MEETING MINUTES

ECONOMIC INCLUSION WORKING GROUP MEETING

DATE	29.02.2024	TIME	15.00-17.00	PLACE	Online meeting

CHAIRS	
1.	UNHCR (Diogo Salema Da Costa Cabral Senior Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer cabrald@unhcr.org)
2.	CARITAS POLSKA (Paulina Babis, Project Coordinator Migrant and Refugee pbabis@caritas.org.pl)
PRESENTERS	
1.	Hanna Reczulska NAWA presents the European Qualification Passport for Refugees.
2.	Natalia Czujko NAWA presents the European Qualification Passport for Refugees.
3.	Dr Hab. Prof. Wojciech The University of Szczecin presents the results on the economic integration of Ukraine into Poland.
4.	Veronica Babych presents the activities of the Red Cross in Poland.

PARTICIPANTS	
1.	Mercy Corps
2.	UNHCR
3.	Caritas
4.	Tent Partnership for Refugees
5.	NAWA
6.	Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
7.	Upwardly Global

8.	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
10.	Red Cross
11.	Fundacja Ukraina
12.	University of Warsaw (UW)
13.	University of Szczecin (USZ)
14.	Force.UA

AGENDA
15:00 – 15:05. Introductions by UNHCR and Caritas Poland. 15:05 – 15:25. PART 1: Hanna Reczulska on behalf of NAWA presenting the European Qualification Passport for Refugees. 15:25 – 15:55. PART 2: University of Szczecin Dr hab. prof. Wojciech Jarecki will present the results of his research on the economic integration of Ukraine into Poland. 15:55 – 16:15. Red Cross presenting their work in Poland. 16:15 – 16:30. Questions & Answers.

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

1. **Presentation by Hanna Reczulska and Natalia Czujko from NAWA about the EQPR passport.**

I. <u>What is the EQPR passport and what functions does it fulfill.</u>

- **<u>Definition</u>**: It is a tool that helps to assess the qualifications of refugees forced to leave the country and who cannot provide complete educational documentation.
- ➢ It does not replace national procedures for the recognition of qualifications, it serves as an additional measure particularly beneficial in challenging circumstances.
- ➢ The document assists refugees in securing employment and gaining admission to educational programs in the countries where they reside. This is crucial as it has multiple effects across various aspects of their lives. Without recognized qualifications, refugees are unable to utilize their skills, sustain themselves, or support their families. Moreover, it facilitates their swift integration into society and boosts their self-esteem.
- **<u>History</u>**: the idea that a tool for qualification recognition was needed was born in 2016 after the War in Syria started, and many Syrians came to Europe, addressing shortages in professions such as medicine and teaching. Initiated by Greece, Norway, the UK, and the Netherlands, the initiative has expanded to include 22 countries, focusing on capacity building and increasing awareness.
- **<u>Objective</u>**: to have a methodology to allows the recognition of assessment of qualifications of refugees who cannot present all the documentation confirming their educational background. This is based on the documentation that can provide and based on the knowledge of the evaluators that participate in the interviews.
- It is key to describe the assessment in a format, which provides clear and accurate information about the qualifications and is accepted as a valid documentary supplement by the end-users.
- The document complies with the Lisbon Recognition Convention Article VII. It obliges the countries to make possible recognition of qualification of refugees who cannot provide full documentation. It entered into force in 2004 in Poland.
- The document is in electronic form.

II. <u>What is the EQPR procedure like:</u>

- The process was created by international experts dealing with the recognition of foreigners.
- It is very flexible, but it is based on a unified procedure based on the principles it has established.

III. <u>Procedure for obtaining a passport</u>:

There are three stages:

1. **Application**

- Register in the platform on the website of Council of Europe.
- Fill the questionnaire on personal and contact details and information on education, work experience, and language proficiency.
- Send an ID card or any document confirming refugee status.

2. **Assessment**

- It's carried out by a team of two qualification assessors from different countries. They map, summarize and present credible information about the refugee's educational level.
- Analysis of the available documentation and information
- Desk research
- Structured interview with the qualified credential evaluators.

3. **Interview.**

- Objective → summarize credible information about the refugee's educational level and understand why he or she needs EQPR.
- It is conducted with two evaluators from different countries.
- The conversation is conducted in a language where the refugee is proficient enough to describe his work experience.
- The duration is approximately 40 minutes.
- The results of the interview are usually provided to refugees within two to three weeks.
- If the assessment and the interview were successful, the refugee receives the EQPR.

➢ The document is issued in electronic form in cases where an institution or employer wants to verify the validity. EQUR is issued for a period of five years and is valid in all countries participating in the project. This is important as refugee might not stay in the same country where he or she is applying for EQPR.

➢ Poland adopted EQPR on 9th May 2022.

IV. Challenges for NAWA:

❖ **Promotion of the EQPR and build trust among stakeholders** → This documentation is crucial, especially in countries like Italy, where it's required for highly skilled professions such as doctors. Without it, skilled refugees might end up working below their qualifications, preventing the country from fully benefiting from their expertise in their respective fields.

- **Incorporation of EQPR into national legislation** →It helps the economy of the receiving country, as it could benefit Poland.

2.Presentation by Dr hab. prof. Wojciech Jarecki from the University of Szczecin on the economic integration of Ukraine into Poland.

I. Research on refugees from Ukraine.

Results on the study group – 350 refugees in 5 cities across Poland.

