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**Report of the fact-finding mission to the Republic of Moldova by
Ms Leyla Kayacik,
Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees,
13-14 June 2022**

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. CONTEXT OF THE MISSION

1. The ongoing aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which started on 24 February 2022, has led to the largest human displacement crisis in Europe today. Within days, millions left the country seeking safety in neighbouring countries and beyond. At the end of June 2022, a total of 8.4 million border crossings from Ukraine had been recorded, as well as 3.1 million border crossings back into Ukraine¹.
2. The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Migration and Refugees convened an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Europe (CoE) Network of Focal Points on Migration (NFPM) on 9 March 2022, to obtain information about the situation of the people fleeing Ukraine. The meeting provided an opportunity to highlight the need to protect persons in vulnerable situations from abuse, exploitation and human trafficking. Further needs in terms of access to healthcare including adequate support for psychological assistance, access to education, linguistic integration and access to the labour market were also emphasised by the Focal Points on Migration.
3. On 24 March 2022, the SRSG convened a meeting of the CoE's inter-secretarial Co-ordination Group on Migration, in order to discuss how the Organisation can best address the needs of the refugees from Ukraine which had been identified by the Focal Points, as well as co-ordinate CoE activities to provide adequate assistance on the ground, in line with CoE's mandate and within the Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe 2021-2025² (Action Plan). Furthermore, the SRSG organised an online meeting on 8 April 2022 with representatives of international organisations such as UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, OSCE/ODIHR, and EU/FRA. The main purpose of this meeting was to exchange information on the actions carried out by these international organisations in the context of the crisis in Ukraine and to determine how best the CoE, within its mandate, can complement the ongoing efforts. The SRSG also exchanged on this issue with representatives of civil society, on 5 April 2022, during the spring session of the CoE Conference of INGOs.
4. Based on the outcomes of these meetings and in accordance with her mandate³ and the CoE Action Plan, the SRSG decided to carry out fact-finding missions to member states neighbouring Ukraine. Prior to the visit to the Republic of Moldova, the SRSG conducted fact-finding missions to the Slovak Republic (2-4 May 2022), the Czech Republic (4-6 May 2022), and Poland (30 May-3 June 2022).

I.2. DATES OF THE MISSION AND COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

5. This report was prepared following the visit by the SRSG to the Republic of Moldova on 13-14 June 2022. It provides an overview of the situation of people from Ukraine in the Republic of Moldova, based on the observations of the SRSG delegation. The mission aimed at following up on the extraordinary meeting of the NFPM on 9 March 2022 which identified the need for the CoE's contribution to the protection of the most vulnerable persons fleeing Ukraine – namely women, unaccompanied and separated children, and elderly persons – from abuse, violence, exploitation and human trafficking.

¹ Source: [UNHCR: Ukraine Situation – Refugees from Ukraine across Europe \(of 29 June 2022\)](#). “These figures reflect cross-border movements (and not individuals). Movements back to Ukraine may be pendular, and do not necessarily indicate sustainable returns as the situation across Ukraine remains highly volatile and unpredictable”.

² [Action Plan on protecting vulnerable persons in the context of migration](#).

³ [Mandate of the SRSG on Migration and Refugees](#).

6. The mission also aimed at identifying challenges on the ground and the responses given by the Moldovan authorities, as well as assessing the needs of refugees from Ukraine, with a focus on vulnerable persons.
7. Considering the heightened risk of trafficking ⁴, the SRSG's delegation included a member of the CoE's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), Dr Ia Dadunashvili, who provided thematic expertise on this important issue. Ms Janeta Hanganu, lawyer at the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights, Ms Carolina Lasén Diaz, legal adviser at the SRSG Office, and Ms Päivi Suhonen, communications officer at the SRSG Office, all assisted the SRSG, Ms Leyla Kayacik, during her fact-finding visit to the Republic of Moldova.
8. The SRSG would like to thank the staff of the CoE Office in Chişinău, and in particular the Head of Office, Mr William Massolin, for all the support provided during both the preparation and conduct of the visit.

I.3. MEETINGS AND VISITS

9. In Chişinău, the SRSG and her delegation met with Ms Jana Costachi, State Secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; Mr Anatolie Topală, Minister of Education and Research; Mr Dumitru Udrea, Secretary General of the State Chancellery; Colonel Adrian Efros, Head of the Crisis Management Centre; Mr Ruslan Bolbocean, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; Mr Eduard Serbenco, State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice; Mr Ion Prisăcaru, State Secretary at the Ministry of Health; and Mr Tudor Mancaş, Secretary General at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The SRSG also had an opportunity to meet with Mr Ceslav Panico, People's Advocate (Ombudsman) and Ms Maia Bănărescu, People's Advocate for Children's Rights.
10. The SRSG's delegation exchanged views with representatives of the UNHCR, UNICEF and ICMPD in Chişinău, as well as with the Head of the Kyiv Office of the European Commission's DG for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). The SRSG also met with the following NGOs: Charity Centre for Refugees; Concordia Moldova; La Strada Moldova; the National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse; and Caritas Moldova.
11. The SRSG visited the Palanca border crossing point, including the nearby emergency accommodation centre and the bus station operating transfers to Chişinău and Romania. The SRSG also visited the MoldExpo Refugee Accommodation Centre in Chişinău.
12. The support of the authorities, in particular from the Ministry of Foreign and European Integration, was much appreciated in the organisation of the SRSG's visit to the Republic of Moldova. The SRSG would also like to express her gratitude to State Secretary, Ms Jana Costachi, for the arrangements made to facilitate the visit to the Palanca border point and nearby facilities for refugees arriving from Ukraine.
13. The programme of the fact-finding mission is included in the Appendix to this report.

⁴ [States must act urgently to protect refugees fleeing Ukraine from human trafficking – News \(coe.int\)](#)

II. ACCESS TO PROTECTION

II.1. FACTS AND FIGURES

14. The Republic of Moldova is a neighbouring country to Ukraine and the only one which is not a member of the European Union (EU)⁵, other than the Russian Federation and Belarus. The Republic of Moldova has the second largest border with Ukraine: 1 222 km, of which 453 km are not under the control of the Moldovan constitutional authorities⁶.
15. Furthermore, the Republic of Moldova is the neighbouring country that has received the largest number of refugees from Ukraine in relation to its population size (under three million)⁷. From 24 February 2022 to mid-June 2022, around 500 000 people from Ukraine had entered the Republic of Moldova⁸. This represents over six times more entries in the Republic of Moldova than in 2021 (with around 70 000 entries)⁹.
16. The martial law prohibiting men (between 18 and 60 years of age) from leaving Ukraine has resulted in women, children, the elderly and others in need of urgent assistance making-up around 90% of those fleeing Ukraine.
17. The Republic of Moldova had not previously been a country of destination for refugees. As reported by the Moldovan authorities, before 24 February 2022 there were 400 asylum-seekers in the country. However, over 8 000 asylum applications have been registered in the country since the onset of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which compares to previous annual averages of around 100 applications¹⁰.
18. UNHCR established “Green Corridors”, in co-operation with the Government of the Republic of Moldova, IOM and other humanitarian agencies, in order to ensure the safe passage of refugees wishing to travel to the EU. The Air Transfer Programme provides free air travel for vulnerable refugees directly from the Republic of Moldova to some EU countries.
19. On 17 March 2022, the EU signed a legally binding agreement with the Republic of Moldova on border management co-operation between Moldovan border guards and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The signed Operational Plan allowed the start of a Frontex Joint Operation to assist the Moldovan authorities in the processing of people crossing the border from Ukraine to Moldova. On 28 June 2022, Frontex and the Moldovan authorities organised an international conference to discuss the changing situation at the Moldovan-Ukrainian borders following the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the challenges linked to the strengthening of border management amid a security crisis.

