draft being ready by July. The goal is to have it approved by the Council of Ministers by the end of the year before the Polish presidency.

*A.O.B. ("Stronger Together"):*

- Stronger Together will take place on Wednesday 12.06.2024. Representatives from IOM, UNHCR, and the Government, including Piotr Stec from Min. Buczyńska's office, will participate in the opening panel.
- The Global Shelter Working Group will meet in Geneva for the Shelter Consultation.
- The POP Fund steering committee will meet on Monday.