

POLAND NATIONAL PROTECTION SECTOR MEETING

Meeting Minutes – 14 April 2022

Meeting subject:	Weekly National Protection Sector Meeting
Time & location:	2pm, online meeting
Chaired by:	Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights; UNHCR
Minutes prepared by:	UNHCR
Participants:	Acted; ActionAid; ADRA Poland; Americares; Association for Legal Intervention; AVSI; Care International; CLEAR Global/Translators without Borders; CRS; Corus International; Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center; ICRC; IFRC; Hayata Destek; Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights; Intersos; IOM; Medair; NCA; NED; Norwegian Refugee Council; Oxfam; Plan International; Premiere Urgence; Project Hope; Polish Red Cross; Reach Initiative; Relief International; RET International; Safe Passage; UK Department for International Development; UN Global Compact Network Poland; UNHCR; UNICEF; WHO.
Agenda:	<p>Agenda</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping of services for referrals: Presentation of the mock-up platform for partners • Discussions of the indicators for the RRP 2) Focus on refugee registration initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PESEL registration • UNHCR enrolment data for cash assistance 3) Updates from the Protection Sub-sectors and Working Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Sub-sector • GBV Sub-sector • Third-country Nationals Working Group • Counter-trafficking Working Group • MHPSS Working Group 4) AOB
AGENDA POINT	DISCUSSION

Introductions and Overview	Participants were welcomed to the fifth weekly Protection Sector meeting for the Refugee Response on Poland. The agenda was presented.
Agenda point 1	<p>Several updates were shared and discussed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The continued need for country-wide mapping of services for refugees for the purpose of referrals was emphasized. An update was provided on the mock-up for the service mapping platform and a demonstration was provided by UNHCR. The platform can be accessed by partners through the use of a link provided on user-to-user basis for privacy. It was noted that to date 30 submissions had already been collected from partners. When the floor was opened for feedback it was noted that based on experience in Moldova, it may be useful to include parameters on the language in which services are provided and on physical accessibility. 2) It was explained that all protection partners will be using the pre-identified protection sector core indicators to report on their protection activities, as they help with monitoring the Refugee Response Plan (RRP). As regards the selection of indicators, it was also highlighted that the indicators should be broad enough to capture the diversity of activities being carried out and few enough to keep the exercise time-effective. One participant suggested that the information indicator could include information about whether refugees had received information in their preferred language. It was also recommended that protection indicators should be compatible with health indicators and that a joint process should exist, as both cover psychosocial support.
Agenda point 2	<p>Updates were given on registration processes for both PESEL numbers and cash assistance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights provided an overview of basic information regarding PESEL numbers as well as the recent legislation regarding PESEL numbers for individuals fleeing Ukraine. PESEL is a personal identification number and it is the responsibility of the municipality (gmina) to register applicants. Ukrainian citizens and their spouses fleeing Ukraine may obtain PESEL numbers, but this is not obligatory. A PESEL is necessary to receive social benefits, start a business, and facilitates access to medical assistance and to legal stay in Poland. It is not necessary to open a bank account or enroll children in school. In practice, most Ukrainians are obtaining PESEL numbers and, as per government figures as of 13 April, 846,000 new PESEL numbers had been given out, with 96% granted to women and children. Problems arise because as per recent legislation the PESEL will serve to prove the legality of stay for Ukrainians in Poland and individuals will not be obtaining other identity documents during their first nine months in the country. Other EU members do not currently have access to the PESEL registry, and there is also a lack of clarity regarding the policies of EU countries towards Ukrainians with Polish

