

Challenges and needs of local authorities on migration management and integration mechanisms in the Republic of Moldova

Baseline report
May - August 2023



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Foreword

The project “Reinforcing the culture of dialogue and ethical open local governance in the Republic of Moldova” is implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (the Congress), in the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova (2021-2024). The project aims to strengthen the dialogue between local and central authorities and support the improvement of the quality of local governance through integrity, corruption prevention, open government, public ethics, gender equality and migration management at local level.

The current baseline assessment is also a contribution to the multilateral project “Strengthening resilience in local and regional authorities facing migration challenges” implemented by the Congress within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan on protecting vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe (2021-2025) and with the support of Germany.

The Congress Secretariat contracted a team of experts to conduct a baseline assessment of the challenges and needs faced by local authorities and their elected representatives (mayors and councillors) in Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Romania with regard to migration management and integration mechanisms.

The analysis has been conducted per country and covers the period May 2023 to August 2023. The methodology for the assessment has been similar for all three countries: a desk review followed by a set of key informant interviews.

The present assessment report has been drafted by Mihail Gorincioi, Attorney at Law, and edited by the Congress Secretariat. It aims to identify trends and challenges and develop key recommendations on how to enhance multi-level dialogue and institutional positioning of local authorities vis-à-vis their central government.

The assessment report will serve as basis to evaluate results at the end of the implementation period, and its findings will help to refine the workplan and activities of the project.

1. Migration in the Republic of Moldova: overview and definitions

Although the legislation of the Republic of Moldova regulates the main key terms in the field of migration, the perception of both the population and the representatives of the authorities seems to be a bit different. Both until the beginning of the Ukrainian war and up to the present day, the term refugee is used, without distinguishing between migrants, displaced persons, asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection, etc. Bearing in mind that more than one million Moldovan citizens have emigrated to other countries in search of better jobs, the local population is used to the term emigrant being attributed to their own citizens and refugee when it comes to people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The legislation of the Republic of Moldova defines migration as the territorial permutation of persons and change of place of residence. The Law on Asylum of the Republic of Moldova regulates the situation when a large number of displaced persons enter the territory of the country and exceed the capacity to process individual applications for refugee or humanitarian protection.¹ Displaced persons are foreigners who are forced to leave their country or region of origin due to the unsafe situation there and may meet the criteria for refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention or other national and international protection instruments.

The Law on the Integration of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova applies to a circle of foreigners, including those who have the right of temporary residence for family reunification, work, study, humanitarian or religious purposes, the right of permanent residence, the status of statelessness in the Republic of Moldova or international protection or political asylum granted in the country.² Integration is defined as a process of active participation of these people in the economic, social and cultural life of Moldovan society, in which they are encouraged to contribute and to develop their potential as members of this society, to exercise their rights and to fulfil their obligations without discrimination or social exclusion, for the benefit of themselves and the state.

The key terms in the field of migration under domestic law are outlined below:

- a) Migrant - although there is no explicit definition of this term in Republic of Moldova legislation, it can be deduced from the definition of labour migration, which is defined as the voluntary entry of foreigners into the Republic of Moldova for the purpose of engaging in work, also, the definition of immigrant worker is relevant for this context: foreigner authorised to carry out a work activity on the territory of the Republic of Moldova in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Code;³
- b) Asylum seeker - a foreigner who has submitted an application for asylum which has not yet been settled by a final decision;⁴
- c) Refugee – The Republic of Moldova regulates the concept of refugee status, which is described as a form of protection, recognised by the Republic of Moldova, of a foreign national or stateless person who meets the conditions laid down in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, concluded in Geneva on 28 July 1951, and in the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 31 January 1967;⁵
- d) Temporary Protection – exceptional protection designed to provide, in the event of a mass spontaneous influx of displaced persons who are unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary protection to such persons, if there is a risk that the asylum system may not be able to process this influx without adverse effects on its efficient functioning in the interests of the persons concerned and other persons in need of protection;⁶
- e) Moldovan legislation also regulates the term of humanitarian protection:⁷ form of protection granted to a foreign national or stateless person for reasons other than those provided for in the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951; form of protection, recognised by the Republic of Moldova,

¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

² https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136576&lang=ro#

³ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=113032&lang=ro

⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

⁶ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

⁷ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

granted to a foreign national or stateless person who does not meet the conditions for recognition as a refugee and in respect of whom there are reasons to believe that, on return to the country of origin, he/she will be exposed to a serious risk and, because of this risk, is unable or unwilling to obtain the protection of that country;

- f) International Protection – refugee status and humanitarian protection status;⁸
- g) Displaced people - the Law on Asylum in the Republic of Moldova (Law No. 270/2008) explicitly regulates the situation of a massive and spontaneous influx of displaced persons - i.e. the entry of a large number of persons from a specific country or region into the territory of the Republic of Moldova, which exceeds the capacity of the Asylum and Integration Directorate of the Migration and Asylum Office to process individual applications for recognition of refugee status or granting of humanitarian protection in accordance with the law. The same law explains the meaning of the term "displaced persons" - foreigners who are forced to leave their country or region of origin and cannot return safely due to the persisting situation in that country or region, and who fall within the scope of Article 1 (A) of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 or other national or international instruments granting international protection, in particular: (a) persons who have left areas of armed conflict or endemic violence; (b) persons who are exposed to serious harm in accordance with Article 45 or who have been victims of systematic or generalised violations of their rights.

2. A brief history of migration in the Republic of Moldova

In order to describe the historical and general situation, two specific criteria are considered:

- events that have characterised certain migration processes of Moldovan citizens ;
- Specific time frames that are pertinent to particular migratory trends.

Events leading to massive migration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova:

Transnistrian conflict: the Transnistrian region, mainly inhabited by ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, "declared" its independence from Moldova in 1990, which led to conflict. The conflict led to the displacement of people within Moldova, as well as the migration of many Moldovans, especially ethnic Moldovans and non-Slav minorities, from Transnistria to other parts of Moldova or abroad.

Economic challenges: Moldova faced economic difficulties after independence, including high unemployment, low wages and limited opportunities. This economic instability has been a significant driver of migration, as more than one million Moldovan citizens have sought better living conditions and employment prospects abroad, mainly in Russia, Europe and the United States.

Visa liberalisation and the Association Agreement with the EU: In 2014, the European Union (EU) implemented visa liberalisation for Moldovan citizens, allowing easier travel to the Schengen area. In addition, Moldova signed an Association Agreement with the EU to strengthen political and economic ties. These developments have facilitated labour migration from Moldova to EU countries, notably Italy, Portugal and other Western European nations.

⁸ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

Specific time frames that are pertinent to particular migratory trends:

First stage (1990s-1994): During this period, Moldova's migration policy focused on regulating labour migration specific to the post-Soviet space. An annual immigration quota of 0.05% of the country's total population was introduced to control migration and maintain the ethnic identity of the republic. Several pieces of legislation have been adopted to this end.

Second stage (1994-1999): Moldova was integrated into global migration processes, especially European ones. However, the Moldovan population was involved in migration without state support and assistance. Approaches were made to other countries, in particular the European Union, to conclude bilateral agreements on labour migration, but the initiatives were not successful.

Third stage (since 2000): Concrete steps have been taken to regulate labour migration, both by Moldova and by Eastern European countries. Although some host states were negative about signing bilateral agreements, steps were taken to address irregular labour migration. Consulates of some of the states affected by illegal migration from Moldova have been established. At this stage, the focus was on legalising persons already present in the country, and agreements in the sphere of labour migration were signed at regional and administrative level. Cooperation with international institutions specialised in international migration was also strengthened.

