Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting

Meeting Minutes – 17 December 2024

Meeting subject:	Małopolska Coordination Group Meeting
Time & location:	9 am – UNHCR Krakow Sub-Office
Chaired by:	UNHCR
Minutes prepared by:	UNHCR
Participants:	IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR, Patchwork, ZHP, Vela foundation, IBP
Agenda:	1. Updates • 1a. From Members of the Coordination Platform • 1b. From UNHCR 2. Emergency preparedness • coordination and mapping of services • minimum package of info • challenges and safeguards 3. Any Other Business (AOB)
AGENDA POINT	**DISCUSSION**
Introduction and update on points from last meeting	Participants were welcomed to the 39th Małopolska Coordination Group (MCG) meeting, highlighting that it is the last meeting in the 2024.
Agenda point 1	1a. Updates from NGOs present – no updates. 1b. Updates from UNHCR: • **Syrian situation**:

	Many European countries have announced pausing Syrian asylum applications (including Poland). Important to remember that Syrians are still considered as refugees. ✓ UNHCR **Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic** released on the 16th December https://www.refworld.org/policy/countrypos/unhcr/2024/en/149254 ✓ This position supersedes and replaces UNHCR's March 2021 *International Protection Considerations with Regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update VI* (March 2021). • **Draft Amendments to the Law on Granting Protection:** discussed in the Parliament on the 18th of December. ✓ Suspension of asylum will be a temporary measure; if implemented it would be in a limited geographical area. Exemption cases considered by the authorities: pregnant women, vulnerable persons (age/health), in cases of a real risk of harm upon return. ✓ UNHCR Comments and Observations on the draft law amending the Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners in the territory of the Republic of Poland- 12th Dec 2024. In coming days UNHCR will share Polish version. **https://www.refworld.org/legal/natlegcomments/unhcr/2024/en/149257**
Agenda point 2	**I. Updates on Emergency Preparedness** IOM, VELA, Zustricz, and UNICEF have already shared inputs regarding their capacities to respond. Please continue sharing. We have capacities in different voivodeships, and activities are connected to various sectors. • **Meeting with the Ministry of Interior**: A meeting with Duszczyk was held to discuss emergency preparedness. No expectation of a mass influx from Ukraine was noted. However, if more vulnerable profiles begin to arrive, it would indicate that the situation in Ukraine is not improving, as energy infrastructure continues to be destroyed. Some refugees might choose not to return to Ukraine, even if the situation improves, as they have integrated into Poland. A working group comprising NGOs and an inter-ministerial committee will meet in January to discuss integration systems and AMIF funding. • **Temporary protection**: Discussions will start in February. It was reaffirmed that temporary protection will last until the EU directive ends. Poland is expected to follow European decisions; if not, Polish authorities will work on establishing a national legalization mechanism. A document is expected to reach Parliament in June. The Ministry of Interior called on NGOs to collaborate with UNHCR to create a consolidated document with comments.

	Representatives from Podlaskie and Podkarpackie were present on the meeting with MinInt. Border Guards stated that the number of crossings remains consistent. They are now assessing the capacities of the government, UN, and NGOs. They are ready to respond to a potential influx. If an emergency occurs, the Ministry will notify UNHCR to coordinate joint efforts. • **Accommodation capacity** A rapid needs assessment by the IM working group was conducted with UNICEF and IOM to discuss information dissemination without duplication. The aim is to develop a collective product detailing where to go and what services are available. The rapid needs assessment, initiated from day one, is focused on understanding gender-based vulnerabilities, service needs, and planning distribution. The information will guide service provision and assess refugees' intentions, such as how long they intend to stay, whether they plan to move to other voivodeships, or if they want to return. A questionnaire (less than 10 minutes) will be developed and shared to gather this information. Questions on refugees' intentions will provide better visibility on those potentially coming to our side. It is crucial to update the Matrix for information provision. Unified information is necessary to reduce confusion among refugees when changes occur or new details arise. A national-level decision has been made to create a unified information leaflet. Recently, information emerged about a significant NGO phasing out. Please communicate any similar changes. • **GBV (Gender-Based Violence)** Efforts are underway to coordinate with different organizations providing GBV services. This includes engaging with government entities like MOPS, crisis intervention teams, and the police, as well as key civil society organizations. A meeting with all actors is planned to validate coordination efforts. A workshop is scheduled for January/February. • **MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support)** A few months ago, UNHCR convened key actors working on MHPSS, including IOM, VELA, Project Hope, and Zustricz. A similar meeting in January would be beneficial. • **Role of Volunteers** Warsaw is preparing a document titled "Do’s and Don’ts for Volunteers." If you encounter any situation that might pose a risk, please flag it. • Check with local authorities to see if they have plans to conduct a needs assessment to better understand the immediate profile of refugees and identify their service requirements. This applies only if an emergency is triggered.

	II. **Updates on Emergency Preparedness in Małopolskie** • **IOM**: Colleagues in Podkarpackie report that only a few people are crossing the border. One shelter accepting Roma has closed, while more new arrivals have been noted in Koninki. Child protection trainings are planned for the end of January and can be shared with the coordination group. • **Spilno Hub**: No major changes have been reported. There is an increase in people seeking legal consultations, including cases involving caregivers. Next year, a contingency plan for the Blue Dot program will be developed. In case of an influx, the Blue Dot will be opened, and Spilno will be maintained. Another Blue Dot across the border is also planned. Volunteers must undergo PSEA training and "safe harm" training and be checked by Polish authorities. • **UNICEF**: Some partnerships are being considered, and UNICEF is working with local authorities. A work plan has been established with municipalities. If an emergency occurs, some funds will be allocated. Humanitarian funds will support the distribution of baby kits, diapers, and hygiene items for children (1,000 kits). These efforts are focused on Kraków, Warsaw, Wrocław, and possibly Katowice. • **Blue Dot**: UNICEF and ZHP are collaborating. It is important to harmonize and share knowledge. • **VELA**: Contract has been extended for mobile teams in 2025 in partnership with UNICEF. These teams will operate in Małopolskie, Podkarpackie, and Dolnośląskie. • **Zustricz**: Legalization of volunteer staff is now possible. Zustricz provides informational support and addresses legal issues. Since December, they have had a lawyer available to assist. They also focus on MHPSS and include people with disabilities as part of their general efforts. A volunteering initiative is open to everyone, and a call for volunteers will be published on social media. The application process resembles a job application, including a pre-check and basic training. • **UNHCR**: A contingency stock for 10,000 refugees is ready, with additional stock in Budapest that can arrive within 48 hours. A framework agreement for staffing is in place, enabling the recruitment of additional protection monitors and other profiles if needed. UNHCR's coordination role continues, with increased frequency of coordination meetings as required. A Letter of Understanding (LoU) has been signed with the Red Cross and Caritas. In emergencies, partnership agreements are reviewed, and budgets can be amended. UNHCR will take the lead in drafting messages based on instructions from authorities, although prior notice is usually not provided. A request has been made to share emergency contact information by the end of the week.
AOB	Next year: A meeting is planned to discuss a short package of training sessions. Suggestions to include: Counter-trafficking training for powiat coordinators. UNHCR and IOM will discuss how to enhance capacities of the actors on this topic

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY				
No.	**Action**	**Responsible**	**Deadline**	**Status** (as of)
1.	Share the Polish version of the **"Draft Amendments to the Law on Granting Protection" from 12.12.2024**	UNHCR		
2.	To share emergency contact information.	All the Parners	20.12.2024	