



Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Protection Working Group

Meeting Details	
Date	29 November 2024
Time	10.00 am – 12.00 pm (hybrid)
Chair	Andrew Painter, Senior Protection Officer, UNHCR Alexandru Zubco, Directorate for the Prevention of Torture, Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Moldova (Co-chair)
Reporting	Sara Sivkova, Associate Protection Officer, UNHCR
Email	painter@unhcr.org , sager@unhcr.org , sivkovas@unhcr.org
Agenda	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Welcome and Agenda Overview (10:00-10:10)2. Situational Updates (CDA)3. PWG Updates<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. 2025-2026 RRPb. RACs Consolidation4. Presentation on Preliminary Findings from 2024 Participatory Assessment (UNHCR/AAP Task Force)5. Presentation on Older Individuals Needs Assessment (OINA) (IMPACT/REACH)6. Presentation on UNHCR's Ukraine is Home Program (UNHCR)7. Partner Updates8. AOB	
Participants	



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<i>Andrew Painter, UNHCR</i>	<i>Olha Florynska, OHCHR</i>	<i>Virgiliu Hangan, P4EC</i>	<i>Lilia Gantatuc, IGM</i>
<i>Sean Sager, UNHCR</i>	<i>Victor Morari, Ombudsman</i>	<i>Mircea Bustiuc, SIRM</i>	<i>Caroline Hui, Impact Initiative</i>
<i>Alberto Tonon, UNHCR</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Andrei Bolocan, Don Bosco</i>	<i>Ana Ursachi, Impact Initiative</i>
<i>Sofia Merzlikina, UNHCR</i>	<i>Elena Ustoroi, CWS</i>	<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Nadine Frisk, Impact Initiative</i>
<i>Hanne Heidinger, UNHCR</i>	<i>Sergei Muntean, ACTED</i>	<i>Constanta Popescu, World Bank</i>	<i>Analia Restrepo, INTERSOS</i>
<i>Carolina Scifos, UNHCR</i>	<i>Anton Balan, ACTED</i>	<i>Cristina Triboi, Tdh Moldova</i>	<i>Abai Iliazov, ICRC</i>
<i>Apreda Ersilia, IOM</i>	<i>Irina Stefan, Laolalta</i>	<i>Yulia Zenchenko, FSF</i>	<i>Diana Alexei</i>
<i>Rei Sulo, IOM</i>	<i>Irina Cojocararu, NRC</i>	<i>Mihaila Alina, IGM</i>	
<i>Jioara Svetlana, CDA</i>	<i>Jude Halaseh, NRC</i>		

Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion	Agreements/ Actions
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<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 the minutes of the PWG, please contact: sivkovas@unhcr.org</p>	<p>Agenda presented and agreed.</p>
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Agenda Point 2

Situational Updates

Sean Sager, Protection Officer,
UNHCR

sager@unhcr.org

Svetlana Jioara, CDA/LCA
svetlana.jioara@cda.md

CDA representative provided updates for two months (October - November) from the BCPs:

- During the reporting period at the Palanca Border Crossing Point (BCP), 27 asylum seekers were registered. Most were Russian Federation nationals with expired passports seeking entry into Moldova to renew their documentation. Additionally, one Ukrainian citizen who had exceeded the legal 90-day period of stay in the country claimed asylum to gain entry into the Republic of Moldova (RM). On the green border, 18 asylum seekers were identified, all of whom were Ukrainian citizens. A moderate to heavy flow of cars and pedestrians was observed in both directions. Ukrainian border guards were seen near the entry barrier and along the transit road, where they were observed stopping vehicles.
- Regular bus services were operating without interruption. During this period, six humanitarian buses provided by the NGO Gloria passed through the BCP, carrying a total of 83 refugees from Odesa and Mykolaiv. These passengers continued their journey to Romania on buses provided by IOM.
- Third-country nationals (TCNs) were subjected to additional verification and had to wait several hours at the BCP. TCNs who could not provide a valid purpose for their trip or lacked valid visas and passports were denied entry to Moldova. This group included citizens from Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Georgia. Several Russian citizens were observed crossing the border using emergency travel documents issued by the

UNHCR to share the
regional intention survey
with PWG.



