

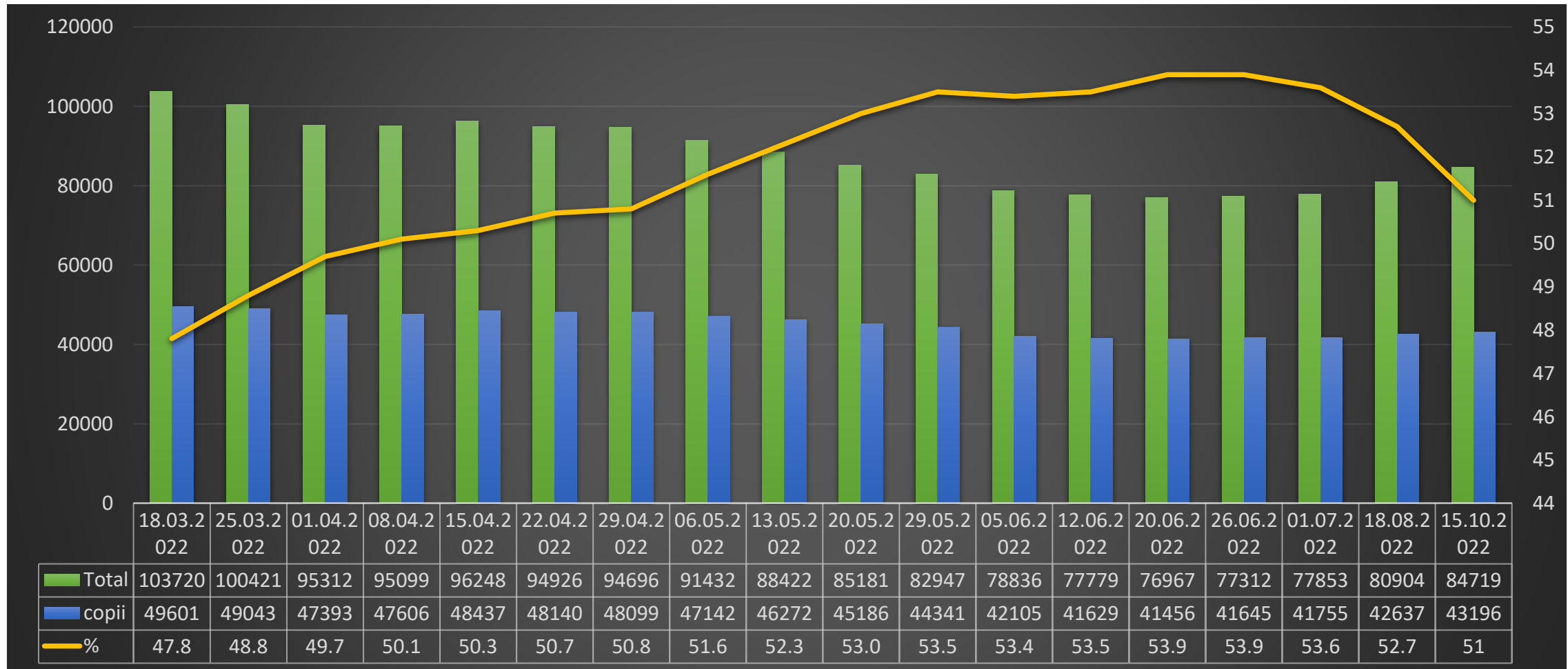
Protection of refugee children from Ukraine in the Republic of Moldova: main highlights on numbers

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Citizens who entered and left the territory of the Republic of Moldova on the MD-UA border segment between **24.02.2022** and **15.10.2022**

- **Ukrainian citizens**
 - Entered RM – 593,251 people
 - Left RM – 475,300 people
 - 303,595 on the MD-RO border segment
 - 175,705 on the MD-UA border segment
 - **remaining on the territory of the Republic of Moldova – 79,196 people**
- **Citizens of other countries**
 - **remaining on the territory of the Republic of Moldova – 5,523 people**
- In total, **there are 84,719 foreign citizens on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, including 43,196 minors** (citizens of Ukraine and citizens of other countries who entered the MD-UA border segment)
- The migration and asylum office took over 10,108 asylum applications. **None of these applications have been processed yet!**

Refugees: total in the territory, including children (March – October 2022)



Unacompanied and separated children

- Assisted by AVE Copiii
 - 801 separated children
 - 98 unaccompanied
 - of them, at least 74 have already left the country, either to UA or to Europe
- The data of the Border Police (24.02.2022 - 15.10.2022)
 - 830 children who entered our country on the UA-RM border segment and who were either unaccompanied or – separated (Attention! This figure does not include children who entered accompanied, but were left unaccompanied or separated on the territory of Moldova)

