



Protection Working Group

Meeting Details	
Date	29 May 2024
Time	10.00 am – 12.00 pm (hybrid)
Chair	<i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR, Sector Coordinator</i> <i>Carolina Cazaciuc, Coordinator on Refugee Rights, Ombudsperson Office, Co-Chair</i>
Reporting	<i>Sara Sivkova, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR</i>
Email	painter@unhcr.org , carolina.cazaciuc@ombudsman.md , sager@unhcr.org , sivkovas@unhcr.org
Agenda	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Situational Update (CDA) (10:00-10:15)• GBV Safety Audit presentation (GBV SWG) (10:15-10:35)• Presentation by NGO Female Support Force (10:35-11:00)• Changes to Ukrainian conscription laws (OHCHR) (11:00-11:15)• Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ UNHCR cash programme (UNHCR) (11:15-11:35)○ Referral pathways (IOM/UNHCR) (11:35-11:50)• AOB	
Participants	



<i>Andrew Painter, UNHCR</i>	<i>Carolina Cazaciuc,</i>	<i>Elena Cernicova, NCUM</i>	<i>Virgiliu Hangan, P4EC</i>
<i>Sean Sager, UNHCR</i>	<i>Ombudsperson Office</i>	<i>Roman Russu, NCUM</i>	<i>Mircea Bastiuc, Societatea</i>
<i>Sorina Pinzaru, UNHCR</i>	<i>Svetlana Jioara, CDA</i>	<i>Eugeniu Martin, ICRC</i>	<i>invalizilor din RM</i>
<i>Sara Sivkova, UNHCR</i>	<i>Cristian Slonodeaniuc, WFP</i>	<i>Victora Rotaras, APSCF</i>	<i>Igor Cibotari, MEC</i>
<i>Katherine Lampe, UNHCR</i>	<i>Danielle Pedretti, HelpAge</i>	<i>Virgiliu Hangan, P4EC</i>	<i>Valentina Ungureanu, Commission</i>
<i>Andrea Cuisani, UNHCR</i>	<i>Oleksii Bodnia, OHCHR</i>	<i>Martin Kunze, Youth</i>	<i>for Coordination of Migration</i>
<i>Natalia Stelea, UNHCR</i>	<i>Dumitru Burdeinii, IFRC</i>	<i>One World</i>	<i>Policies (MAI)</i>
<i>Diego Nardi, UNHCR</i>	<i>Alina Babacaev, INTERSOS</i>	<i>James Osborne,</i>	<i>Natalia Sorbala, Dorcas Moldova</i>
<i>Vanessa Bordin, UNHCR</i>	<i>Aprada Ersilia, IOM</i>	<i>IMPACT</i>	<i>Natalia Morosanu, Caritas</i>
<i>Mary Ombaka, UNHCR</i>	<i>Natalia Moisevice, IOM</i>	<i>Alexander</i>	<i>Moldova</i>
<i>Lilian Staci, UNHCR</i>	<i>Zoa Kostitsi-Papastathopoulou,</i>	<i>Solomonenco, PIN</i>	<i>Yuliia Zenchenko, FSF</i>
<i>Sabina Sandu, UNHCR</i>	<i>DRC</i>	<i>Catarev Cristina, IGM</i>	<i>Olha Stus, FSF</i>
		<i>Serghei Muntean, ACTED</i>	<i>Irene Aletra</i>



Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
<p>Welcome & Review of Agenda</p> <p><i>Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR</i></p> <p>painter@unhcr.org</p>	<p>The PWG co-chair welcomed participants, thanked them for their presence, and encouraged them to attend in person for future meetings, in order to have more engaging discussions. He presented the agenda, and no objections were raised.</p> <p>If any modifications are necessary to minutes of the PWG, please contact: sivkovas@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Agenda presented and agreed.</p>



Agenda Point 1

Situational Updates

Sean Sager, Protection Officer,
UNHCR

sager@unhcr.org

Svetlana Jioara, CDA/LCA

svetlana.jioara@cda.md

CDA representative provided updates for January and February from the BCPs:

During the reporting period, at the **Palanca BCP** there were 13 asylum seekers (AS) at the BCP and 80 AS on the green border (all UA citizens). CDA has noted an increased number of asylum seekers crossing the green border. An intense flow of cars and a medium flow of pedestrians in both directions was noted.

The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU) was observed near the Moldovan territory near the transit road where have been observed stopping cars and checking them rigorously. During this period there were 2 humanitarian buses provided by NGO Gloria, transporting 40 refugees from different regions of Ukraine (Mykolaiv, Kherson, Kharkiv and Odesa). All of them continued to Romanian (Bucharest, Iasi and Constanta).