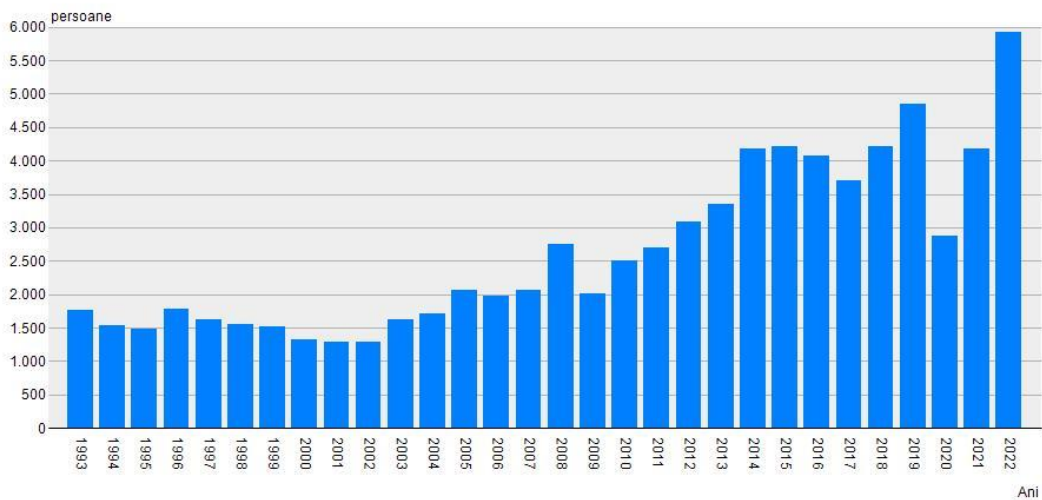
Thus, over time, the Republic of Moldova has adapted its migration policy to meet the challenges and to regulate labour migration in line with European standards. The Government's approval of the Programme on the management of migration flows, asylum and integration of foreigners for the years 2022-2025 refers to the migration crisis caused by the war between Russia and Ukraine and has highlighted obvious institutional gaps and insufficient human resources.⁹ As a result, the need has arisen to strengthen the instruments for coordination and management of situations of increased influx of migrants by state authorities.

3. Impact of the war in Ukraine

In Moldova, the number of immigrants has increased substantially since 2014 as well as in 2022, as can be seen in the graph on immigration from 1993 to 2022 below. These trends have been influenced by the Ukrainian war both in 2014 and 2022. Statistics also show that most immigrants in Moldova come from neighbouring countries (Romania and Ukraine in particular), as well as from Turkey, Israel, and the Russian Federation. Family reunification, studies and work are the main reasons for migrating.

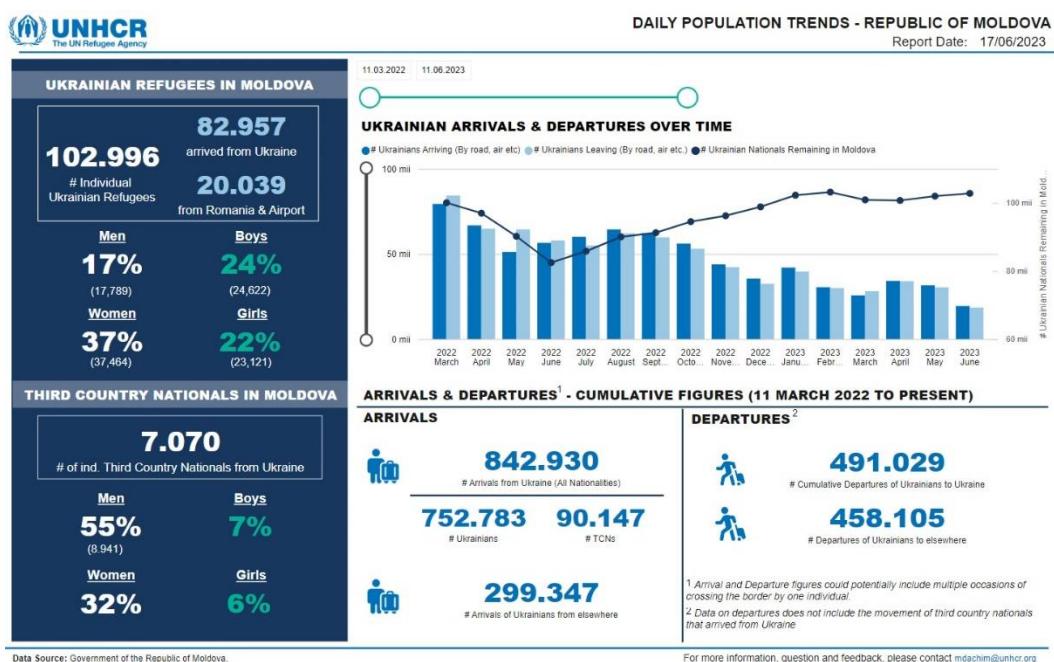
⁹ The Government's approval of the Programme on the management of migration flows, asylum and integration of foreigners for the years 2022-2025

