Meeting of the Working Group on Education – August 26, 2025

Participants:

- Maria Yankova, UNICEF
- Iva Partsaleva, UNHCR
- Yanka Kosarova and Olga Kolot, FAR
- Kristina Gologanova, Reachout
- Svetlana Radolova, Az Buki Vedi
- Galya Georgieva and Ruzha Doncheva, Energy
- Desislava Kancheva, USRF
- Prof. Siika Chavdarova-Kostova

1. Enrollment in primary and secondary education

- Many children between the ages of 12 and 16 have applied for enrolment, as this allows them to continue to use accommodation under the Humanitarian Accommodation Programme. It remains to be seen how many of them will actually start school.
- This is a challenge for the education authorities, as children above 7th grade are included in the places provided for in the state admission plan.
- The instructions to the Regional Education Authorities and schools are that all applicants should be given a copy of their applications so that they can verify this in the process of determining their membership of risk groups.
- Their attendance will be verified through the National Electronic Information System for Preschool and School Education (NEISPSE) in the days before 30 September.
- Discussions have been held to refine this group of persons at risk, as formulated in Article 5.1 (b).
- One-fifth of the resources of the Regional Education Offices in Varna and Burgas are being used to process applications from children under temporary protection.
- USRF reports that it has successfully enrolled 12 children from Syria in Plovdiv.

2. Higher education

- There is a great deal of interest in higher education among young people under temporary protection.
- Challenges related to the implementation of Decree 264: lack of centralized information, different procedures and deadlines in all universities, unattractive majors offered, insufficient places in areas where large refugee communities live.

- Another challenge is that the Regional Education Offices sometimes delay the recognition of diplomas, which makes it difficult to meet application deadlines. Ukrainians can receive their diplomas at the end of May at the earliest, and recognition takes at least a month. The REO commission meets once a week and has a heavy workload.
- On the part of the Ministry of Education and Science: children are educated in parallel in Bulgarian schools and online, and when they receive their diplomas from Ukraine, they enter university directly, even though they are still enrolled in 10th or 11th grade in Bulgaria.
- The Technical University of Varna has organized several information sessions, in collaboration with Compass Varna. They offer dormitories and scholarships, and run preparatory courses in Bulgarian, but students are not satisfied with the 42 majors offered at the Technical University (Varna) for 2024/2025.
- In the Varna and Burgas regions, many young people want to study maritime subjects, but these are not offered. It is possible to transfer with a grade above 4 and after equivalency exams.
- Proposal: to invite Rositsa Koleva, Director of the Higher Education Directorate, to become a permanent member.

Prof. Siika Chavdarova-Kostova announced an upcoming large round table in November, at which the results of a study on the challenges and conditions for the social inclusion of refugees will be presented. She will send out invitations.