Third-country nationals (TCNs) were subjected to additional verification and needed to wait for several hours at the BCP. Instances of Ukrainian (UA) citizens being subjected to fines due to exceeding the legal duration of stay 90 days in the Republic of Moldova (RM). Some UA were fined for overdue vignettes.

Arrivals to Moldova mostly came from Odesa, Odesa regions, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Dnipro and Kherson. Several beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (TP) in RM were returning to UA to visit their relatives. Several persons left for EU countries where they benefit from TP.



Some cases of individuals entering RM for the first time who expressed their interest in registering for TP. Those returning to UA were mostly from Odesa, Odesa region and Kyiv and they come from different EU countries or RM. TCNs were checked rigorously before being granted access to Ukraine.

During the reporting period at **Otaci BCP**, there were 17 AS (all UA citizens) crossing the green border. TCNs were subjected to additional verification and needed to wait several hours at the BCP. Those who could not prove the purpose of their stay or had no visa were denied entering RM. In some instances, UA citizens were fined for overstaying the legally permitted duration of stay 90 day in RM. Those coming to Moldova were mostly from Vinnytsia, Vinnytsia region, Zhytomyr and Kyiv, leaving for RM, Romania, Germany or other EU countries. As usual, the pendular movement was observed to Mogilev-Podolsk for grocery shopping.

Since 12 March, CDA resumed monitoring activities at the international airport. CDA monitors flights from Baku, Yerevan, Istanbul and Tbilisi. Most travelers have immediate access to the territory of RM, the exceptions being violations of rules of entry and documents that are not in conformity with the regulations. CDA observed that customs services intensified inspections of passengers on high-risk flights. A few instances of people being returned to their country of departure. No AS nor unaccompanied or separated children were observed during the reporting period.

Discussion:



	<p>UNHCR informed that the rising number of men crossing the border illegally was observed in connection to the change to the Law on conscription in Ukraine. More information about the changes to Ukrainian conscription laws is mentioned in the presentation by OHCHR.</p> <p>IOM asked if there was any increase in the number of TCNs crossing to Moldova on the green border after the end of the state of emergency. CDA informed that according to Moldovan legislation, all TCNs should present a visa when entering RM, the exceptions are certain nationals who are released from such obligation based on bilateral agreements between countries. The visa can be obtained at the consulate after paying a fee. Currently, there is no increase in the number of TCNs crossing the green border.</p> <p>IOM informed about encountering a rumor among refugees that some UA men crossing the green border were being returned to UA involuntarily. UNHCR informed not to come across any similar rumor and that no cases of Ukrainians crossing the green border being returned back to UA were observed.</p>	
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<p>Agenda Point 2</p> <p>GBV Safety Audit <i>GBV SWG co-chair</i></p> <p><i>Vanessa Bordin, GBV officer, UNHCR</i> bordin@unhcr.org</p>	<p>The 2023 Safety Audit was conducted jointly by UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF and IOM, within the framework of the GBV Sub-Working Group (SWG), as part of the Ukraine Refugee Response. The 2023 Safety Audit aimed at identifying GBV risks and their impact on different groups both among refugees and in the host community, with a particular focus on the experiences of women and girls.</p> <p><u>Recommendations for the Protection sector:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue dissemination of information on Temporary Protection• Integrate GBV risk into assessments and monitoring tools• Proactively monitor interactions between the host community and refugees to respond in a tailored and timely manner avoiding tensions related to assistance• Liaise with the GBV Sub-sector to include GBV aspects in capacity strengthening initiatives• Advocate for the meaningful inclusion of vulnerable groups, adolescent girls, the Roma population, people with disabilities and women engaged in the sale and exchange of sex in programmes aiming at achieving durable solutions <p>More information about the risks and impact of GBV on particular groups of refugees and the host community can be found in the presentation by the GBV SWG co-chair on the shared-disk.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the presentation in the inter-agency shared-folder.</p>
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The full strategy document (*The 2024 GBV Safety Audit*) can also be accessed online at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108377>

Discussion:

The UNHCR representative suggested adding more information about access to justice and courts to recommendations for the protection sector. The GBV SWG co-chair explained that in the report these points are included in the part that focuses on access to services. Generally, there was a relatively high understanding among women and girls about accessing justice and courts. The coverage of awareness raising across the country by different partners was perceived as highly successful in this regard.