⁵ The Republic of Moldova applied for EU membership on 3 March 2022. The European Parliament’s [Resolution of 5 May 2022 – “State of play of the EU-Moldova cooperation”](#), welcomed the Republic of Moldova’s application for EU membership and called on EU institutions to grant them EU candidate status, which was awarded on 23 June 2022 by the [European Council](#). Ukraine was also granted EU candidate status on the same occasion.

⁶ Source: “*Non-paper on Situational Analysis in Home Affairs due to the war in Ukraine*”, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Republic of Moldova (sent to the SRSG Office on 21 June 2022).

⁷ Id.

⁸ Data as of mid-August 2022 indicated over 573 000 border crossings. Source: UNHCR (<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>).

⁹ See no.7 above.

¹⁰ Id.

20. By the end of June 2022, 59 Frontex officers had been deployed to the Republic of Moldova. The SRSG had the opportunity to briefly exchange with several of them at the Palanca border crossing point. They confirmed the absence of serious concerns regarding trafficking in human beings at that border.
21. On 24 May 2022, the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) announced that it was sending a small contingent of personnel to support the Republic of Moldova regarding the influx of people fleeing Ukraine. This was the first EUAA deployment of staff to a non-EU country, which included six people in the context of the EU transfer programme, as well as security personnel.
22. At the time of the SRSG's fact-finding mission, around 85 000 refugees from Ukraine remained in the Republic of Moldova, with 70% of them in the surrounding areas of the Chişinău municipality and 30% in other regions. Over 3 600 people having fled Ukraine and staying in the Republic of Moldova were third-country nationals. Half of those who have stayed in Republic of Moldova (47 000) are children¹¹. The SRSG was informed that out of those 47 000 children, 20 000 were under six years of age and many needed special attention.
23. At the time of the visit, there were around 2 000-2 200 border crossings per day (1 000 incoming and 1 200 outgoing), compared to 13 000 incoming when the Russian aggression against Ukraine started. As of 1 July 2022, UNHCR and Moldovan Government data pointed to over 154 000 border crossings from the Republic of Moldova into Ukraine (since 28 February 2022)¹². This is part of a wider trend of returns to Ukraine over the past months: over three million people who fled Ukraine after the onset of the aggression have returned to Ukraine (data of 1 July 2022)¹³. During the visit to the Palanca border crossing, the SRSG was informed that about 15-20 men arrived daily from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, claiming to be Ukrainian refugees.
24. The Moldovan authorities informed the SRSG that one of their main priorities was the preparation of a contingency action plan at the national level, for around 500 000 more people arriving from Ukraine, with an estimation that around 250 000 of them may be staying in the Republic of Moldova.
25. The State Chancellery set up a Single Centre for Refugee Crisis Management, which operates as a co-ordination mechanism and was managed, at the time of the visit, by Colonel Adrian Efros.
26. The Republic of Moldova had never been faced with a similar crisis and the country was therefore unprepared for the unforeseen and exceptional influx of refugees from Ukraine. However, from the outset, the Moldovan authorities mobilised resources and joined efforts in an outstanding response to provide immediate assistance to people fleeing Ukraine.

¹¹ Id.

¹² Source: UNHCR, Regional Bureau for Europe, Ukraine Situation, Flash Update #19, of 1 July 2022.

¹³ Id.

II.2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

27. The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova declared the state of emergency on 24 February 2022¹⁴, for a duration of 60 days, which was initially extended on 21 April 2022¹⁵, to 23 June 2022. A second extension was decided upon on 23 June 2022 by the Moldovan Parliament to run until 7 August 2022¹⁶ “taking into account the situation related to the regional security and the menace to the national security”. On 28 July 2022, the Moldovan Parliament decided to further extend the state of emergency for an additional 60 days, with effect from 8 August 2022¹⁷.
28. The decisions on the state of emergency refer to the empowerment of the Commission for Exceptional Situations to issue provisions and directives, which are mandatory and enforceable, to implement a number of measures during the state of emergency¹⁸.
29. Parliamentary decisions on the state of emergency in the Republic of Moldova have been notified to the Council of Europe, pursuant to Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights and as they derogate from certain provisions of the Convention and its Protocols¹⁹.
30. The most relevant legislation includes the following: Law No. 200/2010 on foreigners; Law No. 270/2008 on asylum; Law No. 274/2012 on the integration of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova; and Law No. 140/2013 on special protection of children at risk and children separated from parents.
31. As the Republic of Moldova has been a transit country for many persons fleeing Ukraine, and a temporary destination country for others, initial plans focused on protecting people on the move. However, plans are now under way to consider the longer-term integration needs for those who have decided to stay in the Republic of Moldova. This includes granting them legal status.
32. Under normal conditions, Ukrainian nationals are exempt from visa requirements to enter the Republic of Moldova for stays of up to 90 days. A number of derogations from the legislation on asylum and foreigners have been made so that people fleeing Ukraine could enter and stay on the territory of the Republic of Moldova without a passport and without seeking asylum for up to 180 days.
33. In the absence of a mechanism providing temporary protection, persons fleeing Ukraine have two options: (i) apply for asylum, (ii) get the right of stay in the Republic of Moldova, currently available for six months and which brings access to education, the labour market, primary and emergency healthcare.

¹⁴ [Decision of the Parliament No.41/2022, on the declaration of the state of emergency.](#)

¹⁵ [Decision of the Parliament No. 105/2022, of 21 April 2022, on the extension of the state of emergency.](#)

¹⁶ [Decision of the parliament No. 163/2022, of 23 June 2022, on the extension of the state of emergency.](#)

¹⁷ [MOLDPRES News Agency - Emergency state extended by another 60 days in Moldova.](#) See English version of the Parliamentary Decision No. 245, of 28 July 2022, at <https://rm.coe.int/1680a78aac>

¹⁸ Some of the measures included are: “a special regime for entry and exit of the country”; for “movement on the territory of the country”; “expelling from the territory people whose presence may affect the ensuring of the public order and security”; “measures for the management of the migration flows”; and “accessing and managing the international assistance for the duration of the state of emergency”.

¹⁹ These measures, of “humanitarian, economic, energy and military nature” are considered by the Moldovan authorities to be “essential and critical in protecting the national security” as a result of the continuing war on the territory of Ukraine and in a context of “major national security threats in the immediate vicinity of the land border between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. See [Communication contained in the Note Verbale No. FRA-CoE/352.2/258 from the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe](#), dated 28 June 2022.