Imigranti pe Ani. Tara de emigrare-total, Total.



Since February 2022, Moldova has indeed been surprised by a massive influx of displaced persons following Russia's aggression towards Ukraine. Border crossings became very crowded and Moldovan authorities had to manage several processes both economic and social that were not very strong even before the beginning of the war. Under the provisions of the Commission for Exceptional Situations, all citizens of different countries coming to Moldova from Ukraine were exempted from the visa requirement and allowed to cross the border.

According to UNHCR data, from 24 February 2022 to 17 June 2023, around 842,930 displaced Ukrainians crossed the border of the Republic of Moldova, transiting to EU countries.¹⁰ Of these, almost 102,996 remain in the country. Refugees are mostly women (59%) and children (46%), as well as elderly people (12%), who need more social protection.



¹⁰ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/248?sv=0&geo=680>

Refugee statistics are published on the official UNHCR pages (<https://data.unhcr.org>) where more general information can be found. The authorities also publish certain data concerning the number of entries and exits from Moldova (data published by the Border Police Department), or data published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on placement centres, legal procedures, medical, social, financial services, etc. (<https://dopomoga.gov.md/>).

More specific and disaggregated data could also be obtained through the request for official information, a procedure regulated by law.

The Republic of Moldova has received support from the international community to address the situation of Ukrainian refugees. Under the umbrella of the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF), co-chaired by the Government and UNHCR, some 42 governmental and humanitarian partners have joined efforts in 2022 to provide protection and humanitarian support services to refugees in the Republic of Moldova.

Initially, the programmes implemented focused on meeting the basic needs of refugees, such as food, shelter, drinking water, clothing and health care. Humanitarian organisations, NGOs and UN agencies (UNHCR, IOM, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.) worked with state institutions to implement these programmes. One example is the UNHCR's cash assistance programme, which provided 2200 lei (110 euros) per month per refugee.

To ensure sustainability, the focus has also been on the socio-economic integration of refugees. Romanian language programmes, vocational training and facilitating access to the labour market were implemented. However, the results in terms of economic integration have been modest.

To address the problem of the undefined status of refugees, the Moldovan Government granted temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees by adopting a decision in early 2023.

Through its decision on granting temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine, the Government came up with a clear mechanism to urgently implement temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine.¹¹ Thus, from 1 March 2023 the National Migration Inspectorate within the Ministry of Internal Affairs has started the procedure of pre-registration of applicants for temporary protection. Temporary protection is offered to displaced persons from Ukraine who cannot return to their country of origin and wish to stay in the Republic of Moldova.

To apply for temporary protection, persons must be in the Republic of Moldova and meet eligibility criteria, such as proof of residence in Ukraine before 24 February 2022. Similarly, temporary protection is also offered to Ukrainian citizens who were in the Republic of Moldova before 24 February 2022, stateless persons with recognised status in Ukraine and third-country nationals other than Ukrainians who were granted international or national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 and who cannot safely return to their country or region of origin. Family members of the mentioned persons are also eligible to apply for this form of protection.

