

National Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group – March 31st 2021 - Meeting Minutes

<b>Date:</b>	<b>March 31st 2021</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	WEBEX	
<b>Participants:</b>	Rena Arsenou, Christina Christidou and Iro Ntrouva (IOM); Lambrini Stamati (IOM SMS, National Coordinator (NFE & Community Engagement)); Natalia Xouria (IOM HELIOS); Stella Saratsi (CRWI Diotima); Ioanna Konstantinou (GCR Thessaloniki Office); Maria Zygouri (Hellenic Red Cross); Annita Chatzimichailidi (Caritas Hellas Athens); Pisti Xanthakou (MFC Athens - Hellenic Red Cross); Elias Stathopoulos and Tamer Abou El Alla (UNHCR Lesvos, CwC); Athina Vrakatseli (Migrant Integration Center, City of Athens); Nizar Amri (CwC Specialist DRC); Konstantinos Vlastarakis (ACCMR Digital Platform); Tomara Marina (ACCMR/CNI); Enri Hysenbelli (Greek Forum of Migrants); Natalia Kyrkopoulou (Refugee Trauma Initiative); Maro Verli (Refugee.Info program); Styliani Papasarafianou (Communications Officer, INTERSOS Hellas); Ioanna Terzi (IFRC); Pilar Bravo (IFRC CTP Delegate); Vangelis Tsilis (UNHCR, Public Health Associate); Julie Papanikolaou and Basta Daphne (METAdrasi); Maria Karpodini (ASB); Valeria Verzeletti (Safe Place Greece)	
<b>Chairs:</b>	Alexandra Zavvos (Solidarity Now); Valia Gkeka (UNHCR)	
<b>Agenda</b>	<p><u>Agenda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Previous Meeting Minutes</li> <li>• Covid- 19 related Updates</li> <li>• Update on Vaccination Process (Health Working Group)</li> <li>• Asylum Update: Suspension of interviews and renewal of asylum seekers cards (tbc)</li> <li>• Partner Updates</li> <li>• AoB</li> </ul>	
<b>Talking points</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Action Points</b>
<b>Review of last meeting Minutes</b>	Last meeting minutes were reviewed and approved without any significant edits or concerns.	Minutes approved
<b>Covid- 19 related Updates/ Covid Vaccinations 2021</b>	<p>The Public Health Associate of UNHCR joined the meeting to present updates regarding Covid-19, including the vaccinations for Persons of Concern (PoC).</p> <p>As of 28 March, 1,463 <b>asylum-seekers/refugees have reportedly tested positive to COVID-19</b> in Greece: 650 in the mainland and 813 on the islands. Of those in the mainland, 508 were in IOM mainland sites/hotels, 8 persons were intercepted irregular arrivals by land, 13 in the RIC of Evros, 4 detained at Police Stations, 1 at a</p>	Please share Covid-19/vaccination concerns for the health-