34. The SRSG was informed that a draft government decision to grant temporary protection to all those fleeing Ukraine has been prepared and will be adopted upon the expiry of the state of emergency. The Minister of Education further informed the SRSG that the temporary protection will allow refugee children to be integrated in the Moldovan education system.
35. The representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the SRSG that the Bureau for Migration and Asylum (BMA) has the same budgetary and human resources than before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Furthermore, the Moldovan authorities highlighted that alongside protection needs, they must also address security concerns.
36. The SRSG recognised the efforts of the Moldovan authorities to protect those fleeing Ukraine. She underlined the importance of providing legal protection for them, including non-Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons, beyond the state of emergency measures currently in place. She also highlighted the importance of providing timely and accurate legal information and assistance to persons fleeing Ukraine with the help of qualified legal practitioners. The SRSG welcomed the agreement concluded between the State Chancellery and the Moldovan Bar Association to provide free legal aid to refugees and migrants.
37. Bearing in mind the need to equip legal practitioners with the necessary qualifications and skills, the Council of Europe set up in March 2022 a number of online Asylum/Migration HELP²⁰ e-Desks, aimed at facilitating access to relevant information and training for legal professionals and migration officials on the effective handling of cases involving refugees and displaced persons, with a specific focus on refugees from Ukraine. One of these HELP e-Desks is available in Romanian language. These e-Desks complement the existing national HELP courses on “Asylum and Human Rights”, “Refugee and Migrant Children” and “Combating Trafficking in Human Beings”²¹.
38. The SRSG invites state authorities and relevant practitioners to disseminate information on migration and asylum-related HELP courses, as well as on the e-Desk on migration/asylum that is available in Romanian language. She further encouraged legal practitioners to use these free online resources.
39. Updated information on new developments concerning the adoption of new legislation on temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine and the contingency plan which was being prepared at the time of the SRSG visit would be welcomed.

III. RECEPTION FACILITIES AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

40. Persons entering the Republic of Moldova are provided with an identification number that gives them access to the same services as Moldovan citizens, such as education, healthcare, and employment.

²⁰ [What is HELP? \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/helpeasylum/)

²¹ See [COEHELP e-Desks on asylum/migration for lawyers assisting people fleeing the war in Ukraine – All news](#).

41. The World Food Programme (WFP), with the support of UNHCR, provides financial support to refugees from Ukraine – both Ukrainian nationals and third country nationals who were residents in Ukraine are eligible to receive 120 US dollars per month for each family member, during six months. At the time of the mission, this cash-based assistance was received by 60 000 persons. The UNHCR representative indicated that this cash-based initiative also provides an opportunity to connect with the persons arriving from Ukraine and to collect information about their situation and needs.
42. The UNHCR and the Government of Moldova established a Helpline (0800-800-11) that refugees from Ukraine can use to ask any questions, file complaints or make suggestions. The “green line” offers information to refugees and host communities seeking help and it is operational every day from 8am to 10pm and available in four languages: Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian and English.
43. On 25 February 2022, the Republic of Moldova activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to support people from Ukraine²², allocating €13 million in humanitarian assistance to help civilians affected by the war in Ukraine. The funding provides for food, water, healthcare and shelter. In the context of the Solidarity Platform, co-ordinated by the European Commission, six EU countries made pledges to welcome the 11 500 people transiting through the Republic of Moldova.
44. In April 2022, the EU’s European Humanitarian Response Capacity rolled out an operation in the Republic of Moldova setting up a warehouse in Chişinău and delivering over 1 200 tents and 4 000 blankets for people from Ukraine. In addition, 18 EU member states and Norway offered in-kind assistance to the Republic of Moldova through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, including shelter items, medical aid, food and energy supplies²³.
45. The NGO Law Centre of Lawyers monitors six border crossing points and provides legal assistance in refugee accommodation centres in Chişinău and beyond, as well as to those refugees from Ukraine staying in private accommodation. The Law Centre has also trained border police officers on refugee rights, asylum law, and vulnerability identification.
46. The contingency plan under preparation (see paragraph 24 above) will address the institutional and financial capacities and needs of all stakeholders, with the aim of developing two types of assistance for persons fleeing Ukraine: emergency (upon entry, transit and exit), and an integrated package of services for those staying in the Republic of Moldova.
47. The SRSG was informed about a proposal to set up a working group at the State Chancellery to monitor the situation of refugees from Ukraine. Updated information on this initiative would be welcomed.

III.1. ACCESS TO ACCOMMODATION

48. Reception centres are organised through the National Social Assistance Agency (NSAA), under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and they need to comply with a set of requirements approved by the NSAA. There were initially 93 centres for refugees (from 20-person shelters to much bigger ones) many of which were run by local authorities and NGOs.

²² See at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/moldova/>

²³ See [European Commission Press Release](#), of 12 April 2022.

49. The Single Centre for Refugees Crisis Management runs its own reception centres, mostly for people with disabilities, pregnant or nursing women, children under the age of three and seriously ill persons.
50. The Ministry of Internal Affairs runs two special accommodation centres (for asylum seekers, and a public custody centre for migrants). The Ministry also set up a provisional assistance centre on the border (in Palanca), providing immediate support to people from Ukraine wanting to travel to the EU, and another one in Calaraşovca village. Two further provisional centres were set up as well.
51. Order No. 1 of the Commission for Emergency Situations, of 24 February 2022, set up the afore-mentioned provisional centres to manage the influx of people fleeing Ukraine. It also established that local authorities, public institutions, state-owned companies and trade unions would identify and make available facilities that could be used as temporary placement centres to accommodate refugees from Ukraine. The NSAA prepared the rules for the operation of the centres and approved them, after examination of the applications received.
52. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection issued Order No. 21/2022, of 26 March 2022, regulating the organisation and functioning of temporary placement centres for refugees, as well as including rules on staffing and expenses. This Order sets minimum standards and regulates the operation of the temporary placement centres.
53. At the time of the mission, there were a total of 87 centres (including those run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection), with a total capacity of 8 822 places and an occupancy rate of 60%, with over 4 000 persons.
54. However, 90% of people entering the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine are hosted by families. Cash assistance is provided to these Moldovan families: 190 US dollars, twice, while a third payment was being considered at the time of the mission. The SRSG was informed that around 10 000 families that host refugees from Ukraine receive cash support from the WFP. This cash assistance also provides the possibility for international organisations to register people fleeing Ukraine and assess their special needs and vulnerabilities.
55. Unaccompanied children are accommodated temporarily in reception centres, with child-friendly support services. At the time of the mission, the SRSG was informed that six unaccompanied children were integrated in family-type services.
56. The People's Advocate²⁴ raised concerns regarding the protection of refugees from Ukraine housed by private individuals, alerting about possible risks of exploitation and human trafficking. Issues related to the accreditation and access to accommodation centres for people fleeing Ukraine ran by religious organisations were also raised. As regards accommodation centres for unaccompanied children from Ukraine, the People's Advocate for Child's Rights informed the SRSG that her Office intended to conduct visits to these centres the week after the SRSG's mission, in June 2022.
57. The People's Advocate further informed the SRSG that there had been difficulties as regards the accommodation in reception centres of non-Ukrainian persons. Furthermore, he indicated that no accommodation centre provides adequate facilities for persons with disabilities.