¹¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135260&lang=ro

Those who obtain the identity document of the beneficiary's temporary protection have access to primary and emergency health care services, access to general education for minors, access to social assistance measures and last but not least permission to stay in the country during the period of temporary protection.

The provision 5.5. of the Commission for Exceptional Situations n3.68 of 10 May 2023 stipulates that from 15 May 2023, the period of stay on the territory of the Republic of Moldova for refugees from Ukraine who have not obtained a form of protection or another right of residence will be 90 days within a period of 180 days.¹²

It can be considered as a consequence of the war in Ukraine - or rather a concordance of the criteria deriving from the status of the Republic of Moldova as an EU candidate country - that the Cabinet of Ministers approved the draft on the organisation and functioning of the General Inspectorate for Migration. It involves changing the name of the Migration and Asylum Office into the General Inspectorate for Migration and the establishment of structural units necessary for the effective implementation of the structure's tasks.

The reorganisation of the Migration and Asylum Office contributes to strengthening the capacities for legalisation and documentation of displaced persons from Ukraine, increasing the capacity to respond effectively to challenges and threats, as well as to keep the migration situation under control, prompt operationalisation of the monitoring of the stay of foreigners on the territory of the country, timely resolution (15 calendar days) of the files of applicants for the right of residence in the Republic of Moldova.

At the same time, the amendments increase access to information, consultation and documentation services for foreigners and applicants throughout the country through the North, Centre and South territorial offices, and contribute to the possibility of providing quality services requested by investors, business representatives, regarding the documentation of foreigners arriving for work purposes, including citizens of EU Member States.

Thus, it is achieved to supplement the state staff with 50 units for the effective implementation of functional competences and tasks established, for the organisation and provision of quality services, development of cooperation and strengthening of institutional capacities in preventing, monitoring and combating illegal stay of foreigners. It also decentralises tasks to the territorial level in order to be closer to the citizen and the applicant beneficiary.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that, while data on migration are difficult to obtain and analyse, the UNHCR's Operational Information Document on Inter-Agency Cooperation identifies Chisinau, Ocnita, UTA Gagauzia and Stefan Voda as the Moldovan localities hosting the largest number of refugees.¹³

¹² https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/dispozitia_cse_68_10.05.2023.pdf

¹³ <https://data.unhcr.org/ar/documents/download/97538>

4. Responsibilities of local authorities

Until the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the responsibilities of local authorities in the field of migration were general and were assigned to both their own citizens and foreigners. Migration-specific responsibilities of public authorities until the beginning of the war are contained in both the Law on Asylum and the Law on Integration of Foreigners.^{14,15}

The role of the Public Administration Authorities in the field of migration, according to the Moldovan Legislation, refers to the following:

- *Collaborative role:* the Directorate of Asylum and Integration collaborates with the public administration authorities in the process of implementing the necessary rules and procedures to ensure respect for the rights of asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection, temporary protection or political asylum.
- *Protection of minors:* The Public Administration Authorities, acting as guardianship authority, provide protection to minors, including unaccompanied minors;
- *Coordination role:* when UNHCR intervention is necessary, the Public Administration Authorities play a role of cooperation and coordination of certain processes that are required;
- Central and local public administration authorities, in partnership with non-governmental and international organisations, can create collaborative networks to facilitate the integration of foreigners, including by delegating and subcontracting certain specific activities to non-governmental organisations.
- Local public administration authorities shall provide support in the development of programmes and implementation of community projects to facilitate the active participation of foreigners in the social and cultural life of the community;
- The public administration authorities carry out measures to increase the level of information of the local population on migration, asylum, social integration of foreigners, development of a spirit of tolerance and intercultural understanding;
- Public administration authorities identify accommodation possibilities for foreigners included in integration programmes.
- The central public administration authorities involved in the integration process meet quarterly to evaluate the integration process of foreigners, to determine the shortcomings in the implementation of integration measures, to plan joint activities and to systematise information on integration in order to submit proposals for the adjustment of national policies.