	<p>ICRC. In some instances, Ukrainian nationals were fined for exceeding the legal stay in Moldova or for lacking car vignettes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CDA observed that some Ukrainian citizens were fined for overstaying in Moldova, particularly those whose vehicles were not registered for Temporary Protection (TP). Customs services informed them that they could return to Moldova and register for TP to avoid further fines.• Most arrivals to Moldova were from Odesa, Odesa region, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kherson. Some of the arrivals were beneficiaries of TP in Moldova and were traveling to Ukraine to visit relatives. Others were heading to EU countries where they also had TP. A few individuals were entering Moldova for the first time since the start of the war and expressed an interest in applying for TP in Moldova. Pendular movement was observed, with some Ukrainians traveling for vacations between Ukraine and other countries.• For Ukrainians returning to Ukraine, most were coming from Odesa, Odesa region, Kyiv, and other European countries or Moldova, where they had been benefiting from TP. They were returning to visit relatives or check on their properties. Several individuals were returning to Ukraine for an indefinite period due to difficulties adapting to host countries.• Two cases of unaccompanied children were observed at the Palanca BCP. In both instances, the children were accompanied by relatives, but without the required power of attorney.• At the Otaci BCP, there were 82 asylum seekers at the green border, most of whom crossed the Dniester River by swimming. Two asylum seekers, both citizens of the Russian Federation, were denied entry to Moldova due to expired passports. An intense to medium flow of cars and pedestrians was observed in both directions, with regular bus services running without interruption.	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In several instances, Moldovan Border Police denied entry to Ukrainian vehicles with Ukrainian plates due to the absence of documentation verifying that the vehicles had passed the mandatory technical inspection required in Moldova and Romania. As a result, both the vehicles and their drivers were returned to Ukraine, but the drivers were informed they could enter Moldova without their cars.• Ukrainians arriving at the Otaci BCP were primarily from Vinnytsia, Vinnytsia region, Zhytomyr, and Kyiv, and were heading to Moldova, Romania, Germany, and other EU countries.• TCNs at the Otaci BCP were subjected to additional verification, with those unable to provide a purpose for their trip being denied entry to Moldova. A few Russian nationals were also denied entry.• At the international airport in Chisinau, CDA maintained its presence, monitoring flights from Baku, Yerevan, Istanbul, and Tbilisi. During the reporting period, 160 flights were monitored. Three asylum seekers, all TCNs, were admitted to Moldova and were awaiting interviews with the General Inspectorate of Migration (IGM). <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The representative from the Ombudsman Office inquired whether CDA had encountered any cases of individuals crossing the green border who, after being intercepted, requested Temporary Protection (TP) instead of claiming asylum. To the best of CDA's knowledge, there were no such cases; in all instances, individuals intercepted at the green border requested asylum.• The UNHCR co-chair informed that humanitarian buses are running through the Palanca BCP every Thursday. However, due to a decreasing	
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	<p>demand for transportation services, the provider may switch to operating buses every two weeks instead.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNHCR also provided information about Russian nationals traveling with emergency travel documents issued by the ICRC. After consulting with ICRC, it was confirmed that these documents were issued exclusively to Russian nationals intending to return to Russia. These documents are not provided for individuals crossing into Moldova to renew their passports with the intention of returning to Ukraine.• UNHCR addressed the issue of Ukrainian vehicles being prohibited from entering Moldova without technical inspections, as well as the issue of Ukrainian vehicles overstaying in Moldova without TP. Regarding the first issue, UNHCR will inquire with the authorities about the legislative requirements for technical inspections. Regarding the second issue, which pertains to Ukrainian vehicles overstaying in Moldova without TP, UNHCR has raised the matter with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to advocate for consistent conditions for all Ukrainian refugees residing in Moldova, regardless of their legal status (e.g., permanent residence, temporary residence, etc.).• UNHCR also commented on the number of arrivals from Ukraine, noting that while there had been no significant increase in arrivals, the situation may change in the upcoming weeks due to the approaching winter season and the intensification of bombing in some regions of Ukraine.• Additionally, UNHCR shared some results from a regional intentions survey conducted across Europe. This survey tracks the short- and medium-term intentions of Ukrainian refugees throughout Europe. Based on the survey results, fewer refugees expressed an intention to return to Ukraine in the future.	
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<p>Agenda Point 3</p> <p>PWG updates</p> <p><i>Sean Sager, Protection Officer, UNHCR</i> sager@unhcr.org</p>	<p>RRP 2025 - 2026</p> <p>The UNHCR representative provided an overview of the RRP 2025 – 2026 submissions by Protection Working Group (PWG) appealing partners. A total of 29 partners (does not include UNHCR implementing partners who will be submitted by programme unit separately) entered their submissions under 12 indicators. The distribution of target/budget for next two years is following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2025 – target 143,117 with budget 19,955,315• 2026 – target 94,479 with budget 6,154,113 (partners will have opportunity to review their targets and budgets in 2025) <p>In comparison to submissions from last year, more partners submitted activities connected to social cohesion and there was a decrease in MHPSS activities. The inter-agency team will proceed with reviewing the submissions and will be reaching out to partners in case of questions.</p> <p>The deadline for submissions is the first week of December 2024. More details can be seen in the presentation on the shared disk.</p> <p>RACs Consolidation</p> <p>UNHCR provided an update on the closure of the refugee accommodation centre (RAC) in Testemiteanu 6 (T6). By the end of November, most of the residents had been relocated. The relocation options taken by individuals (some 122 individuals) residing in the centre were:</p>	<p>UNHCR to share the presentation at the inter-agency shared disk</p>
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- Rental assistance 8 individuals
- Relocation to another RAC 64 individuals
- Private accommodation (without rental assistance) 17 individuals
- Departure from Moldova 6 individuals