	<p>shelter for unaccompanied children and 116 in UNHCR ESTIA apartments. Of those in the islands, 508 were in Lesvos, 106 in Chios, 172 in Samos, 2 in Kos, 11 in Leros, 13 in Rhodes and 1 in Kalymnos. In the meantime, some of the COVID-19 positive cases have recovered.</p> <p>During the current period, the following <b>groups are eligible for vaccination</b>: (1) Front line workers in the healthcare system; (2) People belonging to the age groups 60-64 and 70+; as of 2 April, people belonging the age group 65-69 will also be eligible; (3) People with high risk medical conditions such as transplantation, renal failure, cancer under treatment (undergoing cancer treatment since 1/1/2019) or hematological cancer (people diagnosed with hematological cancer since 1/1/2016), severe chronic respiratory diseases, serious heart or liver conditions, immunosuppression (autoinflammatory / autoimmune diseases or other diseases under immunosuppressive or immunomodulatory therapy), other diseases (such as down syndrome or after special application of the competent doctor).</p> <p>A <b>Technical Committee</b> with the participation of the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MMA), IOM, UNHCR and specialised NGOs has been formed to support the national vaccination campaign. As a first step, the Committee has documented the main relevant challenges in relation to the refugee population, especially for asylum seekers without AMKA. The Committee will also discuss about info sharing with asylum seekers and refugees in relation to COVID19 and the vaccination in its next meeting.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Minister of Migration and Asylum, has announced that <b>asylum seekers in Sites will be vaccinated by EODY teams</b>. Organizations continue to advocate for inclusion of staff of NGOs in Sites in the vaccination campaign. On the other hand, PoCs residing in the <b>urban setting</b> will have to register for vaccination, <b>similarly to the rest of the population</b>; no special circular explaining the procedure will be issued, contrary to what had been announced at an earlier stage.</p> <p>Currently we are in the <b>third wave of the pandemic</b> and it's a critical period as the number of new cases and numbers of hospitalised patients in need of intensive care have peaked. Moreover, it is expected that <b>measures restricting movement</b> (including operation of retail shops) will become more lenient in the next few weeks and schools are also expected to start reopening gradually. Moreover, measures foreseeing the provision of COVID19 self-tests is also underway.</p> <p>Maro Verli from Refugee.Info noted that in many of the queries and individual communications they receive, POCs express concerns about the safety of the vaccines used and <b>worries about possible side effects</b>.</p>	<p>working group or EODY focal point with the CwC coordinators</p> <p>Feedback from actors who have helped PoC enrol in the vaccination platform: both qualitative and quantitative information welcome.</p>
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<p><b>CwC Partners Updates</b></p>	<p><b>UPDATES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated <b>messaging on the COVID 19</b> is available on Refugee info website <a href="#">here</a>; information about COVID19 and particularly <b>updates about COVID19 vaccination</b> is available on UNHCR Help website <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>• Maria Karpodini from ASB informed the group that in <b>Diavata site</b>, they updated the <b>WhatsApp</b> numbers in the <b>Site’s relevant group</b> (90% of the numbers); messages become also available as voice messages, which is very useful as approximately 1/4 of the population cannot read or write. This CwC mechanism has very important, especially since due to COVID19 cases in the Site it has been very challenging to approach physically and talk to POCs.</li> <li>• Athina Koutsochera from UNHCR shared with the WG participants updates in relation to the Asylum Service. The <b>Asylum Service issued an announcement</b> on 28.03.2021 (and later an updated announcement on 05.04.2021) <b>concerning the operation of the Regional Asylum Services</b>. More specifically until 11 April (a) all Regional Asylum Offices (RAO) and Autonomous Asylum Units (AAU) will serve the public only on the basis of a scheduled appointment; (b) remote interviews of Lesvos RAO will be conducted as planned; (c) the use of mask is mandatory at all AS premises; (d) RAO and AAU located in the “very high risk” areas pursuant to the 03.04.2021 JMD (GG B’ 1308/03.04.2021) will be exceptionally receiving urgent registrations (predominantly for health reasons and for family reunification purposes) and appeals' submissions (no interviews will be conducted in such RAO/AAU).</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regarding the <b>rescheduling of interviews postponed</b>, there is no harmonized practice applied throughout RAOs. RAO Attica reschedules all interviews either by making a phone call to the applicant or by sending an e-mail informing the applicant for the need of the rescheduling. The rescheduled interviews are planned between June 2021 and the beginning of 2022. The same practice also applies in RAO Alimos; applicants who reside in camps, are informed accordingly and receive electronically a new appointment while the self-accommodated population can also ask the rescheduling by themselves electronically through the relevant platform (application for the acceleration of the interview). To be noted that no interruption acts have been issued during this period according to information received by UNHCR.</li><li>• Regarding the <b>validity of International Protection Applicant Cards</b> which had been initially extended until 31 March 2021 (by Article 156 para. 3 of Law 4764/2020), they are <b>now extended until 30 June 2021</b> (Law 4790/2021 with publication date 31 March 2020 (GG A' 48/31.03.2021)).</li><li>• Ioanna Konstantinou from GCR Thessaloniki Office noted that there is a <b>great need for translation of the Asylum Service announcements</b>, as currently all these announcements are initially only in Greek (and are translated only in English a few days later). Ioanna suggested and it was agreed by all present that it is important to make a relevant intervention with the Asylum Service; the point will be brought to the Legal Aid WG as well as to the Advocacy WG. UNHCR will share with the proposal with the Legal Aid WG and Alexandra Zavvos (Solidarity Now) will follow up with the Advocacy WG.</li><li>• Moreover, she added that there was an <b>AS Announcement on Residence Permits</b> (<a href="https://migration.gov.gr/ananeosi-adeion-diamonis-adet/">https://migration.gov.gr/ananeosi-adeion-diamonis-adet/</a>), stating that international protection beneficiaries whose Residence Permits (ADET) expire by 30 June 2021 may submit applications for renewal until 30 April 2021 (inclusive), sending a message on the following email address <a href="mailto:GAS.residencepermits@migration.gov.gr">GAS.residencepermits@migration.gov.gr</a>. Nizar Amri shared with the Chair and Co-Chair of the WG the translation of the relevant announcement in Arabic, English, French and Persian.</li><li>• In addition, Ioanna announced that the <b>GCR Helpline</b> has started its operation as of 22 March; asylum seekers and refugees can call or text their requests for legal aid and psychosocial support. The Helpline is available in Arabic, Farsi/ Dari, French, Lingala, Kurmanji/ Sorani, Turkish, Armenian, and English and covers both Athina and Thessaloniki regions (different lines). The Facebook/ GCR Helpdesk page will remain operational only for information purposes (posting of information and updates).</li></ul>	
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<p><b>Taskforce to address Gaps (vaccination)</b></p>	<p>The taskforce will have its first meeting on 07.04.2021.</p>	<p>Other members interested in joining taskforce please reach out</p>
<p><b>AoB</b></p>		

	To invite a representative from Babel to share updates with the WG in relation to their new services offering psychosocial support for patients with COVID-19 and their families.	
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