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**Second Interim Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan on
Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and
Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)**

Table of Contents

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Protection of Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration – Priority Action for the Council of Europe	5
3. Progress report on the implementation of actions in the four priority areas	8
4. Additional activities	18
5. Multilateral co-operation.....	22
6. Financial overview	25
7. Conclusion	25

Executive summary

1. This interim report provides an overview of the implementation of the activities listed in the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021–2025) (hereafter referred to as “Action Plan”), in the period from 1 January 2023 to 30 April 2024. It is the second interim report since the adoption of the Action Plan by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at its 1403rd meeting, on 5 May 2021.
2. During the reporting period, the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees (hereafter referred to as “SRSG”), as outlined in the mandate, ensured a co-ordination role, a transversal approach, and streamlined in-house co-operation based on the relevant Council of Europe conventions and standards relating to the implementation of the Action Plan.
3. In the reporting period, the implementation of the Action Plan continued to be impacted by the Russian Federation’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022, and resulted in millions of persons fleeing Ukraine. In order to provide support in addressing the emerging challenges in member states, the SRSG has conducted fact-finding missions to Hungary and Bulgaria, as well as carried out country visits to Ukraine and Armenia. The country visits were set up with the aim of liaising and exchanging information with each country’s relevant authorities and strengthening Council of Europe assistance. The Action Plan was adapted, and follow-up activities took place to address the recommendations included in the reports of the fact-finding missions.
4. Following the adaptation of the Action Plan in 2023, priorities for the Office of the SRSG have been updated and include: protecting women and children, including unaccompanied and separated children, from abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking; providing access to healthcare, including psychological support; promoting education, linguistic integration and the recognition of qualifications (EQPR and TOOLKID projects); enhancing the capacity of legal professionals in the field of migration and asylum (migration-related HELP projects); strengthening the resilience of local and regional authorities in hosting people from Ukraine and addressing their immediate and medium-term needs; and promoting intercultural dialogue and community cohesion.
5. These actions, along with the Council of Europe Network of Focal Points on Migration, contributed to strengthening in-house co-ordination and to consolidating communication with member states.
6. Co-operation with international organisations is ongoing, with raised awareness of the role of the Council of Europe in protecting the human rights of vulnerable persons in the context of migration. The Action Plan complements the work that is being carried out by other international organisations on the ground, also contributing to the objectives of the UN Global Compact on Refugees, UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, UN Sustainable Development Goals and a number of goals in the European Commission’s Communication on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Out of the 28 activities directly referenced in the Action Plan, 11 have been completed within the reporting period (more information provided under Chapter 3). These include:

7. ***Pillar 1 – Ensuring protection and promoting safeguards by identifying and responding to vulnerability (human rights):*** A joint note “Children in migration: fundamental rights at European borders”¹ was issued by the Council of Europe and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights outlining the relevant human rights standards at Europe’s borders that apply to children; a guide for practitioners on the administrative detention of migrants and asylum seekers was issued by the European Committee on Legal Co-operation that aims to promote the application of existing international and European standards in this area; a new Guide to Health Literacy, contributing to trust-building and equitable access to healthcare, was officially launched by the Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO); and the Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on equitable access to medicinal products and medical equipment in a situation of shortage was also adopted.
8. ***Pillar 2 – Ensuring access to law and justice (human rights and rule of law):*** The Guidelines on National Digital Identity were published following the adoption by the Consultative Committee of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108); and a Practical Guide to the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood was published and officially launched in April 2023. Finally, the activities under the Action Plan contributed to the Council of Europe’s pledges 1 and 2 under the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024.
9. ***Pillar 3 – Fostering democratic participation and enhancing inclusion (human rights and democracy):*** New HELP online courses related to the Action Plan were developed on Transition of Migrant and Refugee Children to Adulthood, on International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, and on Temporary Protection in the European Union; a Toolkit on the Language Support for Migrants containing a set of 80 resources was published², as well as new resources under the TOOLKID project on Strengthening the capacity of the education systems to facilitate integration of children with migrant backgrounds, addressing the needs of both adults and children with a migrant and refugee background and of communities in better understanding linguistic integration. Participation of young refugees in youth work was supported through several activities. The multilateral European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) is steadily gaining acceptance among authorities and higher education institutions, with over 940 passports issued.
10. The cost of implementation in 2023 and 2024 varied, as the policy and standard-setting work was covered from the ordinary budget, while the technical co-operation part was mostly covered by extra-budgetary resources. The implementation of the Action Plan so far has led to the development of numerous impactful tools and instruments, which need to be adequately promoted and implemented. To this end, further funding is necessary to support the efforts and investments that have already been made, including the adaptation of the Action Plan to respond to the needs of member states affected by the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

¹ Link in English: [Children in migration: fundamental rights at European borders](#).