²⁴ People's Advocate (Ombudsman), Ceslav Panico, [Report No.1 on monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from 25 February to 30 April 2022](#) (dated 18 May 2022). See sections 2.4 and 2.5 on accommodation.

58. The representative of a Roma non-governmental organisation (NGO) informed the SRSG that the week before he had visited Ungheni (west of the country), where a group of 50 Roma who had fled Ukraine had to pay rent for their accommodation, as they had not been allowed in refugee accommodation centres. Furthermore, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) reported that thousands of Roma fleeing Ukraine have experienced segregation and poor conditions in reception centres, with many lacking the documentation which would enable them to travel on to EU countries²⁵. The ERRC monitors both the conditions and the segregated nature of these centres.
59. During the visit to the MoldExpo accommodation centre, which hosts families, women with children, elderly persons and people with disabilities, as well as Roma persons (but no single men), the SRSG observed that the open-plan nature of the accommodation, with cubicle partitions having cloth doors and room mostly for one bed and the related lack of privacy reported by some of the residents, does not make it suitable for long stays.
60. The Director of MoldExpo explained that many refugees had been there for over two months, and that the presence of Roma people had created additional tension among residents, who called the police in case of theft and accused the Roma in the centre.
61. The SRSG underlined the need to monitor family-based accommodation for adults and unaccompanied children fleeing Ukraine, including compliance with the required standards. She invited the authorities to consider whether the NSAA rules for accommodation need reviewing or adapting to the evolving situation. The SRSG further encourages the authorities to ensure that the accommodation centres for refugees meet the minimum standards set, and treat all refugees equally, regardless of their origin.

III.2. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

62. NGOs informed the SRSG about the different access to healthcare for refugees from Ukraine and asylum-seekers. The former have quicker access to health insurance, while the latter only get a one-month permit and no medical insurance, without the possibility of buying it (although they get medical insurance when they get a job). International organisations have reportedly offered to cover the costs of medical assistance/insurance schemes for asylum seekers, which has not received the green light of Moldovan authorities.
63. During her visit, the SRSG was informed of the decision by the Ministry of Health to provide all refugees from Ukraine with free access to medical assistance, without having to buy health insurance. The Ministry made available mobile medical groups to enter border checkpoints, as well as to be present in refugee camps and accommodation centres. Immediate healthcare including emergencies, traumas and primary healthcare is provided to people fleeing Ukraine free of charge.
64. Free vaccination services are provided to children from Ukraine, including routine vaccines such as those against measles/mumps/rubella, poliomyelitis and diphtheria/tetanus. In addition, over 1 100 adult refugees from Ukraine have been vaccinated against Covid-19 while residing in, or transiting through, the Republic of Moldova.

²⁵ ERRC news of 25 April 2022: "[Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo](#)".

65. On 11 May 2022, the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) approved nearly 2 million euros in grants from its Migrant and Refugee Fund (MRF) to help people fleeing Ukraine and arriving in four European countries²⁶. The Republic of Moldova²⁷ was one of the four recipients of these grants, and the Ministry of Health was awarded 900 000 euros in grants to finance immediate and urgent healthcare services for refugees from Ukraine.
66. One of the biggest challenges reported to the SRSG was the continuation of treatment for chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases, oncological treatments, and dialysis. The Moldovan authorities requested the support of international organisations and the EU to address this issue and the European civil protection system was used to evacuate some of the chronically ill persons arriving from Ukraine. Twenty-eight persons were evacuated to EU countries to continue with their treatment, with the support of EU platforms, while another 50 were evacuated to the EU with the support of international organisations or NGOs.
67. At the time of the mission, some international organisations were covering the costs of some important medical services: the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) covered pregnancy and newborn related costs; UNICEF covered children's medical assistance (from June 2022); IOM covered some of the costs for oncological medicines and hemodialysis.
68. The Moldovan authorities informed the SRSG of a monthly expenditure of around one million euros in medical assistance for refugees from Ukraine, which is a burden for their national health system. All the support received from international organisations is agreed with the National Insurance Company and all the costs linked to assisting persons fleeing Ukraine are reported to this company and strictly documented.
69. NGOs informed the SRSG that there is stigma associated with psychiatrists and, initially, people arriving from Ukraine did not want to accept the psychological support, but this has evolved over time.
70. The CoE Pompidou Group prepared recommendations²⁸ on how people can better interact and communicate with persons who have experienced a crisis or difficult life event. The recommendations were developed at the request of the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior, in light of the traumatic situations experienced by the Ukrainian population, and they are available in eight languages, including in Romanian and Ukrainian²⁹.
71. A CoE pilot event – “Seminar on Psychological Support to Refugees: Strengthening Professional Capacities” – was organised in the Republic of Moldova on 14-15 June 2022, at the initiative of the SRSG and with support of the CoE's Directorate of Political Affairs and External Relations. This pilot seminar allowed psychologists, teachers and social workers to strengthen their skills and to learn how to detect signs of war-related trauma in women and children and to treat them adequately. Requests for follow-up have been made and further events are envisaged.

²⁶ See press release at <https://coebank.org/en/news-and-publications/news/ceb-approves-almost-2-million-to-help-refugees-from-ukraine/>.

²⁷ In March 2022, the CEB approved 3.1 million euros to five country offices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) including the one in the Republic of Moldova.

²⁸ See [Psychological first aid for Ukrainian people - Newsroom \(coe.int\)](https://rm.coe.int/for-helpers-ro-web/1680a5c955).

²⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/for-helpers-ro-web/1680a5c955> (Romanian), and <https://rm.coe.int/for-helpers-ukr-web/1680a5c95b> (Ukrainian).

72. The CoE stands ready to support stakeholders in the prompt detection of psychological trauma in persons fleeing Ukraine and in the provision of appropriate assistance, thereby contributing to ongoing efforts of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and educators working on psycho-social support and trauma rehabilitation.

III.3. ACCESS TO EDUCATION

73. The Minister of Education informed the SRSG about the framework that allowed for the integration of children from Ukraine in the kindergartens and schools of the Moldovan education system, through an Order of the Commission for Emergency Situations.
74. Out of a reported total of 47 000 children from Ukraine present in the Republic of Moldova at the time of the visit, 1 800 of them were enrolled in schools. Most Ukrainian school-aged children in the Republic of Moldova continued to follow the Ukrainian curriculum online, given the uncertainty of the situation and the need to complete the academic year.
75. The Moldovan authorities reported having registered around 8 000 children from Ukraine, mostly through contact with local educational establishments or municipal authorities. They also reported that around 20 000 of the total 47 000 children from Ukraine in Moldova were under six years of age, and therefore pre-school.
76. The People's Advocate for Child's Rights in the Republic of Moldova highlighted the obligation for all children to be enrolled in school in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the monitoring of the implementation of this right that her Office is conducting. As the education systems in the two countries differ (there are 12 grades in the Republic of Moldova and 10 in Ukraine), it can be difficult to place children in the corresponding grade.
77. The SRSG was informed that psycho-pedagogical services were provided in refugee accommodation centres, and that trainings for teachers had been organised so that they could learn the specificities of working with refugee children.
78. The Moldovan authorities raised concerns about the need for assessments to make appropriate plans for the academic year starting in September 2022, including the likelihood that many more children from Ukraine may be interested in education in the Republic of Moldova, and for which they will have to learn the Romanian language. For this, co-operation with other Ministries is needed so that more children from Ukraine living in the Republic of Moldova are identified and located. The Moldovan authorities recognised that the linguistic integration of these children, especially in rural areas, must receive additional attention – and therefore the Moldovan educational system needs to be reinforced.
79. With more than 200 applications filed by young people from Ukraine interested in taking admission exams for Ukrainian universities, the Moldovan authorities have supported the Ministry of Education of Ukraine in setting admission examination centres for online tests in accordance with the requirements of the Ukrainian education system.