	<p>PESEL numbers. It was further observed that the lack of clarity regarding this practice has to potential to disincentivize individuals from registering for PESEL numbers.</p> <p>2) The Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center highlighted it could prove challenging to register and legalize the stays of individuals or community segments who do not have identity documents, although this has not yet been reported in practice. Furthermore, Poland is not party to any international conventions on statelessness and as such no practices on this matter exist. It was also noted that some communities, such as Roma, may be less likely to possess identity documents. Discussions in the field with authorities in Krakow show that in practice Roma registered in the city have so far possessed documentation showing Ukrainian citizenship and lack of documentation has not been an issue but they have faced challenges accessing some services e.g. education. It was recommended to discuss Roma and statelessness issues at an upcoming protection sector meeting.</p> <p>3) Updated information was provided about the UNHCR cash assistance points in the country. Points are currently located in Krakow and in Warsaw. Individuals have been observed coming to these points from other locations in Poland, which makes the inter-agency protection response more challenging. 95% of individuals enrolled to date have been women and children, while 5% have been men. 30% of those enrolled are those with specific needs, of which 20% are single parents with no family support.</p>
<p>Agenda point 3</p>	<p>Updates from the Protection Sub-sector and Working Groups were shared:</p> <p>Child protection The draft guidelines for child protection in cash-based interventions have been shared with the protection lead and sector partners for feedback and review. There is one week for feedback before the document is closed for input. In addition, the sub-sector working group has also identified the need to create a brief guidance document on arrival processes, border processing, and placement of children that might require intervention or legal guardianship documents. During the most recent weekly sectoral meeting, a representative from the Polish family court and Association of Judges mentioned that most delays in processing claims regarding guardianship documents result from errors and missing information in submitted forms. As such, when providing assistance, legal aid providers should make sure these forms are filled in correctly.</p> <p>GBV The last sub-sector discussion took the form of an open meeting which allowed members to share needs, challenges, priorities and recommendations. Points raised during the meeting had to do both with organizations scaling up operations and staffing and with issues faced by refugees. Two points were made regarding organization staffing. One was the need for a coordinated approach on protection so that efforts, such as translation of legislation, are not duplicated. The second was the need for coordinated onboarding</p>

and perhaps a general training package for new staff across the sector as organizations rapidly recruit new staff. Issues faced by refugees included access to basic services for GBV survivors in Poland, both in terms of sexual and reproductive health and in terms of clinical management of rape. Bilateral discussions between the Ministry of Health and WHO on these issues have already taken place; however, it remained a priority that stopgap measures in this area are put in place. It was also discussed what the best methods of communication would be for establishing hotlines and similar services. It was noted that in Ukraine the Telegram app is more popular than some other means of communication.

Third-Country National (TCN)

The Third Country Nationals Working Group has met twice. To date, over 70 groups and individuals have signed up to the email distribution list. During meetings, it has been noted that TCNs face particular challenges in Poland in regards to right to stay and accessing support. Many TCNs fleeing Ukraine were international students. As a result of language and financial barriers, educational options continue to be limited for them in Poland. In addition, there are currently TCNs held in detention facilities in Poland. Going forward, the group is planning to map services across Poland which can provide services to TCNs, including shelter accommodation, legal services, and specialized support for those with specific needs. The working group is also planning to collect more information on access to higher education for TCNs across Europe and investigate the issue of TCNs in detention in cooperation with the Polish border guard.

Counter trafficking

The focus of the last sub-sector meeting was unaccompanied minor children, as they were found to be particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking in Poland. A focus on unaccompanied minors will likely continue in future meetings. Law enforcement agencies and the Polish government, including the Ministry of Interior, are also expected to participate.

MHPSS

Next week, the working group will hold a workshop presenting the Polish system of community mental health centers. During the workshop access to public health and mental health services at the community level will be discussed. A number of MHPSS resources, including *Psychological First Aid*, have also been translated into Polish. In the near term, efforts are underway to begin service mapping in a practical way that enables referrals. The working group is attempting to facilitate the participation of Polish partners in this initiative and participants were asked to encourage any partners engaged in mental health and psychosocial support to attend. Ukrainian should soon be able to access prescriptions for psychotropic medications at the primary healthcare level without having to see a psychiatrist. These communications will be shared with working group leads to share more broadly. It was also announced that the Rapid Assessment on MHPSS is openly available and would be shared with the sector head for dissemination. The assessment contains important findings related to integrating MHPSS in protection and highlights the link between protection, mental health, psychosocial support, and stress related factors.

AOB

The next meeting will take place on 21 April at 2pm.

ACTION POINTS SUMMARY				
No.	Action	Responsible	Deadline	Status
1.	Contact mazurenk@unhcr.org and kernin@unhcr.org to access the service mapping platform to provide feedback	All Partners	20 April	
2.	Provide feedback on the revised RRP Protection Sector indicators	All partners	20 April	
3.	Facilitate a discussion of protection issues faced by stateless persons and Roma people specifically	Co-leads	30 April	