² English version: [Language Support for Migrants \(LSM\) Toolkit 2024](#), soon available in French, Italian and Turkish.

11. Close co-operation and communication with member states ensures that all the activities carried out within the Action Plan are tailored to their specific needs, thereby strengthening the ownership and sustainability of the implemented actions.

1. Introduction

12. On 5 May 2021, at its 1403rd Meeting, the Committee of the Ministers adopted the Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025). The Committee of Ministers indicated the need to receive regular updates on the progress made and the ongoing results of the Action Plan through interim reports and a final report. The first interim report was presented to the Committee of Ministers on 1 March 2023 and covered the first 20 months of implementation of the Action Plan, from May 2021 to the end of December 2022. This second interim report summarises progress, accomplishments and lessons learnt during the Action Plan implementation from January 2023 to the end of April 2024.
13. The rising flow of refugees, primarily comprised of women, children and the elderly fleeing as a consequence of the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, required the Council of Europe to adapt the existing tools to safeguard human rights of persons in vulnerable situations.
14. The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 examines the implementation modalities and transversal approach of the Action Plan; Chapter 3 provides an overview of the achievements in the implementation of actions in the four priority areas; Chapter 4 presents other activities and initiatives by the Organisation providing complementarity to the Action Plan; Chapter 5 addresses multilateral co-operation. A concise financial review is outlined in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents conclusions, summarises key insights, and proposes recommendations for forthcoming strategies and action.

2. Protection of Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration – Priority Action for the Council of Europe

2.1 Implementation modalities and a transversal approach

15. In the reporting period, the implementation of the Action Plan continued to be impacted by the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022. The increasing flow of refugees, mostly women, children and elderly persons fleeing Ukraine and seeking shelter in neighbouring European countries, required a rapid mobilisation of neighbouring states to receive and accommodate refugees. Over 4.8 million refugees³ from Ukraine were recorded in the member states of the Council of Europe. In this context, the member states placed particular emphasis on the protection of persons in particularly vulnerable situations fleeing Ukraine from abuse, exploitation and human trafficking; the need to provide psychological support to those fleeing the war; the need for linguistic integration for adults and children; the need for access to education and to the labour market; the need to address housing and integration into host societies.

³ As of 19 April 2024.

16. To tackle these challenges and as per its mandate, the Office of the SRSG consistently employed the established working methods, namely regular exchange through the inter-secretariat Council of Europe Co-ordination Group on Migration (hereafter referred to as “Co-ordination Group on Migration”) and the Network of Focal Points on Migration, which are both chaired by the SRSG. Additionally, fact-finding missions and country visits were carried out, aiming to provide direct, practical assistance to member states.
17. Four meetings of the Co-ordination Group on Migration were organised, bringing together all relevant Council of Europe entities involved in the implementation of the Action Plan. The Co-ordination Group on Migration followed the implementation modalities of the Action Plan closely and discussed and agreed on internal procedures relating to the programmatic and financial management of the Action Plan.
18. By means of the Co-ordination Group on Migration, a robust relationship and regular information exchanges are sustained with the Council of Europe’s Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations and its Committee on Migration.
19. The advancement of internal co-ordination facilitated connections and synergies across different programmes. Within the reporting period, this was particularly visible within links between the activities carried out by the Children Rights, Youth, Education, Gender Equality and Dignity and Anti-Discrimination Departments, the Sport Values Division and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities regarding the inclusion and protection of persons in vulnerable situations in the context of migration.
20. Discussions on the implementation modalities of the Action Plan were further conducted with member states through the Network of Focal Points on Migration.
21. The Action Plan supported the implementation of the current Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) by tackling situations of vulnerability for children affected by migration and forced displacement (including for the purpose of child labour). Furthermore, the Action Plan supported the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, by specifically addressing the protection of the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls (Strategic Objective No. 5). The activities of the Action Plan looking at the equity of access to healthcare in the context of the pandemic and health literacy support priorities of the Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020-2025). The implementation of the Action Plan on Fostering International Co-operation and Investigative Strategies in Fighting the Smuggling of Migrants is supported, among others, through the work of the Network of Prosecutors on Migrant Smuggling.
22. The transversal approach of the Action Plan also seeks to capitalise on and further strengthen the alignment of the work of the Council of Europe with activities carried out by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). The CEB’s Strategic Framework 2023-2027 sets a path for the CEB to initiate activities in Ukraine, continue to assist migrants and their host communities, as well as address other social challenges across Europe.
23. Additional information on other activities carried out by the Organisation that are not directly linked to the Action Plan and which contribute to its implementation, is available in Chapter 4 of this report.