Since February 2022, immediately after the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the Commission for Exceptional Situations of Moldova has issued several Provisions that concerned the activity of the Local Public Administration, as follows:

- It was expressly regulated that local public authorities will participate in the process of managing the flow of displaced persons coming from Ukraine, including with logistical and administrative support.

¹⁴ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94717&lang=ro

¹⁵ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=94718&lang=ro

- Local public authorities, public institutions, state-owned companies and trade union organisations will provide the territorial social welfare structures with accommodation facilities under their control for the creation of temporary accommodation centres for refugees.
- Tax deduction of expenses related to donations for temporary placement and management of refugee flows made to public authorities is allowed.
- Permission has been issued for public institutions subordinated to central public authorities and local public authorities of the first level to set up temporary placement centres for refugees, with the approval of the National Agency for Social Assistance and in compliance with the Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the temporary placement centre for refugees.
- Provision has been made for the allocation of extra-budgetary funds for the management of the refugee crisis by the Local Public Administration Authorities.
- Local Public Authorities' Emergency Commissions were established and meet within 24 hours of each meeting of the National Commission for Emergency Situations to adopt measures to ensure the implementation of decisions at local/regional level.
- It was decided that the Public Administration Authorities that have established Refugee Placement Centres may employ social workers for a fixed period of time to provide humanitarian assistance services to refugees and manage the centres.

The role of local public administrations in managing migration and refugee crises remains an evolving landscape. The legal foundation is currently limited, necessitating legislative adaptations to empower them effectively. The responsibility to manage migration and refugee crises often fell squarely on the shoulders of mayors and local leaders who found themselves confronting these challenges independently.

One significant shortcoming remains the lack of sustained support from the central government. Financial resources were inadequate and the absence of eligible expenditure categories further complicated matters for local authorities to respond to the influx of Ukrainian refugees. For instance, in Edinet, local authorities managed the crisis with the assistance of civil society, as statutory provisions were absent.

The absence of explicit provisions within the legislation prevent local authorities from executing certain responsibilities effectively. Even the *Strategic Programme on the management of migration flows, asylum and integration of foreigners for the years 2022-2025* fail to address the role of local public administrations. In this context, local public authorities demonstrated proactive problem-solving while navigating the complexities of migration crises.

5. Compatibility with international standards on migration

a) Assessment of Moldovan Legislation

Definitions and Scope

Moldova's definitions of key terms such as migrant, asylum seeker, and refugee appear to be aligned with international standards, particularly in relation to the Geneva Convention. However, it is

essential to ensure that these definitions are comprehensive and accurately reflect the complexity of migration and protection needs and that there are proper interpretations.

Integration of Foreigners

The Law on the Integration of Foreigners is a notable effort towards promoting social, economic, and cultural integration. It is important to assess the effectiveness of integration programs and policies, especially in facilitating access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for migrants and refugees.

Temporary Protection for Displaced Persons

Moldova's recent decision to grant temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine is in line with international standards for providing immediate shelter in crisis situations. However, the implementation and effectiveness of this mechanism should be closely monitored, and its accessibility to eligible individuals should be ensured.

Changes in Migration Authority

The reorganisation of the Migration and Asylum Office into the General Inspectorate for Migration is a step towards improving efficiency and capacity in managing migration. It is important to assess whether this change enhances the quality of services, strengthens institutional capacities, and ensures compliance with international standards.

b) Impacts of EU Membership Consideration

The perspective of Moldova's accession to the European Union holds significant potential to reshape and influence the country's migration policies and practices. As Moldova progresses toward potential EU membership, several key impacts on its migration strategies become apparent.

The EU places strong emphasis on shared norms, values, and regulations among its Member states. In its endeavour to align its legal and regulatory frameworks with EU standards in preparation for membership, Moldova will need to harmonise its migration governance-related competences with those of the EU.