The representative from the Commission for Migration and Asylum suggested to the GBV SWG to draft a proposal to diminish GBV risks to the authorities perhaps to the MLSP for the upcoming Action Plan for 2025 – 2027 part of the National Action Plan to include the mitigate the risks of GBV.



<p>Agenda Point 3</p> <p>Presentation by NGO Female Support Force (FSF)</p> <p><i>Yulia Zenchenko, co-fonder FSF</i> <i>Stus Olha, co-fonder FSF</i> femaleasupforce@gmail.com</p>	<p>The organization's full name is <i>AO Ukrainian Women Refugee Network Female Support Force</i>. It was officially registered as an NGO on 12 October 2023. The organization was created to respond to different challenges Ukrainian women face in Moldova. Their main activities are monitoring, advocacy, integration and support for female Ukrainian refugees and their families. Among other activities of FSF, there is support for educational projects, government communication projects, integration projects and sports projects. The organization have multiple advocacy projects to improve the daily lives of Ukrainians in Moldova.</p> <p>More information about FSF activities can be found in the presentation by FSF on the shared-disk.</p> <p>The representative of the FSF shared the challenges that the Ukrainians face in Moldova. Currently, one of the most pressing issues for Ukrainians in Moldova is the stay of cars with UA plates on the territory after the end of the state of emergency.</p> <p>After the end of the state of emergency (January 2024) the status of cars with UA plates on the territory of Moldova differs for different status holders in Moldova. For the beneficiaries of TP after the TP extension, they are allowed to keep on using their cars with UA car plates without any limitations until March 2025. Nonetheless, Ukrainians with different legal statuses or no status at all, need to register their cars with customs service by June 2024 as the Custom Code¹ is now re-activated.</p>	<p>UNHCR will share the presentation in the inter-agency shared-folder.</p> <p>UNHCR to coordinate a meeting between the Commission Coordination of Migration Policies and the customs service and relevant stakeholders to</p>
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¹ By the Custom Code of RM (adopted by Decision of Parliament of RM on 24/08/2021, no. CV95/2021), all foreign vehicles used for personal purposes must be registered within 6 months (180 days limit) with the customs service, counted from the day they entered the territory of RM.



	<p>The FSF representative warned that many refugees are alarmed by the approaching time limit (end of June) for registering cars with UA car plates. To prevent panic among the refugee population, FSF suggests taking preventive measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocating for extending the term of stay for cars with UA plates, until the end of the war in Ukraine.• Launch an information campaign to prevent misinformation and ease the anxiety among refugees. <p>The FSF intends to launch a survey to inquire about the car plate issue awareness among the refugees and will announce the findings during the next meeting. FSF is currently consulting with CDA on how to proceed with acquiring temporary car plates for those who may be affected by this issue. In connection with the Ukrainian car plates issue, the FSF is also preparing an official letter for the Ombudsman Office.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>The representative from the Commission for Migration and Asylum informed that those who have problems with their UA car plates can apply with customs service for temporary car plates to be allowed to remain on the territory without fines. She also emphasized that for the car with UA car plates, the beneficiaries should reach out directly to customs service to acquire all the necessary documentation. The FSF representative explained</p>	<p>discuss the UA car plates.</p>
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that obtaining the temporary car plates is not a solution as there is no clear information about the rights of holders of such a plate, i.e. how long can a holder of a temporary car plate stay out of the territory of Moldova; or should this temporary car plate be registered at the consulate. FSF aided three refugees who intended to gain the temporary car plate but each of them obtained different information from the customs service and was not able to gain it. FSF emphasized that even after officially reaching out to customs service, no unanimous explanations were provided. Additionally, the FSF representative stressed that there were some cases where TP card holders were stopped at the BCPs by the customs officers who informed them of the time limit for the presence of cars with UA car plates in Moldova by the end of June. Therefore, the customs officers were not properly briefed about the extensions of the durability of the UA car plates for TP beneficiaries.

The representative from the Commission for Migration and Asylum suggested that FSF sends a list of questions from the refugees about the UA car plates (including the temporary car plates) to discuss their questions and come up with a suitable solution for all.

The Ombudsman Office representative commended the good efforts of the government in incorporating refugees in governmental decisions but stressed that more could be done to harmonize the national framework to encompass all refugees regardless of their legal status not only the TP card holders.