2.2 Communication on the Action Plan

24. In the reporting period, communication on the Action Plan continued internally and externally during activities carried out by the Office of the SRSG, specialist departments, monitoring bodies and intergovernmental committees such as the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) and the Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO). The progress on the Action Plan has been presented in the regular meetings of the Council of Europe's Network of Focal Points on Migration to representatives of member states dealing with migration issues at a national level, as well as in the inter-secretariat meetings of the Co-ordination Group on Migration within the Council of Europe.
25. The Action Plan was also presented to partners in the EU institutions (EU COM, EEAS, EU Council, European Parliament) and agencies (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and European Migration Network (EMN)). In addition, it was presented to other international partners such as UNHCR, OHCHR, IOM and OSCE/ODIHR, including civil society organisations and at the Council of Europe's Conference of INGOs.
26. A dedicated web page has been updated to illustrate the implementation of the Action Plan in real time and to reflect new activities and events. In addition, a thematic page on migrant children's transition to adulthood has been updated with new resources.
27. Finally, more than 100 awareness-raising activities were carried out during the reporting period, four videos featured the Action Plan, 14 Newsletters on migration mentioned the Action Plan and more than 30 news items on the web had references to the Action Plan. Furthermore, 39 articles were published in mainstream media outlets shedding light on the activities of the Office of the SRSG and its Action Plan. To enhance communication channels, social media presence was regularly maintained, with 131 postings on X, formerly Twitter, garnering more than 230 000 views.

3. Progress report on the implementation of actions in the four priority areas

28. The overall implementation of the Action Plan is proceeding in conformity with the implementation modalities that were approved by the Committee of Ministers. The completed actions mostly concern recommendations and guidelines related to vulnerable persons in the context of migration, with a particular focus on migrant women and children. On a technical co-operation level, a number of activities took place within ongoing and recently-launched projects in the field of migration and asylum, including initiatives relating to the integration and social inclusion of migrants in host communities. The activities of the Action Plan are grouped around four pillars and a concise description of the progress made under each of the Pillars is provided below.

Pillar 1 – Ensuring protection and promoting safeguards by identifying and responding to vulnerability (human rights)

29. Tools have been developed to support member states with preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against persons in vulnerable situations in the context of migration and asylum. In particular, this has been visible when addressing issues related to the protection of women and children, from enhancing protection in vulnerability screening, transit and reception centres, to establishing gender-sensitive asylum, migration and integration policies. Furthermore, effective alternatives to immigration detention were promoted and detention conditions and procedural safeguards have been improved, such as increasing access to services, including healthcare.

1.1 Promoting effective vulnerability screening and safeguards

30. A new joint note "Children in migration: fundamental rights at European borders"⁴ by the Council of Europe and the FRA outlines the relevant human rights standards at Europe's borders that apply to children.
31. As a follow-up to the fact-finding mission of the SRSG to Bulgaria, a round table on the protection of unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children was organised in April 2024 in Sofia by the Office of the SRSG, in co-operation with the UNHCR. The meeting brought together representatives from key state institutions responsible for child protection, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the State Agency for Refugees and the State Agency for Child Protection, as well as parliamentarians and members of the judiciary. The discussion highlighted the need to establish a guardianship system capable of addressing the specific needs of unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking children, as well as the further development of fair age-assessment procedures and dignified reception conditions.

⁴ Link in English: [Children in migration: fundamental rights at European borders](#).