6. Inspiring local practices

Cooperation

Prior to the war in Ukraine, cooperation across regions was fostered to ensure the efficient function of Centres for legal migration. This cooperation encompassed activities such as training, consultations with the Bureau of Migration, Territorial Social Assistance Departments, and local education authorities, supported by civil society efforts. Consultations with the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM) were also held regularly, and collaboration with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) led to on-site consultations, particularly regarding hosting refugees in areas such as Mereni and Rezeni.

In the aftermath of the war, local authorities exhibited a comprehensive mobilisation effort, working across sectors to address challenges posed by the influx of displaced people, particularly from Ukraine. Cooperation extended to regions like Palanca, where unaccompanied minors required immediate attention. The presence of legal guardianship authorities was deemed vital for proper procedures, given discrepancies in age requirements. Actions of solidarity and support across local authorities have been also present, such as in the case of the Strășeni's resource mobilization efforts and donation to Ștefan Vodă.

Collaboration with colleagues from the southern regions, enabled effective decision-making. This resulted in equitable distribution of assistance not only to Ukrainian displaced people but also to the local population.

Mediation, conflict resolution, and integration efforts

During challenging situations, local public authorities acted as intermediaries, ensuring effective conflict resolution and collaboration with various stakeholders. The establishment of temporary shelters and response to urgent needs demonstrated adaptability in the face of adversity. In addition, training initiatives, supported by both donors and local authorities, targeted marginalised groups, including the Roma community. Gender equality and combating violence were ingrained in local authorities' practices, reflecting long-standing commitment to human rights. Collaborative initiatives with diaspora members further enriched integration efforts.

Long-term Integration and Transitory Support

The integration of migrants varied between urban and rural settings. While challenges persisted in larger cities like Balti, rural communities exhibited smoother integration processes, including schooling for migrant children. Short-term solutions encompassed transient accommodations, transportation to airports or Romania, albeit without state financial support.

In terms of long-term integration, local authorities contemplated strategies to offer comprehensive support. The inter-ministerial Migration and Asylum Committee provided a platform to discuss services during transit and the necessary provisions for extended stays.

Language Courses

Local public authorities have recognised the importance of effective communication for migrants and refugees to integrate into the host community. In response, language courses in Romanian are being organised for all interested individuals. These courses serve as a crucial tool to bridge the communication gap, enabling migrants and refugees to engage with the local community, access services, and pursue education and employment opportunities.

Vocational Training Facilities

Collaborating with both national and international NGOs, local authorities have taken proactive measures to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees through vocational training. Workshops, fairs, and exhibitions are organised, providing opportunities for both the local community and displaced individuals from Ukraine to acquire new skills and enhance employability. This not only contributes to their economic self-sufficiency but also promotes a sense of belonging and community engagement.

Inclusive Practices in Education

One of the commendable practices implemented by local authorities is the successful integration of refugee children into schools and kindergartens. The use of Russian as a common language facilitated this integration process, allowing swift enrolment and participation. The proactive approach of local public authorities ensured that the educational needs of refugee children were met promptly, contributing to their overall well-being and integration into the educational system.

Facilitating Employment: Job Matching and Opportunities

A national portal showcases job vacancies across urban and regional settings.¹⁶ Since the commencement of the war, Ukrainian displaced persons have enjoyed the right to work, leading to streamlined employment procedures. Moreover, a multitude of private online platforms supplement the state-run job portals, offering free job listings. Complementing these efforts, several NGOs provide valuable consultancy and guidance to facilitate the employment of displaced individuals.

Municipal Engagement in Business Ventures: Licensing and Support

Municipalities significantly contribute to the business landscape by providing guidance and assistance to potential entrepreneurs in their jurisdiction. The Agency of Public Services is entrusted with business registration, and LPAs frequently collaborate with this agency to offer effective support, extending their services to Ukrainian displaced persons. A concrete instance is found in Vinogradova, where the local municipality extended its support to a Ukrainian family, granting them resources to establish a family-run business.

Campaigns for Information Dissemination

Across the country, joint efforts involving Local Public Authorities (LPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have led to nationwide information campaigns. These campaigns aim to inform and educate displaced persons about available services, legal rights, and integration processes.