As of 28 November, six (6) individuals remained in the RAC and were awaiting relocation.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) has shared the list of the planned closures of RACs in 2025. Currently, there are 27 RACs open, out of which 10 RACs are scheduled to be closed throughout 2025. Two centres for closure are yet to be selected.

1. The first group to be closed next year includes two centres (Telenesti and Chisinau), the closure should commence at the end of January.
2. The second group encompasses three RACs, including the only remaining RAC in South (Congaz), the reason for the closure of this centre is due to the overall liveability conditions of the centre.
3. The third group includes three RACs to be closed.

Discussion:

The representative of HelpAge inquired about the cash for rent programme and the assessment of those who entered the programme situation. UNHCR informed that the assessment of the rental assistance outcome will be presented by the rental assistance partners when all the data is consolidated, most probably in January at the next meeting of the



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	Relocation Technical Group (RTG) responsible for the RAC Consolidation process.	
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<p>Agenda Point 4</p> <p>Presentation on Preliminary Findings from 2024 Participatory Assessment</p> <p><i>Alberto Tonon, Protection Officer, UNHCR / AAP Task Force Chair</i></p> <p>tonon@unhcr.org</p>	<p><i>UNHCR Disability and Inclusion Specialist provided an overview of the preliminary findings from the 2024 Participatory Assessment</i></p> <p>The Participatory Assessment was conducted by 15 partners from the Accountability to Affected Population Task Force (AAP TF). Some 49 focus group discussions (FDGs) were conducted across 19 locations (including FDGs conducted in the Left Bank of Dniester River), including participants from RACs, private accommodation/ hosted families.</p> <p>The Participatory Assessment 2024 report will be finalized in January 2025 and will be shared with the PWG and partners.</p> <p>More information is available in the presentation on the shared disk.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>The representative of the World Bank inquired about <i>Patenta</i> and self-employment in Moldova. The UNHCR co-chair suggested reaching out to the Livelihood and Inclusion Working Group which can provide more useful information about the economic inclusion for refugees.</p> <p>The AAP TF co-chair informed that in 2025, the Task Force is planning to conduct thematic information sessions for refugees where they can get information and ask questions about services available to them.</p>	<p>UNHCR to share the presentation at the inter-agency shared disk.</p>
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<p>Agenda Point 5</p> <p>Presentation on Older Individuals Needs Assessment</p> <p><i>IMPACH/REACH</i> <i>Caroline Hui, Impact Initiative</i> <i>Ana Ursachi, Impact Initiative</i> <i>Nadine Frisk, Impact Initiative</i></p>	<p><i>The representative of IMPACH/REACH presented key findings of the Older Individuals Needs Assessment (OINA)</i></p> <p>The assessment focused on the refugees displaced from Ukraine to Moldova after 24 February 2022, aged 60 years or older residing in the RACs and members of Moldovan host community aged 60 years and older. The data was collected through 333 surveys conducted between 30 September to 25 October 2024.</p> <p>The final report from this assessment will be launched in 2025. Nonetheless, the data can be reached at IMPACT repository:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OINA Refugees data and analysis• OINA Moldovans data and analysis <p>More information is available in the document available on the shared disk.