32. In May 2023, the Lanzarote Committee held a seminar on the Statutes of limitation in respect of sexual offences against children and approaches to the legal age for sexual activities, where state parties discussed solutions and the Committee decided to prepare two opinions as guidance to states. On the European Day to end child sexual abuse in November 2023, the Committee held an exchange with advocates on engaging with victims/survivors of child sexual abuse to inspire policy change, discussing the ways that governments can contribute to their healing, even when there is no criminal justice response.
33. Other major achievements of the Lanzarote Committee related to the Action Plan include a new monitoring round on sexual abuse in the circle of trust, publishing factsheets to highlight and facilitate the implementation of the Committee's monitoring findings to help parties address the challenges raised by child self-generated sexual images and/or videos, the decision in September 2023 to address urgent questions to the Russian Federation on the situation of Ukrainian children unlawfully transferred or deported to its territory or areas temporarily controlled/occupied by it and the adoption in February 2024 of a survey to gather information about data collection mechanisms on child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.
34. As regards the co-operation activities, the Office of the SRSG continued its work on practical guidance on the identification and referral of vulnerable persons in the context of migration. Based on a study on existing policies and tools for the identification and referral of vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum prepared in December 2022, it was decided to commission a mapping of the Council of Europe instruments and existing guidance at the national and international level concerning vulnerability. On this basis, existing HELP courses dedicated to migration and refugees or modules therewithin that are relevant to vulnerability could be further promoted and updated if necessary (for instance, the HELP course on Refugee and Migrant Children, on Internal Displacement, on the Temporary Protection Directive, or on LGBTI Persons in the Asylum Procedure).
35. The Gender Equality Division's ongoing co-operation projects in Armenia, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova that focus on combating violence against women, include components working on the needs of asylum-seeking and refugee women and girls.
36. Since 2023, the Council of Europe project "Combating violence against women in Ukraine (COVAW-II)" focused, among others, on capacity-building and training for mental health and emergency response professionals, based on a 2022 manual on addressing conflict-related sexual violence⁵. The SRSG conducted an exchange of information with the COVAW-II field team during the visit to Ukraine in October 2023. In co-operation with Ukrainian NGOs, including those working at borders, the project is developing a practical tool to support the implementation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 on Protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.

⁵ Link to "Working with victims of sexual violence during armed conflict: A manual for Ukrainian mental health and emergency response professionals" (available in English and in Ukrainian).

37. The Council of Europe project “Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Republic of Moldova” has completed a study on international protection from violence against women for migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls. Its recommendations will be discussed with the governmental working group in the Republic of Moldova dealing with the package of legislative amendments to the laws on violence against women and domestic violence.
38. The project “Ending violence against women and promoting gender equality in Armenia” in January 2024 incorporated a new component to assist Armenian authorities in enhancing strategies and policies addressing the needs of refugee women and girls, raising awareness, and supporting their integration and empowerment⁶.

1.2 Enhancing special assistance, protection and support services

39. The Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) is conducting an evaluation of the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration and its Explanatory Memorandum. Based on feedback received in 2023 from a questionnaire circulated to member states, a preliminary report has been prepared, shared for consultations with the relevant partners internally and externally and upon discussions within the CDENF 9th plenary meeting, will be adopted in the course of 2024. Furthermore, in the context of this implementation review, child consultations were carried out in Cyprus and Portugal in order to collect the views of young persons who had benefitted from guardianship measures during their childhood, on the basis of the effective implementation of the recommendation. The report on these consultations will be appended to the overall report on the implementation of the recommendation.
40. At its 100th plenary meeting in June 2023, the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) adopted a guide for practitioners on the administrative detention of migrants and asylum seekers that aims to promote the application of existing international and European standards in this area. The guide has been translated into Greek and, under the project “Strengthening the human rights protection in the context of migration in Türkiye” (2023-2025), into Turkish. Additional translations into Italian, Spanish and Arabic are being considered, subject to available funds. The Guide will be presented to the National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) during a workshop of the European NPM Forum in June 2024. Afterwards, it is planned to complement the Guide with an additional checklist for the NPMs, similar to the existing checklists for lawyers and medical practitioners.

⁶ It was part of the official launch of the Council of Europe refugee response package in April 2024 in Yerevan (point 4.1).

