Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation

Meeting Details	
Date	*13.05.2025; next meeting – tbc*
Time	*13:00 – 14:30*
Chair	*Felicia Bechtold, Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection* *Seher Ariner, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP*
Reporting	*Zinaida Adam, Livelihoods and Inclusion Sector Lead, UNDP,* zinaida.adam@undp.org *Natalia Telesco, MLSP,* natalia.telesco@social.gov.md
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Agenda

1. Welcoming remarks from LI co-leads
2. Presentation of the Regional Report "High employment rates, but low wages: a poverty assessment of Ukrainian refugees in neighbouring countries" and Q&A session
3. Updates from SEIL working group members
4. AOB

Information collection and relevant links

High employment rates, but low wages: a poverty assessment of Ukrainian refugees in neighboring countries

Participants: members of the LI WG

Agenda	*Discussion*	Agreements / Actions
Agenda Point 1 **Welcoming remarks from LI co-leads**	**Zinaida Adam, UNDP**, welcomed the attendees of the meeting and presented the agenda. **Natalia Telesco, MLSP**, urged attendees to be active in the discussion, create a learning environment, and contribute to identifying the best solutions.	WG members were encouraged to remain engaged in ongoing discussions and initiatives to support refugees.

Agenda	*Discussion*	Agreements / Actions

Agenda Point 2
 	
Presentation of the Regional Report "High employment rates, but low wages: a poverty assessment of Ukrainian refugees in neighboring countries" and Q&A session
 	
Konstantin Fastovets, UNHCR Economist for Europe
	Konstantin Fastovets, UNHCR:
	• Presented the key goals and the methodology of the Socio-Economic Insights Survey:
	  ○ Data collection took place in the period May - July 2024
	  ○ Face to face survey of Ukrainian refugee households conducted in 10 countries neighboring Ukraine: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia
	  ○ Total 2024 sample: c. 8,700 households and 20,000 individuals
	  ○ Average HH size – 2.33
	• Highlighted the main findings of the survey:
	  ○ Economic vulnerability has decreased since 2023, but 23% of refugees still live below the poverty line, twice as many as nationals
	  ○ Poverty has a very tangible effect on living conditions: refugees living in poverty feel markedly less safe, less secure in terms of accommodation tenure, more frequently miss out on needed healthcare, etc.
	  ○ Given that refugee employment rates are nearing host levels, attention must now turn to wages, as refugees make 30% less than nationals on average, while being twice as likely to have university degrees; the data strongly suggests the presence of underemployment
	• Provided an overview of recommendations:
	  ○ Poverty measures account for differences in housing costs between refugees and host populations
	  ○ Focus on supporting refugee employment at their skill level, including transition from current low-level jobs; monitor wage differential between refugees and locals
	• Answered questions on care responsibilities as a barrier to the labour market inclusion of refugee women; language barriers; and Roma inclusion.
		The presentation was shared with all SEIL working group members via email.

Agenda	*Discussion*	Agreements / Actions
Agenda Point 3 **Updates from SEIL WG members**	**Ms. Eirini Aletra, Catholic Relief Services:** • Announced that this week CRS is launching a new livelihoods project, which will include small business grants and trainings. Targeted locations will be Chisinau, Balti and Cahul. **Ms. Mary Khozomba, Norwegian Refugee Council:** • Shared that NRC, through the I-PATH (Innovative Path to Inclusive Employment) project, is partnering with CEDA to support NEA to build a chatbot for Angajat.md. • NRC is also working with AFAM to support left bank businesses. **Mr. Vitalie Beriozov, ACTED Livelihoods**: • Provided an update on the vocational courses and business trainings organized by ACTED (announced in a previous SEIL WG meeting, in March). **Natasa Omerovic, IOM:** • IOM has been organizing Romanian language courses in Cahul, Balti, Chisinau, and Comrat. Besides refugees, the courses have also garnered interest and active participation from locals, which is a good sign of social cohesion. • IOM is also working with young people with disabilities, including refugees, and connecting them with academia.	WG members were encouraged to share any relevant announcements/initiatives with Ms. Adam for further dissemination to all WG members.
Questions and discussions	WG co-leads Ms. Adam and Ms. Telesco thanked the attendees for their active participation.	