- 70% of respondents are of productive age.
- 87% are women.
- 29% of respondents have higher education.
- 70% perform work in accordance with their competences.
- 50% of beneficiaries obtained employment thanks to friends.
- The main concern of respondents in the context of finding employment is insufficient knowledge of Polish or another foreign language such as English or German.
- The Languages spoken by refugees: Ukrainian (98,4%), Russian (81,2%), Polish (43,2%), English (18,3%).
- 27,7 % of refugees want to come back to Ukraine after the war ends.
- The majority wants to stay in Poland until the situation normalizes and almost 30% would like to stay in Poland permanently.
- The studies shows that the refugees are in majority qualified and wants to work: the 36,6% is unemployed but wants to work.
- Almost 70% of refugees in the study earns 20 PLN net every working hour.

➢ The support that beneficiaries expect most is:

1. healthcare
2. ensuring Polish language learning
3. formalization of stay
4. educational services for children

II. Recommendations:

- Developing flexible time and work organization systems, especially part-time and part-time work.
- Taking into account the family situation of employees (single mothers or with elderly people).
- Polish language – learning a specialized language.
- Taking into account and using the high competences of people from Ukraine.
- Taking into account the distance: place of residence-place of work.

3.The Red Cross presenting its work in Poland

I. Mission.

- The Red Cross is focusing on promoting socio-economic integration of Ukrainian displaced persons in neighboring countries by increasing employment opportunities.
- Red Cross has experience supporting employment programs in Europe (ESIRAS) and in other regions including Asia, the Middle East, and South and Central America.
- **Employment program** → It's a two-year project that aims to enhance employability and local labor market access for persons who have fled the Ukrainian conflict and have settled temporarily in Poland. Its objective is to bridge the gap in the labor market for vulnerable people, enhancing their employability through professional skills reinforcement and facilitating a conductive environment.

II. Employment plan for refugees in Poland:

- ✓ Seeking and understanding refugees' motivations to assist them in finding suitable employment.
- ✓ Recognizing that many Ukrainian refugees possess professional backgrounds and require certification to work in Poland.
- ✓ Providing courses for refugees, followed by recruitment interviews upon completion.
- ✓ Offering support throughout the course and recruitment process.
- ✓ Enhancing the employability and self-employment opportunities of displaced communities.
- ✓ Promoting socio-economic integration of displaced persons residing in neighboring countries.

Refugee assistance process:

- Initial research of professional background for each refugee seeking help.
- Invitation to informative sessions to learn about project conditions and available courses.
- Development of individualized development plans based on needs.
- Engagement in professional training/courses or other support ideas to facilitate self-sustainability.
- Issuance of certificates upon completion.

➢ The program primarily focuses on refugees in Gdansk, Krakow, and Lodz, but also extends its support to refugees in Ostrowiec, Rzeszow, and Warsaw.

Professional Activation Centers → The project provides employment assistance in Professional Activation Centers through group information sessions, customized career counselling, reskillin and upskilling programs, digital skills training, language training, legal advice, psychosocial support, CV writing and document translation.

Vocational trainings organized by the Polish Red Cross are promoted, according to the needs of the labour market.

Outsourced services that are provided for refugees: this is very important as many refugees do not know about their rights and duties, and have questions or issues that need to be addressed.

1. **Legal Counsel**: Crucial to prevent companies from taking advantage of misinformed refugees, such as exploiting them for unpaid work or other unfair practices.
2. **Psychosocial support**: Vital due to the high rate of depression among refugees and essential for their ability to continue seeking employment
3. **Translation**: It is crucial to have refugees' documents translated officially for employment in Poland, ensuring they meet the necessary requirements for work.
4. **Volunteers**: They play a crucial role in providing additional assistance.

III. Key activities to strengthen Polish Red Cross capacities

- Orientation sessions→ cover various topics such as types of employment contracts, occupational health and safety courses, etc.
- Training on job orientation and design of personalized itineraries -→ covering tasks such as CV checking and interview preparation.
- Training and support for the design, implementation and monitoring→ including follow-ups with refugees two to three months after completing their courses. This check ensures whether they have secured a job, are in the process of doing so, or require any further assistance.
- Compiling, translating and testing the tools.
- Development of a procedure for the implementation of CVA.
- Training for staff involved in planning, proposal development and monitoring (HQ level).

IV. Professional Activation Centers | Services

- Increasing employment opportunities →According to the participant's preferences and professional profile (personalized travel plan)
- Work training → Depending on gaps in the labor market and the availability of training offers at the local level.

• Monetary support →Childcare, Transport, Specific training.
• Other services →Language classes, psychological support, translation ,legal advice, and documentation support.

V. Key achievements

- 77% of persons reached participated in group information sessions.
- 60% received individual labor counselling.
- 21% completed language courses, although the percentage is bigger for those who are enrolled.
- 31% trained in professional skills.
- 20% found a job (labor insertions) – this they know because following up with the participants of the program. After 2 months of completing the courses approximately.

❖ **Conclusion**: The success of the intervention pivots on personalized follow-up for participants and providing close support to the teams. Ensuring individuals have a plan and feel supported, particularly at the beginning, fosters a positive relationship with the organization. Currently, there is a heightened focus on vulnerable cases, including single mothers and people with disabilities.

NEXT MEETING

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY

No.	Action	Responsible
1.		