



Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting
Meeting Minutes – 7 June 2023

Meeting subject:	Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting
Time & location:	9 am – UNHCR Krakow Sub-Office
Chaired by:	UNHCR; Open Krakow Coalition
Minutes prepared by:	UNHCR
Participants:	Małopolski Urząd Wojewódzki; Grodzki Urząd Pracy Krakow; Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy w Krakowie; Americares; Centrum Pomocy Prawnej im. Haliny Niec; Fundacja Kalina Krakow (Zupa dla Ukrainy); Fundacja Widowisk Masowych; IB Poland/Multicultural Center IOM; OWiM; Patchwork; Polish Red Cross Małopolska; Project Hope; Salam Lab; Slavic Mission in Europe; UNHCR; UNICEF; Voice Amplified; ZHP; Żydowskie Stowarzyszenie Czulent;
Agenda:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction and updates from the co-chairs• Updates from refugee and Ukrainian-led organizations• Updates from the Voivodship Office• Presentation by the Grodzki Labor Office• Presentation by the Voivodship Labor Office• Presentation on comparative analysis of selected occupations in Poland and Ukraine (IOM)• AOB
Introduction and update on points from last meeting	Participants were welcomed to the 20th MCG meeting.

UNHCR introduced the topic as access to employment. UNHCR highlighted that this is a topic important to the refugee response given the fact that The European Union has invoked the Temporary Protection Directive. Apart from voting rights, the Directive gives refugees access to the same rights and privileges as EU citizens. This is exceptional because in other contexts refugees must often go through the refugee determination status process before they can work. UNHCR further noted that what is also an exception in Poland is the involvement of the private sector. During the first phase of the refugee response, this took the form of in-kind donations, support, providing items, and hosting refugees. Now it takes the form of access to employment and complementary services, such as provision of coaching for job interviews, CV drafting guidance, language courses. The multistakeholder involvement is extraordinary and this is also why the topic of access to employment is on the meeting agenda.

Zustricz introduced the organization to participants and noted that it has been active within the Krakow Ukrainian community for 14 years. Zustricz further provided updates about recent activities. A point was made in regards to the provision of consultations where refugees can learn how and where to access to services, including employment support. This work is done by Zustricz in cooperation with the Multicultural Center. However, employment services provided are broader than providing advice and CV help. The goal should be not to duplicate what exists, but to encourage people to actively search for existing opportunities and use their talents. In this regard, there is also a need for a better system to connect job seekers with employers.

Agenda point 1

The floor was opened for Ukrainian and Refugee-led organizations to provide updates. Zustricz highlighted that it is important that Ukrainian organizations are able to advocate for themselves in their own words.

Patchwork introduced the organization and its activities. Patchwork is an organization supporting refugees, children, and young adults with disabilities. The organization currently has 180 to 190 families under its care in Krakow and Małopolska. Patchwork highlighted that helplessness is a key challenge. Individuals with disabilities often do not have the ability to work; however, at the same time they are also not used to being included. As a result, economic inclusion is key and constitutes one of the main goals of Patchwork for the current year. With the help of UNHCR and other UN agencies a space was created where people can co-work with laptops and where nannies are available to take care of children. Patchwork is also running a second project where mothers can earn money by sewing. However, here there is a second problem regarding the legal restrictions on parents of children with severe disabilities. These parents receive social benefits of 2500 PLN a month. Those who obtain this support cannot officially work, and at the same time 2500 PLN is not a large sum of money. This is one of the reasons these families experience hopelessness. Women can be only mothers and cannot work. Patchwork is trying to find a solution – for example coupons that women could receive in exchange for doing tasks.