80. The priority for the Moldovan authorities is to integrate children from Ukraine in the Moldovan education system, which is better for socialisation and inclusion. At the same time, it has proved difficult to secure the integration of refugee children in rural areas due to a lack of schooling opportunities in Ukrainian/Russian. However, the option of online schooling in Ukrainian, as well as the possibility of involving Ukrainian refugees as teachers in the Republic of Moldova, are considered secondary and cannot be sustained over time.
81. The CoE implements the Project “Education for Democracy in the Republic of Moldova”³⁰ with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. All Moldovan civic education teachers have received training under this project and, right after the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, a series of half-day online workshops were jointly organised with the Ministry of Education and Research to support teachers in addressing the war in schools (about 1 000 teachers participated). Over the summer of 2022, modules on inter-cultural education within existing continuous teacher training programmes were being developed under this project, to help teachers better integrate Ukrainian refugee children in Moldovan schools.
82. The Moldovan authorities informed the SRSG that they are developing a comprehensive programme for language learning for minorities and that refugees could also benefit from it. They also expressed interest in CoE tools and experience on language teaching methods to support the linguistic integration of refugee children. A possible pilot project on language support for migrants is under discussion between the CoE and the Moldovan authorities and focuses on equipping educators working with Ukrainian children with relevant CoE tools.
83. The CoE has a dedicated website with resources focused on refugees from Ukraine, including children, run by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)³¹. In addition, the CoE project on Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM)³² provides policy guidelines and pedagogical resources for authorities and educators in member states receiving refugees and other migrants, covering adults and children. A new Reference Guide on Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants³³ was launched at the end of June 2022.
84. The SRSG encourages the Moldovan authorities to make full use of the available CoE guidelines and other tools to support authorities and practitioners to strengthen the linguistic inclusion of adult and child refugees from Ukraine. The Moldovan authorities are also encouraged to use relevant CoE standards and expertise, in particular the 2022 Recommendation “on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture”³⁴.
85. The SRSG welcomes the participation, as from May 2022, of the Republic of Moldova in the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees³⁵ – EQPR – (see next section), a tool that can help refugees access the labour market and continue their academic studies.

³⁰ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/project-education-for-democracy-in-the-republic-of-moldova>.

³¹ See [ECML/CELV > Resources > Supporting the linguistic integration of refugees from the Ukraine](#) and [Toolkits: Linguistic integration of migrants \(coe.int\)](#).

³² See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/home>.

³³ See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/lasliam>.

³⁴ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture \(adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 February 2022\)](#).

³⁵ [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees \(EQPR\) \(coe.int\)](#).

III.4. ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

86. People having fled Ukraine are allowed to enter the labour market without a specific permit, just with their identification number (see paragraph 40) and employers informing the authorities. At the time of the visit, 1 135 economic entities had offered vacancies to people from Ukraine and over 500 of them were officially employed. The real figures are likely to be somewhat higher as some contracts are short-term and the authorities may not have been duly informed.
87. The official website (www.dopomoga.gov.md) provides information and tips for Ukrainians to find jobs in the Republic of Moldova including links to the National Employment Agency.
88. One of the challenges reported to the SRSG was the difficulty for people from Ukraine to open a business in the Republic of Moldova given their lack of documented status and the paperwork necessary to start a business.
89. The SRSG highlighted the importance of the EQPR, a practical tool for assessing the qualifications and skills of persons from Ukraine. Nine centres have opened in the country where the personal competencies of refugees can be recognised. The SRSG encouraged the Moldovan authorities to make full use of the EQPR scheme to facilitate the employment or further education in the Republic of Moldova of persons fleeing Ukraine.
90. As most of the adults fleeing Ukraine and travelling to other European countries are women, and most of them look after children and/or elderly persons, it is of particular importance that they can access childcare facilities so that they are able to find employment – also in rural areas. The SRSG was informed about the shortage of such facilities also for Moldovan nationals (including the lack of day care for children under the age of three) and she recommends that these needs are duly addressed.
91. The SRSG welcomed the access to the labour market provided to persons fleeing Ukraine, which is a very important form of assistance, with the additional benefit of contributing to protect people from Ukraine against the risk of human trafficking.

IV. PERSONS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

IV.1. CHILDREN

92. Children fleeing the war and seeking protection in a foreign country are particularly vulnerable and need special support and guidance. At the time of the visit, more than half of the 80 000 persons from Ukraine living in the Republic of Moldova were children.
93. The SRSG was informed that standard operating procedures were being developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection as regards the protection of refugee children from Ukraine, following the regulation by the Commission for Exceptional Situations in April 2022 of the procedure to identify, assist and monitor children at risk from entering the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine (through an inter-sectorial co-operation mechanism).

94. UNHCR and UNICEF set up seven “Blue Dot” safe spaces, in co-operation with public authorities and other partners, to provide services for children, families and other persons with specific needs arriving from Ukraine, including key information, rest areas, food, hygienic supplies, psycho-social support, safe spaces for mothers and children, basic legal counselling, and referrals to local services. “Blue Dot” centres were set up at the Refugee Accommodation Centre at MoldExpo and at the Palanca and Otaci border crossings.
95. UNICEF and UNHCR, in partnership with NGOs in the Republic of Moldova, have provided training on child protection and children’s rights. NGOs such as Plan International and Ave Copiii work closely with border police, staff at the BMA and guardianship authorities as regards child protection identification and referral systems. A database with unaccompanied and separated children, and children in need of protection services, was under development at the time of the visit³⁶.
96. The People's Advocate for Children's Rights highlighted the issue of documentation of children and the need to work with the government to ensure that every child entering the Republic of Moldova is identified, registered and provided with documents if they lack ID. She also raised the lack of specialised assistance for refugee children from zero to three years of age and the wider issue of lack of recreation centres and activities for all refugee children, while recognising that the Moldovan child protection system is over-stretched to also cater for the needs of children arriving from Ukraine, with existing resources.
97. On 10 March 2022, the CoE Lanzarote Committee adopted a statement³⁷ “on protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse resulting from the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine”, calling for the protection of migrant and refugee children. The Lanzarote Committee further adopted a checklist³⁸ on the protection of children affected by the refugee crisis, which provides concrete guidance for practitioners and policy makers to prevent and protect children in a migration context. It is therefore a pertinent tool to support the authorities confronted by the arrival of children, in particular those fleeing Ukraine. The checklist is also available in Romanian³⁹.
98. On 19 May 2022, Government Order No. 66 created a specialised committee for the co-ordination and monitoring of the Lanzarote Convention in the Republic of Moldova. The SRSG encourages this committee to address the outstanding recommendations from the Lanzarote Committee aimed at the protection of children affected by the refugee crisis, in particular as regards information and advice to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation from occurring; awareness-raising activities; helplines for victims; and cross-border missing children.
99. The CoE is currently implementing a project in the Republic of Moldova, aimed at combating violence against children, including in the context of the consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. In this regard, the two main components of the project in 2022 are: (i) the development of guidelines for monitoring services provided to children, with a specific focus on services for refugee children, and (ii) support NGOs working with children arriving in the Republic of Moldova, in the form of grants for awareness material distribution among relevant professionals working with refugee children. Both activities are planned to be completed before the end of the year.