Territorial Coordination Commission

The establishment of the Territorial Coordination Commission, as per HG 947, exemplifies collaborative endeavours. Noteworthy is the participation of key stakeholders such as LPA, UNHCR, and CALM (Council of Local Authorities in Moldova). This initiative underscores the significance of inter-agency cooperation and consultation.

Consultative Mechanisms

A notable highlight from the interviews was the centrality of consultative mechanisms. Instances were cited where the Centre for Crisis Management acted as a hub for collaborative decision-making. This mechanism allowed for soliciting support from various parties, such as law enforcement when required. Such consultation contributes to effective crisis management.

¹⁶ <https://www.angajat.md/>

7. Recommendations

Strengthen Administrative Capacities and Financial Resources:

- Develop and implement sustainable financial mechanisms to bolster local municipalities' budgets dedicated to migration management. This could involve establishing a legislative framework for the creation and allocation of a dedicated reserve fund for exceptional circumstances related to migration.
- Advocate for the inclusion of provisions within legislation that outline the allocation of special funds to local authorities, specifically designated for managing migration crises.
- Develop standardised communication protocols between national and local authorities to ensure consistent implementation of migration-related decisions.
- Implement targeted integration programs that encourage social interactions and understanding between migrants and the local community.
- Establish a centralised data collection and management system that facilitates accurate reporting and analysis of migration trends.

Comprehensive Emergency Action Plans:

- Mandate the development of comprehensive local emergency action plans that cover a wide range of crisis scenarios, such as natural disasters, conflict-related displacements, and large-scale migration flows. These plans should be well-coordinated with regional and national response strategies.
- Establish legislative requirements that necessitate the creation and maintenance of well-defined emergency response plans at the local level, ensuring that each administrative unit is prepared for potential crises.

Tailored Local Plans Based on Context:

- Empower each local municipality to develop migration-specific action plans that are tailored to their unique context and challenges. These plans should address various aspects of migration, including integration, resource allocation, communication strategies, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- Encourage municipalities to conduct thorough assessments of their existing resources and capacities, enabling them to devise effective and contextually appropriate plans of action.

Revision of Legislative Framework:

- Undertake a comprehensive review of existing legislation pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in migration management. The aim should be to refine and clarify the legal framework, clearly defining the authority and obligations of local municipalities in times of migration crises.
- Enact comprehensive legislation that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in migration management.
- Advocate for the inclusion of provisions that outline the coordination mechanisms among local authorities, central government agencies, and international organisations during migration-related emergencies.

Sustainable Funding and Reserve Creation:

- Advocate for legislative changes that enable the establishment of a sustainable funding model for local authorities, ensuring that they have access to resources required for both routine migration management and unexpected crises.
- Work towards the creation of a reserve fund at the local level, designed to be utilised exclusively for addressing exceptional migration-related challenges. This fund should be regularly replenished to maintain its effectiveness.
- Allocate adequate funds to municipalities to support both migrants and refugees and address local residents' needs.
- Foster collaboration between municipalities and international organisations to ensure adequate funding and technical support for migration management efforts.

The baseline country report for the Republic of Moldova presents an assessment of the challenges and needs faced by local authorities regarding migration management and integration mechanisms.

The text presents key developments in the country's migration policy, assesses the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and describes the responsibilities of local authorities in the current legal and policy frameworks. The report outlines key trends and challenges in migration management and integration, and proposes recommendations to enhance multi-level dialogue and strengthen institutional frameworks for local authorities as leaders of change.

This baseline report is prepared within the framework of the project "Reinforcing the culture of dialogue and ethical open local governance in the Republic of Moldova" implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova (2021-2024). It is also a contribution to the multilateral project on "Strengthening resilience in local and regional authorities facing migration" implemented in Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Romania under the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan on protecting vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe (2021-2025).

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 46 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three Committees, it comprises 612 elected representatives representing more than 150,000 local and regional authorities.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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