	<p>A participant noted that many refugees who come for assistance are eager to work and that many work illegally as the amounts that can be made from non-skilled legal work are sometimes not sufficient.</p> <p>The Foundation of Mass Performance noted that the attack which took place the previous day on the Nova Kakhovka Dam could mean many people may try to leave affected areas. Furthermore, many may come to Krakow as they have families and friends in the city. These people will need help and even possibly a place to sleep. It is difficult to predict if many people will come, as other Oblasts in Ukraine have prepared well to take IDPs. The Foundation further noted a need for funding to continue running their center on Garbarska street.</p> <p>Slavic Mission provided an update about recent activities. The organization continues to run a collective shelter, and more than 3500 people have passed through so far. In addition the organization is still distributing food and hygiene packets.</p>
<p>Agenda point 2</p>	<p>The Plenipotentiary of the Voivode of Małopolska provided updates about the current situation in the Voivodeship and at the Polish-Ukrainian border.</p> <p>Cross-border movements have increased slightly since the last time figures were shared, but daily exits and entrances remain even. On 29 and 31 May, as well as 1 June, there were about 25,000 entrances to Poland per day, and about an equal amount of exits to Ukraine. These figures have remained stable for a relatively long period. However, it remains to be seen what will happen in the coming weeks given recent developments in Ukraine.</p> <p>Currently there are about 23,000 places in the housing database maintained by the Voivodeship, of which about 11,000 are taken and about 11,000 are available. However, most of these places are outside of Krakow city, and the housing situation in Krakow remains difficult. Those organizations working directly with refugees should encourage them to consider moving to locations where there is more available housing. Furthermore, more than 900 million PLN has been given from the national budget for the refugee response, and in 2023 alone more than 221 million PLN.</p> <p>The Plenipotentiary also noted that in past meetings there has been a lot of interest in the regulations under which refugees must participate in the cost of their accommodation. There is not yet available exact data to share; however, many people have been taking advantage of the 6th criteria for exclusion from payment, which states persons who are in a difficult situation can be considered for exemption from participation in the costs of accommodation.</p> <p>Participants were encouraged to share the information that the Foreigners Office continues to host “Open Saturdays” during which foreigners can visit the Office and take care of matters also on Saturdays. In May over 400 people took advantage of this extra</p>

	<p>availability, in April over 300, and in March over 900. In total, over 20,000 people have met with government workers in Krakow. A new information point will also open shortly and more information will be available at the next Coordination Meeting.</p> <p>On the previously mentioned theme of helplessness, the Plenipotentiary noted that she has met with refugees who have come to the Voivodeship Office and refuse to consider moving out of Krakow or who do not want to take up work. There are also problems with integration. What can be said is that community centers like the Open Place opened by UNHCR will be helpful in taking down perceived barriers of willingness and integration. Hopefully the desire to take up work will also increase.</p> <p>The Plenipotentiary also asked participants if any were planning or had more information on overnight camps (kolonie) or day camps (połkolonie). There have been many questions about camps where Polish and Ukrainian children can integrate. Participants with more information were invited to get in contact.</p> <p>Following the question from the Plenipotentiary regarding summer camps, a discussion took place between participants on this topic. Among others, participants raised concerns regarding funding, child care, and the registration criteria for running such camps. It was noted by UNHCR that the topic of the subsequent meeting on 22 June would be education. The topic of summer camps was added to the agenda for this meeting and in the interest of time the discussion was closed and moved to the subsequent week.</p>
<p>Agenda point 3</p>	<p>The Grodzki Labor Office (GUP) shared information about available programs and services.</p> <p>GUP serves Krakow Municipality. Available job offers are mainly in Krakow, with some also in the surrounding area. The largest tool at the disposal of job seekers are job boards and work offers. Most offers are “open offers” where anyone can apply. These offers are available on the GUP website with the contact directly to the employer. Job seekers do not need to be registered with GUP to view or apply to these offers. Furthermore, GUP has just launched a new tool, which consists of a map of job offers in Krakow, in line with the principle of a “15 minute city.” For example, using this map, a mother with small children can look for job offers close to her home.</p> <p>GUP also has activities or initiatives for both Polish and Ukrainian citizens aimed at promoting or facilitating engagement in the workforce or enhancing professional skills and opportunities. These include career advising sessions. Advisors help from the beginning steps of the job search. These advising services are available only to individuals registered with GUP. From year to year there are also additional activities, such as financing for positions or internships. Some Ukrainians have already interned with GUP.</p> <p>One year ago, GUP faced different problems, for example, a lack of Ukrainian speaking staff able to communicate with refugees who did not speak Polish. Since this time, GUP has hired translators. More refugees are now also able to communicate in Polish. Since the</p>

beginning of the influx, GUP has also been asking employers if they have offers for individuals who do not speak fluent Polish and if they would be willing to hire refugees. If employers agree, their offers are also presented on the GUP website in Ukrainian.

Following the presentation from GUP, participants discussed the difficulties in access to employment refugees had raised with them.

Patchwork noted that many refugees with whom they work have very high qualifications but cannot find jobs that suit their profiles because of language barriers, the length of the nostrification process, and associated issues. For example Patchwork works with a mother who has a PhD in math and works in Poland as a cleaner. This can cause not only financial difficulties, but also affect an individual's psychological state.

IOM likewise noted that many refugees with high qualifications come for assistance. The biggest barrier remains the lack of Polish language skills. However, there is also a reluctance from Polish employers to hire Ukrainians. IOM further noted that there has been information that in July funds will be available for programs related to entry into the job market and asked GUP if this information was current.

GUP acknowledged that nostrification remains a large problem. In addition, some refugees do not have all of their documents with them, which further complicates the situation. Furthermore, GUP is still waiting for information about EU funds. Each month there has been information that these funds are imminent, and they do not come. Current information is always available on the GUP website in advance.