³⁶ See [Regional Inter-Agency Operational Update – Ukraine Refugee Situation – 15 May to 15 June 2022 – ReliefWeb](#).

³⁷ See [Urgent need to protect Ukrainian children in migration from the risk of exposure to sexual abuse – Newsroom on Children's Rights \(coe.int\)](#).

³⁸ [Council of Europe checklist “Protection of children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”](#).

³⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/lista-de-verificare-principalele-obligatii-ale-statelor-in-temeiul-con/1680a725b1>.

IV.1.1. Unaccompanied and separated children

100. According to the Moldovan authorities, between the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the time of the visit, 428 children from Ukraine had been identified as unaccompanied or separated. Most of them however were later reunited with parents or relatives.
101. At the beginning of the Russian aggression, reportedly many 14 to 18-year-olds entered the Republic of Moldova alone, while at the time of the visit there were far fewer reports of children crossing the border to the Republic of Moldova unaccompanied. It should be noted that Ukrainian law allows young people aged 16 to 18 to travel outside Ukraine alone and without parental consent. Whenever such cases were identified, the guardianship authority was informed, and a guardian was assigned until an adult relative was identified.
102. The Moldovan authorities informed the SRSG that a placement centre for unaccompanied children was set up in Cărpineni, Hâncești. The centre was however empty at the time of the visit as family accommodation was prioritised and six unaccompanied children from Ukraine had been placed in family-based accommodation.
103. The Moldovan authorities has identified as priority issues, where the Council of Europe support would be welcome, the training of relevant officials and staff to facilitate the early identification of vulnerable people among people arriving from Ukraine, including trainings to manage the situation of unaccompanied children.
104. During the visit to the Palanca border crossings, UNHCR staff and NGOs present reported no incidents as regards unaccompanied and separated children, explaining that guardianship authorities are deployed at the different border crossings where they are actively involved. The SRSG was informed that the Ștefan Vodă guardianship authority is present 24/7 at the Palanca border crossing with Ukraine. At the beginning of the crisis, there were cases of undocumented persons but at the time of the visit the situation had changed and everyone crossing the border had documents.
105. The SRSG recalls the importance of ensuring the best interests of migrant and refugee children, and draws attention to CoE standards and guidance, such as the Lanzarote Committee recommendations⁴⁰ (including the specific ones addressed to the Republic of Moldova); the Guide on family-based care for unaccompanied and separated migrant and refugee children⁴¹, the 2019 CoE Recommendation on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration⁴²; and the 2019 CoE Recommendation on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood⁴³.

⁴⁰ See [Council of Europe assesses measures taken by states to protect children on the move from sexual abuse and exploitation - News \(coe.int\)](#) and <https://rm.coe.int/cross-border-missing-children-helplines-for-victims-prosecution-of-off/1680a62b36>.

⁴¹ See [New Guide on familybased care for unaccompanied and separated children – Newsletter – February 2022 \(coe.int\)](#).

⁴² See <https://rm.coe.int/cm-rec-2019-11-guardianship-en/16809ccfe2>.

⁴³ See [CoE webpage on supporting young refugees in their transition to adulthood](#).

IV.2. ROMA

106. Ukraine's Roma minority, estimated at around 400 000 people, are among the refugees who fled the country after 24 February 2022. Many of them arrived in the Republic of Moldova without travel documents or only with birth certificates, which created difficulties in accessing services. In addition, persons arriving from Ukraine with travel documents can continue their travel to other countries in Europe and beyond, but those without documents – which is the case for most Roma persons – cannot do so as they are not able to prove their nationality and many of them are indeed *de facto* stateless.
107. There were reported cases of segregation in accommodation centres⁴⁴ as regards Roma persons arriving from Ukraine (see paragraphs 59 and 60). A previously closed university building in Chişinău⁴⁵ was turned into a temporary accommodation centre mostly for Roma refugees from Ukraine, hosting around 200 of them⁴⁶. NGOs reported that Roma refugees from Ukraine actively participate in their activities and need an adapted response to their needs.
108. The People's Advocate⁴⁷ also raised concerns about discrimination against Roma in temporary placement centres of persons fleeing Ukraine. He has recommended that the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Commission for Emergency Situations “prevent and combat discrimination in access to accommodation and services for refugees, combat stereotypes and hate speech”, for instance through codes of conduct, complaint mechanisms and non-discrimination training for relevant staff.
109. The SRSG underlines the importance of equal treatment of all refugees from Ukraine and recalls the relevant statements of the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights and ECRI⁴⁸.

IV.3. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

110. There is no official data on the number of persons with disabilities having entered the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine. The absence of information hinders the proper assessment of their potential needs and access to relevant services and support, including medicines, medical care, and specialised equipment.
111. A multi-sector needs assessment, including disability aspects, was conducted in the Republic of Moldova in May 2022 by UNICEF and REACH International⁴⁹. The assessment was based on a survey carried out through face-to-face interviews with around 700 persons having fled Ukraine and living in cities and villages in Moldova, as well as in 39 refugee accommodation centres.

⁴⁴ European Roma Rights Centre: [Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo – European Roma Rights Centre \(errc.org\)](#); Human Rights Watch: [Romani Refugees from Ukraine Face Segregation | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#).

⁴⁵ The building belonged to the Faculty of International Relations, Political Sciences, and Public Administration (FRISPA).

⁴⁶ The Moldovan authorities explained that this centre was not intended exclusively for Roma refugees, as families with children and citizens of Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and China were also accommodated there between 2 March and 15 June 2022.

⁴⁷ People's Advocate (Ombudsman), Ceslav Panico, [Report No.1 on monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from 25 February to 30 April 2022](#) (dated 18 May 2022). See section 2.5.1 on accommodation.

⁴⁸ See [Commissioner for Human Rights: Let us fight discrimination and prejudices against Roma fleeing the war in Ukraine](#) and [ECRI Statement on the consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine](#).

⁴⁹ See [website Ukraine Situation – REACH & UNICEF - Multi-Sector Needs Assessment \(MSNA\) Disability](#).

112. The Republic of Moldova's Hotline Support Service for persons with disabilities⁵⁰ is also being used by persons fleeing Ukraine. By the end of July 2022, 181 people from Ukraine had called the hotline seeking information, psychological or legal services, or referrals to other services.
113. The SRSG underlines the importance of collecting data on the number of persons with disabilities having entered the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine in order to better address their situation and needs. She further encourages relevant authorities, international organisations, civil society and other stakeholders to increase efforts in providing refugees with disabilities with all the necessary support.