	<p>UNHCR acknowledged the good practice of including the beneficiaries of TP in the Customs Law by allowing them to keep their cars with UA car plates. UNHCR supported the notion from FSF that it would be beneficial for all refugees to harmonize the different laws and procedures including the car plates legislation to apply to all refugees no matter their legal status. UNHCR suggested holding a round table between the IGM, the customs service and the Commission for Migration and Asylum to discuss the entitlements of the TP card holders and refugees with different or no status in Moldova regarding the UA car plates.</p>	
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Agenda Point 4

**Changes to Ukrainian
Conscription Laws, OHCHR**

Oleksii Bodnia, OHCHR
oleksii.bodnia@un.org

OHCHR representative provided an update on the impact of Ukrainian law No. 3633-XI on Strengthening Mobilization (entering into force on 18 May 2024). The change in the law on Mobilization in Ukraine will impact both, the refugees already residing in Moldova and refugees who decide to cross into the territory as a result of the application of this law.

More information can be found in the presentation by OHCHR on the [shared-disk](#).

Discussion:

UNHCR informed that based on partners' border monitoring, there was an increased number of men of conscription age claiming asylum after crossing the green border. CDA affirmed that during the last reporting period, there were some 80 AS on the green border at Palanca BCP and 17 AS on the green border.

The Ombudsman Office representative inquired about the men eligible for conscription asking for asylum when crossing the green border. UNHCR explained that most of those who do not qualify for conscription are travelling to Moldova through BCPs however, men of conscription age are often observed crossing the green border, subsequently, when intercepted they claim asylum to be allowed to enter the country. To UNHCR's knowledge, most of those who applied for asylum after crossing the green border were subsequently withdrawing their asylum applications and intended to move further to EU countries.

UNHCR will share the presentation in the inter-agency [shared-folder](#).



Agenda Point 5

Update on UNHCR Cash Program

*Yigit Anil Gurer, Programme CBI
Officer, UNHCR*

gurer@unhcr.org

*Andrew Painter, Senior Protection
Officer, UNHCR*

painter@unhcr.org

UNHCR representative presented an update on the UNHCR cash assistance program targeting methods.

The UNHCR cash assistance in Moldova will be newly targeting the beneficiaries using the scorecard method. The scorecard method allows for triaging the beneficiaries based on different levels of vulnerabilities. This method enables prioritization and can be used by different partners.

More information can be found in the presentation by UNHCR on the [shared-disk](#).

Discussion:

UNHCR explained that the refugees were informed in time by SMS that the cash assistance in Moldova would be diminished by the end of June and that they should prepare for this change. The beneficiaries were undertaking interviews to determine their score based on which it was decided who would keep on obtaining cash assistance. The FAQ can be found on the UNHCR website [Cash assistance for refugees in - UNHCR Moldova](#) in English, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian languages.

IOM added that in the Transnistrian region (TN) they were mirroring the same system and that a deduplication exercise was initiated. For those who are interested in learning, more information about cash assistance in TN can be provided by reaching out to local coordinators.

UNHCR will share the presentation in the inter-agency [shared-folder](#).



<p>Agenda Point 6</p> <p>Referral Pathways</p> <p>IOM/UNHCR</p> <p>Natalia Moisevici, Project Coordinator, IOM nmoisevici@iom.int</p> <p>Sara Sivkova, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR sivkovas@unhcr.org</p>	<p><i>Due to time constraints, this presentation will be held separately as an information session. UNHCR will share the date and link with PWG networks once agreed upon.</i></p> <p>On 3 and 4 June, a workshop on ‘Establishing Local Referral Pathways for Ukrainian Refugees’ will be held in Donduseni to establish new local referral pathways for North, encompassing the services for refugees in Edinet, Donduseni, Ocnita and Otaci raions.</p> <p>The IOM and UNHCR representatives encouraged partners who are working in the Northern territories to participate in the workshop.</p> <p>UNHCR announced that the update for the inter-agency referral pathways document will commence next month. The partners who are not listed in the document or want to amend their information were encouraged to reach out to the focal point (sivkovas@unhcr.org).</p>	<p>UNHCR to share the link and date for the upcoming session.</p>
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Agenda Point 7

AoB

All participants

The Anti-trafficking Task Force is organizing the Training of Trainers on Preliminary Identification of Victims of Trafficking, from 10 – 12 June. The training is primarily for Romanian and Russian speakers who have prior knowledge about the topic and work in Moldova on counter-trafficking.

IOM will soon be launching the Cash for Protection program aiming at TCNs (including those residing in TN) funded by ECHO. This program will be integrated into the existing case management system.

The next meeting will be held in the first week of July.



Moldova operational data portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe: The Implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive - Six Months On (October 2022)

<https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/unhcr-regional-bureau-europe-implementation-temporary-protection-directive-six-months-october-2022>

If you have any difficulties accessing the Inter-agency shared folders do not hesitate to contact sivkovas@unhcr.org