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>The representative of UNHCR inquired about the number of older refugees with health insurance, and about older persons employed in Moldova if they have formal or informal employment contracts. REACH clarified the confusion about a high number of refugees stating to have some kind of health insurance, as the assessment considers the holders of Temporary Protection as those having access to health services not only the health insurance holders. As for the employment of older refugees, it was stated that most of those working in Moldova were working formally in temporary employment settings.</p>	<p>UNHCR to share the presentation at the inter-agency shared disk</p>
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<p>Agenda Point 6</p> <p>Presentation on UNHCR's Ukraine is Home Program</p> <p><i>Sofia Merzlikina, Associate Social Media Officer, UNHCR</i> merzliki@unhcr.org</p>	<p><i>Due to time constraints the presentation did not take place. Kindly find more information about the platform below:</i></p> <p>UNHCR has launched a new platform providing information to refugees and internally displaced Ukrainians about their rights and continued stay in host countries, addressing questions and explaining opportunities regarding voluntary return to Ukraine, and promoting access to the support needed to recover and rebuild.</p> <p>More information is available on the online platform webpage Ukraine is Home.</p> <p>UNHCR position on returns:</p> <p><i>UNHCR is mandated to protect the rights of refugees and ensure all states uphold their obligations outlined under international refugee law. This includes the right of voluntary return in conditions of safety and dignity. For millions of people forced to flee following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukraine is — and will always be — home. For some, this remains a distant dream. The war continues and many people continue to fear for their safety and that of their families if they return to Ukraine before the war ends. This is justified—and international law is on your side, as is UNHCR. In line with our earlier advisory, we continue to call on countries to allow civilians fleeing Ukraine to access to their territories and to refrain from returning anyone against their wishes.</i></p>	
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Agenda Point 7 Partners Update	No partner provided any update.	
Agenda Point 8 AoB	UNHCR informed about the Law on Asylum proposed revisions passed through governments two days ago which will be now submitted to the Parliament. Once the revisions are approved the main change will allow the Government, if they choose to, to extend TP for another year and would remove the two-year cap.	UNHCR to send invitation for the PWG Planning Retreat 2025 when date is set



	<p>UNHCR will circulate the latest Protection Brief with PWG. It is available online here.</p> <p>UNHCR informed about the change in the settings of PWG meetings in 2025. The PWG meeting will be newly conducted every two months and an on ad hoc basis.</p> <p>UNHCR informed about the Protection Advisory Group (PAG) which will be renewed for next year without changing the membership structure. Nonetheless, the meeting will be held every quarter and an on ad hoc basis.</p> <p>UNHCR informed about PWG Planning Retreat to be held in January/February 2025. UNHCR will send an invitation once the date is scheduled.</p> <p>Inter-agency informed about the upcoming regional conference on Protection and Continuity Health and HIV Services for Forcibly Displaced Persons from Ukraine Living with and Affected by HIV. The conference will take place on December 4 – 5, 2024. PWG members are welcome to participate.</p>	
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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