V. PREVENTING, DETECTING AND PROTECTING AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

V.1. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

114. Sixty percent of Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova are female, while 50% are children, which makes them a sizeable group in need of protection against violence and human trafficking.
115. The Secretary General of Council of Europe has underlined the vulnerability of women and girls from Ukraine to sexual violence as they try to escape the conflict⁵¹, pledging the Organisation's support to member states in addressing the needs of refugees from Ukraine.
116. In the Republic of Moldova, UN Women and other relevant UN agencies co-ordinate work on gender-related issues affecting people having fled Ukraine, together with relevant national authorities and NGOs, in a "Gender Task Force" that meets regularly⁵² and which includes a Working Group on Gender-Based Violence. The Working Group oversees resource mobilisation to prevent gender-based violence and to respond to it, and it has prepared referral pathways and standard operating procedures. It has also carried out awareness campaigns and other activities to prevent and address gender-based violence.
117. The Inter-ministerial Committee on violence against women, led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, also co-ordinates with the Working Group on Gender-Based Violence, which is part of the Refugee Crisis Response Mechanism and includes more than 50 partners among national authorities, NGOs and UN organisations. The Council of Europe also participates in the meetings of this Committee.

⁵⁰ The hotline was set up so that people with disability in the Republic of Moldova could access information and counseling. It also facilitates the reporting of rights violations and of situations where the life, safety, and integrity of people with disability is at risk. From the end of February 2022, the hotline was made available in Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian, so that refugees from Ukraine can use it too. See <https://www.khs.org/hotline-support-service-connects-refugees-to-resources/>

⁵¹ [War in Ukraine: protecting women and girls - Newsroom \(coe.int\)](#)

⁵² See [Working Group: Moldova: Gender Task Force](#)

118. The UNFPA, together with partners, established ten “Orange Safe Spaces” at temporary refugee placement centres across the Republic of Moldova to offer women and girls from Ukraine immediate support and counselling, as well as an entry point to access specialised services regarding gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health. In addition, UNFPA – in partnership with Homecare and Artemida NGOs – established mobile Orange Safe Space to reach out to communities and ensure that both Ukrainian and Moldovan populations across the country have equal access to information, support and services.
119. By mid-June 2022, 621 frontline respondents had been trained on preventing and responding to gender-based violence, including border police, health service providers and volunteers; while referral cards and posters on gender-based violence were produced and distributed by UNFPA and UNHCR to raise awareness of these risks and the related services available among the refugee community from Ukraine.
120. The UNFPA has also provided post-rape treatment kits to hospitals in ten districts, as well as at the Palanca border crossing, and was training health professionals on the clinical management of rape, to ensure comprehensive care for survivors of gender-based violence among refugees⁵³.
121. The UNHCR has also partnered with the NGO Casa Mărioarei to help monitor gender-based violence risks and provide psychosocial and legal services to refugee women in cities and towns across the Republic of Moldova through a network of trained volunteer mentors.
122. NGOs informed the SRSG that some cases of sexual harassment and sexual abuse had been registered through the helpline available for women and child refugees from Ukraine. She was also informed that there had been no reports to the authorities of war crimes involving sexual violence, including rape, coming from women and children having fled Ukraine.
123. UNFPA has conducted an audit identifying the following gender-based violence risks among refugees in the Republic of Moldova: sexual assault and harassment, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse. The audit identified that gender-based violence risks increase in the context of private/host accommodation, private arrangement for transportation, in reception and transit facilities, and refugee accommodation centers.
124. The Republic of Moldova ratified the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and became a Party to this Convention on 1 May 2022⁵⁴. Chapter VII of the Convention concerns “Migration and asylum” issues such as residence status of women victims of violence, gender-based asylum claims, and *non-refoulement*. A CoE publication includes policy guidance and a checklist to assist with the implementation of the Convention provisions on migration and asylum⁵⁵.
125. The CoE is currently implementing a project to support the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Republic of Moldova⁵⁶, which was launched in April 2022. The project provides a roadmap to support the Moldovan authorities in their implementation of the Istanbul Convention, taking account of their national policy instruments too. The project components have been adapted to take account of the needs of women and girls from Ukraine staying in the Republic of Moldova.

⁵³ See UNHCR, [Refugee Response, Inter Agency Update #11 \(20-22 April\)](#).

⁵⁴ See [the Istanbul Convention website](#).

⁵⁵ See “[Gender-based asylum claims and non-refoulement: Articles 60 and 61 of the Istanbul Convention](#)”.

⁵⁶ See [the project webpage](#).

126. Another CoE project, in Ukraine, is also developing a manual and gender-sensitive training of psychologists, hotline workers and social workers to better detect and address war trauma among refugees from Ukraine, including those in the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, relevant CoE material on gender and migration, currently being translated into Romanian (as well as in Hungarian, Slovak and Polish), will support the Moldovan authorities in their work with refugees from Ukraine.
127. As regards sexual and reproductive health care, an agreement between the UNFPA and the Moldovan National Health Insurance Company guarantees that refugees from Ukraine can access the sexual and reproductive health care services available, for free, including antenatal and postnatal care, delivery, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, etc. The UNFPA has distributed more than ten tons of reproductive health supplies to hospitals and clinics across the country, which will meet the needs of some 450 000 people, including Ukrainian refugees.
128. The SRSG would like to draw the attention of the Moldovan authorities to the 2022 CoE recommendation to protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls⁵⁷. The SRSG invites the Moldovan authorities to conduct risk assessment of private accommodation in order to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls arriving from Ukraine. The SRSG further invites the Moldovan authorities to consider vetting procedures for hosts offering private accommodation to refugees from Ukraine.
129. In addition to the co-operation already being provided under the above-mentioned projects, the Council of Europe stands ready to carry out further capacity building activities to address the prevention and detection of violence against women, as well as the protection of survivors of violence, including psychological support, in co-operation with international organisations and civil society. Moreover, the Council of Europe stands ready to provide assistance to the Moldovan authorities to implement the 2022 CoE Recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.

V.2. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

130. A Task Force on Trafficking in Persons as regards people from Ukraine was established in June 2022, co-chaired by the Secretariat of the National Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons (within the State Chancellery), UNHCR, and IOM. The Task Force includes UN agencies and NGO networks with expertise and/or operational capacity on anti-trafficking work. A specific tool for the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings amongst the influx of migrants from Ukraine was developed.
131. The Task Force aims to facilitate the compilation and dissemination of information and evidence on risks of human trafficking among persons fleeing Ukraine; support the effective and co-ordinated action of partners; and to provide practical recommendations and advice for identifying, preventing and responding to risks and incidents of human trafficking, with a focus on ensuring respect for the rights of victims and persons at risk.

⁵⁷ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls](#) (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 May 2022).