Main highlights on numbers

- The **number of people remaining** on the territory of the Republic of Moldova is constantly fluctuating, registering a **general decrease by June 20, and a permanent increasing trend after these data.**
- The **% of children in the total population of refugees remaining** on the territory of Moldova **was continuously increasing** from 47.8% on 18.03.2022 to 53.9% on 26.06.2022. Based on cases managed by AVE Copiii this dynamic could indicate the following conclusions:
 - 1) probably, for a while, more and more families with more and more children (their own and/ or those of their relatives etc.) entered our country;
 - 2) probably a number of parents/other caregivers brought their children to Moldova, left them here in the care of acquaintances or even alone (in Chisinau, for example, there are teenagers, girls and boys, 16-17 years old, who live alone in rented apartments by parents);
 - 3) there were probably a number of parents who commuted once every two weeks in Ukraine (our data indicates cases of adults who went every two weeks after shopping in Odessa).
- After the Jun 26, the **% of children in the refugee population who lives in Moldova it is decreasing**, on September 10 indicating already 51.52% and in October 15 – 50,98%. Considering the challenges related to access to the education system, possibly more children return to Ukraine or go further to Europe for better access to education...

Where are the over 40,000 children?

- The **rapid assessment** carried out in **August – September** by AVE Copiii in **24 districts of the country, Balti municipality and in Gagauzia** indicated a number of **3216 children aged 0-17**, including
 - 855 of school age, of which
 - 478 learn online
 - 326 – with physical presence at school
 - and 51 are not in school (the reasons are still being evaluated)
- there is a **lack of a system for registering all refugees from Ukraine throughout the country**, and this creates **confusion in terms of needs**
- there are districts where at least the authorities in the field of social assistance, through the community social workers, monitor all families and all children in a real time (there the data on separated or unaccompanied children, those on schooling, etc. can be checked)
- at the same time, from practice, we know that
 - there are families who don't even want to access the assistance if they have to leave their personal data
 - in large localities (district centers, municipalities) even the people in need are not registered - in these localities the visibility of community social workers is much lower as well as those who support refugees (however bizarre this may sound)

Other highlights

- Both community social workers and other exponents of local public authorities (mayors, secretaries of local councils), as well as specialists at district level, do not know and cannot differentiate unaccompanied and separated children (in the context of migration)
- There are cases of separated children in which the carer does not want to declare the situation because is afraid of being separated from the child (usually there are cases when the carer is an old grandparent)
- Although a protection solution was suggested for separated children - custody, however, the institution of custody is impossible if the custodian should be a foreign citizen
- Roma children face discrimination: for example, in RACs, the majority of parents and children exclude Roma children from activities or withdraw their children from activities if Roma children also come to the activities
- The Roma community is very reluctant to enroll their children in school: some of them, although of school age, were never enrolled in school even when they were at home in Ukraine
- There are parents/caregivers who have started work but are faced with a lack of care facilities for preschoolers

AVE Copiii response



- Collecting and systematizing data on unaccompanied, separated, undocumented, etc. children (Plan International and Eriks Sweden)
- Developing child friendly spaces for refugees and local children's in RAC's and in communities (Eriks Sweden, Pediatres du Monde, World Vision International, International Rescue Committee, Caritas Austria and Nachbar in Not)
- Identifying, assessing, assisting, monitoring cases of unaccompanied, separated, undocumented, etc. children (UNHCR, UNICEF, Eriks Sweden, Plan International, Pediatres du Monde, etc.)
- Providing refugees school children with support in accessing Moldovan education system and/ or online Ukrainian education system (Pediatres du Monde, World Vision International, International Rescue Committee)
- Providing training and professional supervision to social workers and child protection specialists on the case management of refugee children (UNICEF, UNHCR, Plan International)
- Working on tools to facilitate work in the field of refugee child protection (UNICEF)

We are encouraging all our partners

- To refer all cases to the local and/ or territorial guardianship authorities
 - To ask consultancy and support in addressing refugees children

We listen, we discuss, we consult other colleagues, and we discuss and offer solutions or... at least we answer the phone (admittedly sometimes late) to listen to you!

We recommend

- to the governments of Moldova and other countries hosting refugees from Ukraine
 - To implement a mandatory registration process of all Ukrainian children at national level. In these regard, to develop and implement a regional database through which children can be tracked (especially unaccompanied, separated and those without identity documents) when fleeing from war across borders;
 - To make sure that all refugee children, especially those who have never been documented, acquire an identity with the assistance of the Ukrainian authorities. Don't wait for the war to end for this. We must not be complicit in such a violation of children's rights – right to identity;
 - To revise the crossing border rules to ensure that no child between 16 years old and under 18, having a biometric passport, cannot cross the borders without an adult (not related to the principle of access to the territory) and/ or remain in a country without a guardian and a legal representative;
 - To develop procedures/rules for the assisted return of unaccompanied, separated children, without identity documents, with damaged identity documents, etc.
 - To ensure that every child can access the education system, including the Ukrainian online options
- to international bodies and agencies
 - To increase the interagency coordination and the coordination with governments and to offer them a sense of ownership on the processes;
 - To invest in better communication and capacity of governments they are working with, especially in creating contingency plans to ensure organized and well-structured responses in times of crisis
- to national and international CSO
 - leave the competition behind! We work for the same people, for the same children. At the end, the most important thing is not who helped but how many refugee children are protected.