A discussion took place on children under the age of 18. It was noted by several participants that in some cases these children would like to work. It was further noted by others that education in Poland remains compulsory until age 18. Participants wondered what guidance they could provide in these cases.

A subsequent discussion took place on language classes. The Red Cross noted that the organization provides language classes. However, an ongoing problem is that refugees approach the Red Cross and express interest and enroll in classes, but often stop attending. Salam Lab further noted that there are needs for various levels of classes at different times. For example, if someone works they cannot attend classes during the day.

Agenda point 4

The Voivodship Labor Office (WUP) shared a presentation on available programs and services. The presentation will be shared with participants following the meeting. Main points included:

	<p>In comparison with GUP, WUP does not have any job offers and does not provide job placement or intermediary services. WUP works with the Marshall's Office of the Voivodship. In Małopolska Voivodship there are currently four information points for job seekers – Krakow (Plac Na Stawach), Tarnow, Oswiecim, and Now Sacz. While there are Ukrainian speaking advisors, translators are available for services.</p> <p>WUP has carried out a survey to better understand the job seeking needs of Ukrainian citizens. The survey indicated if those among the surveyed group need help, they are more likely to approach NGOs instead of government offices.</p> <p>Until the end of June applications are open for the Train to a Career program (pociagdokariery.pl) that will run until the end of 2023. Under the program participants can benefit from specialist advising services and vouchers for skills training. Ukrainian citizens are eligible to participate under the same rules as Polish citizens. About 85 Ukrainian citizens are currently enrolled.</p> <p>WUP also responded to point made by partners earlier in the meeting. While it was mentioned that many people are working illegally, statistics show that there have been an increased number of foreigners employed. While these may not all be Ukrainians or refugees, many likely are, as the Special Act allows refugees from Ukraine to take up work without registering with the Labor Office. In regards to the profile of those taking up work, many are highly educated and in the previous year 43% of employment of foreigners were for unskilled labor. This is in some sense normal, and Polish citizens faced the same situation when first moving abroad to the UK. What is important is to make a system where people can progress into jobs that are in line with their qualifications and that ceilings are not closes to them.</p> <p>Language remains a key barrier, and the nostrification process is also difficult. WUP does not deal with nostrification. In regards to language courses, there are also difficulties. Many Ukrainians resign after starting courses and companies are hesitant to submit tenders. As well, while there are many language courses available, information is still received that this is insufficient and does not meet the given needs. More information sharing and coordination is needed</p>
Agenda point 5	<p>IOM shared a presentation on an ongoing comparative analysis of select professions in Poland and in Ukraine. The presentation will be shared with participants following the meeting. The comparative analysis and related mapping were conducted due to the fact that professions in Poland and in Ukraine that share the same name are often in practice very different.</p>
AOB	<p>Salam Lab shared that the organization continues to work with recent arrivals and that the housing situation in Krakow city remains difficult. Most flats available through Salam Lab's placement program are outside of Krakow.</p>

Czulent shared that a project on an inclusion policy was being started within the confines of the city budget. Partners interested in organizing such a policy with the city were invited to get in contact. There are planned open consultative meetings and also smaller meetings for a group of experts. Information will be posted on the Krakow city website.

The Krakow Train Station Blue Dot asked participants to get in contact if they continued to have accommodation where refugees can stay for several days after arrival. New arrivals continue to come and it is more difficult to find places.

Americares asked about anti-trafficking measures. As was mentioned previously, illegal work has been happening and it is important to keep people safe.

IOM noted that while the work that NGOs have been doing has been really important, it is also time for some activities to be taken over by public institutions. For example, language classes can be connected with internship programs.

UNHCR reminded partners that the targeted cash assistance program remains ongoing and that partners can continue to make referrals. While cash assistance for 3 months will not change someone's life, it could provide the push until someone is able to get back on their feet.

UNHCR closed the meeting and thanked both GUP and WUP for their attendance of insightful presentations. UNHCR further summarized the main points and challenges raised. These include: the need for childcare over the summer months; the attitude of some refugees which may be demanding; the difficulty of matching highly qualified candidates to work, especially given difficulties with language barriers and notification; the language barrier and difficulty of coordination courses, hours, and levels; the challenge of illegal work and anti-trafficking and the related challenge of adolescents coming from Ukraine who would like to work but are too young to do so. Also mentioned was the need to coordinate between various stakeholders and initiatives. In this regard, partners can take advantage of the Coordination Meeting cycle to continue to strengthen cooperation.

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY				
No.	Action	Responsible	Deadline	Status (as of)
1.				
2				