132. NGOs informed the SRSG that there had been some allegations of human trafficking but had no confirmed cases. They indicated that the few cases that had been reported were being followed-up, underlining that this phenomenon is generally under-reported and therefore outreach campaigns must continue. The IOM has also distributed awareness-raising materials and conducted awareness-raising sessions for refugees from Ukraine on preventing human trafficking.
133. NGOs highlighted the risk for the Republic of Moldova to become a country of destination as they believe there is a big risk of exploitation in the “hidden” economy, including in the sectors of agriculture and construction work where labour laws are not always applied. The NGO La Strada Moldova distributes information on human trafficking at border crossing points. It has also started an awareness-raising campaign with the Prosecutor’s Office and the Labour Inspectorate.
134. National authorities confirmed the lack of recorded cases of human trafficking amongst refugees arriving from Ukraine and the need for information, training and more resources to monitor the country’s borders as regards preventing and detecting human trafficking. Capacity-building of first-line respondents is also needed so that they can better detect and identify cases of human trafficking. Awareness raising and outreach at the local level should also be strengthened, including to monitor the situation and detect cases of human trafficking among refugees living in either private accommodation or refugee centres.
135. The CoE stands ready to provide capacity building on the above-mentioned issues, including in co-operation with international organisations, and in particular, with the UNHCR. The CoE online HELP course on combating trafficking in human beings is also available in Romanian⁵⁸. A new CoE recommendation on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation, and its explanatory memorandum, are scheduled for adoption⁵⁹ by the Committee of Ministers⁶⁰.
136. The SRSG invites relevant authorities and partners to make use of CoE standards and tools on this issue, in application of the CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, of which the Republic of Moldova is a Party, and prepared by its monitoring body, GRETA. In particular, the Guidance Note⁶¹ on “Addressing the risks of trafficking in human beings related to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis” (4 May 2022).

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

137. The SRSG recognises and appreciates the outstanding efforts made by the Moldovan authorities, at national and local level, in co-ordination with international organisations and civil society, to welcome, support and protect persons fleeing Ukraine, whether in transit to other destinations, or for those deciding to stay in the Republic of Moldova.

⁵⁸ See [Council of Europe HELP](#).

⁵⁹ The Recommendation was adopted on the day of publication of this report: 27 September 2022.

⁶⁰ See [Human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation \(DH-TET\) \(coe.int\) and GRETA’s Guidance Note on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation](#).

⁶¹ [Guidance Note on addressing the risks of trafficking in human beings related to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis](#) (4 May 2022). See also GRETA’s [Guidance Note on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation](#) (2020) and the [Guidance Note on the entitlement of victims of trafficking, and persons at risk of being trafficked, to international protection](#) (2020).

138. The important influx of people fleeing Ukraine who entered the Republic of Moldova caused many unforeseen and unprecedented challenges – not least as the country had to address the needs of refugees from Ukraine with the limited human and financial resources available. Sustainable measures are now necessary to respond to the needs of those who decide to stay in the Republic Moldova, taking also into account the needs of local populations, and in support of the national authorities.
139. This report does not aim to provide a full picture of the situation of those leaving Ukraine and transiting through or staying in the Republic of Moldova, nor does it try to provide a comprehensive analysis of all relevant legal and policy considerations in the country. Its main purpose is to identify key areas where the Council of Europe can assist, upon the request of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, in addressing certain challenges and needs, in line with the mandate of the Organisation.
140. At the initiative of the SRSG and the Moldovan authorities, and with the support of relevant entities of the CoE, the project “Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova” will be launched in the autumn of 2022. The project aims to provide tailor-made support in addressing the needs of refugees and migrants, in light of the needs identified by the SRSG visit, as well as to build resilient migration, asylum and reception systems, in the long term. One of the components of this project will be to enhance the capacities of national authorities, the judiciary, legal professionals, social workers and other relevant actors to effectively respond to the needs of refugees and migrants. In addition, a number of relevant CoE co-operation projects and activities are already under way in the Republic of Moldova, as mentioned throughout this report.
141. In the framework of the CoE Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025), and in close co-operation with international organisations and other partners, further know-how and expertise can be mobilised to provide tailored-made technical support to the competent entities in charge of providing protection, access to services and integration to persons fleeing Ukraine.
142. The CoE therefore suggests the following ten actions:
1. Support national authorities to adopt a specific legal framework on the status and protection of refugees from Ukraine (covering both Ukrainians and third-country nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to arriving in the Republic of Moldova), addressing their access to relevant services.
 2. Enhance and support the capacity of local authorities to provide access to relevant, gender-sensitive services for refugees and local populations in the short-, medium- and long-term.
 3. Support national authorities and all relevant stakeholders in the early identification of persons in a vulnerable situation arriving from Ukraine, including through training and effective policy guidance.
 4. Support national authorities in monitoring the situation and needs of adult and child refugees from Ukraine, including those living in private accommodation and in accommodation centres, and assess their vulnerability to violence, abuse, exploitation and human trafficking, in line with CoE and other relevant international standards and tools.

5. Support competent authorities, institutions and relevant stakeholders as regards the protection of unaccompanied and separated children arriving from Ukraine, including training for officials and other personnel in contact with refugee children.
6. Facilitate the provision of language support for adults and children through the use of relevant guidelines and tools and the training of educators.
7. Support the relevant authorities in achieving an inclusive education system so that it can sustainably integrate children arriving from Ukraine with local children.
8. Support the relevant authorities in implementing the European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR) in order to facilitate access to the labour market and further education for all refugees, and in particular for those fleeing Ukraine.
9. Support all stakeholders providing psychological assistance to persons fleeing Ukraine, including through the training of psychologists, social workers and other frontline professionals, in order to better detect and address war trauma among refugees from Ukraine.
10. Assist the relevant authorities to prevent and detect human trafficking and violence against women in all its forms, as well as to protect victims, including through gender-sensitive training and in line with CoE standards and guidance, in co-ordination with other international organisations such as the UNHCR.

APPENDIX: PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

Monday 13 June

- 08:30 – 10:00** Meeting with NGOs: Concordia, La Strada, Charity Centre for Refugees, National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Caritas
- 10:05 – 11:00** Meeting with Ms Jana Costachi, State Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs
- 11:20 – 12:50** Joint meeting with Mr Ion Prisăcaru, State Secretary, Ministry of Health and Mr Tudor Mancaş, Secretary General, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
- 14:00 – 14:45** Meeting with Mr Ruslan Bolbocean, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration
- 14:50 – 15:35** Meeting with Mr Eduard Serbenco, State Secretary, Ministry of Justice
- 15:45 – 16:30** Meeting with Mr Anatolie Topală, Minister of Education and Research
- 16:30 – 17:15** Joint meeting with Mr Dumitru Udrea, Secretary General of the State Chancellery and Colonel Adrian Efros, Head of the Crisis Management Centre
- 17:30 – 18:15** Joint meeting with the Mr Ceslav Panico, People's Advocate (Ombudsman) and Ms Maia Bănărescu, People's Advocate for Children's Rights

Tuesday 14 June

- 10:30 – 12:30** Visit to the Palanca border crossing point (accompanied by Ms Jana Costachi, State Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs)
- 16:30 – 18:00** Visit to the MoldExpo Refugee Accommodation Centre (accompanied by Mr Tudor Mancaş, Secretary General, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection)
- 18:30 – 20:00** Meeting with International Organisations: UNHCR, UNICEF and ICMPD

Wednesday 15 June

- 08.30 – 09.30** Launch of the Seminar "*Psychological Support to Refugees: Strengthening Professional Capacities*"
- 10.45 – 12.00** Meeting with Mr Srđan Stojanović, Head of Office, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), European Commission