41. As regards the co-operation activities, the DGI Co-operation Programmes Division has organised and contributed to various capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on alternatives to immigration detention in different member states. In particular, the second phase of the project 'Strengthening the human rights protection in the context of migration in Türkiye' started in January 2023, focusing on supporting the authorities of Türkiye with enhancing detention conditions and ensuring that appropriate procedural safeguards are in place in line with European and international standards in the context of migration. Special attention is given to strengthening guarantees for the identification, protection and referral of persons in vulnerable situations. The project is funded under the third phase of the joint EU and Council of Europe programme Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

1.3 Enhancing access to healthcare, involvement in disaster risk reduction and emergency measures

42. In January 2023, a new Guide to Health Literacy, contributing to trust-building and equitable access to healthcare, was officially launched by the Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO). The guide was drafted with the involvement of the Office of the SRSG. It is intended to help decision-makers, health professionals and healthcare providers to identify the needs of individuals in accessing healthcare, and to undertake corresponding responsibilities in healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion.
43. On 1 February 2023 the Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)1 to member States on equitable access to medicinal products and medical equipment in a situation of shortage to promote this equity in the 46 Council of Europe member states and to safeguard the fundamental rights of individuals with serious or life-threatening health conditions. Furthermore, in March 2023 the work on equitable access to innovative treatments started after the adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)1. A white paper on equitable and timely access to innovative treatments and technologies in healthcare systems is being prepared by the drafting group, an outline of which will be presented to and discussed with the CDBIO in June 2024. The publication of the white paper is expected in November 2024.

Pillar 2 – Ensuring access to law and justice (human rights and the rule of law)

44. Specific measures have been implemented to enhance special procedural safeguards and support services, enabling vulnerable groups such as children, women and others with specific needs to effectively participate in and engage with the justice system. The actions focused on the clarification of standards and an exchange of good practices in preventing ill-treatment and violence. They also emphasised implementing child-friendly justice within the domains of administrative and migration law.

2.1 Strengthening procedures and improving decision-making

45. The Committee of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108) adopted at its 43rd plenary meeting the Guidelines on National Digital Identity and published them in the form of a leaflet in February 2023. The preparation of a normative document on data protection in the context of intra- and extra-European migrations, which directly contributes to the activity of the Action Plan, is also envisaged as part of its Work Programme for 2022-2025, the start of which the Committee will decide on at a later stage.
46. Activities under the Action Plan contributed to the Council of Europe's pledges 1 and 2 under the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024. Furthermore, at the conference "Addressing statelessness in Europe: closing protection gaps and realising everyone's right to a nationality" in Madrid in June 2023, the SRSG provided a detailed overview of the Council of Europe's standards and activities addressing statelessness, particularly the European Convention on Nationality.
47. The need to combat trafficking and smuggling of migrants while continuing to protect victims and respect the human rights of migrants and refugees was emphasised by the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Reykjavík (16-17 May 2023), work which is now being carried out by the CDPC. In view of fostering international co-operation, in October 2023 the Office of the SRSG and the Secretariat of the CDPC organised an information meeting intended for Permanent Representations of the member states of the Council of Europe, with a focus on the current international framework addressing migrant smuggling, in order to provide a full picture of regional and international action in this domain, with presentations by representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the European Commission, Eurojust and the European Public Prosecutor's Office. The Council of Europe delegations were also given the opportunity to better assess the efficiency of existing legal instruments and co-operation mechanisms and the need for further action.

2.2 Empowering vulnerable persons to access their rights

48. To sustain the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on supporting Young Refugees in Transition to Adulthood, a youth- and user-friendly guide "Turning 18 with confidence" was officially launched in April 2023 under the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.
49. Furthermore, the Council of Europe co-ordinated the multilateral project "Building Futures, Sharing Good Practices: Migrant Children's Transition to Adulthood," which aimed to foster long-term improvements in the quality of support for unaccompanied migrant children during their transition to adulthood, which was implemented in Greece, the Netherlands and Spain. The project was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Council of Europe and was implemented by the DGI Co-operation Division. The project ended in June 2023, and led to, *inter alia*, the development of six practical tools for supporting unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in their transition to adulthood (a Compendium of Good Practices, a Roadmap, two videos – one from Greece and one from Spain, a Toolkit, a HELP e-learning course (see point 3.1)). The tools developed a strong European dimension as part of the project and can be used to strengthen the capacities of different professionals across Europe.

50. It is important to highlight that the implementation of this project involved various member states in its activities, adding new insights and experiences and fostering a Europe-wide dialogue on the topic; gave a voice to young migrants and refugees in all its activities, thereby ensuring a participatory approach, while upholding the right of these young people to express their views in all actions concerning them; as well as involved a number of relevant services from the Organisation (Youth Department, Education Department and HELP Programme), demonstrating collective efforts in addressing issues of common concern.
51. The Office of the SRSG also actively participated in the development of a HELP course on LGBTI Persons in the Asylum Procedure (see point 3.1).

Pillar 3 – Fostering democratic participation and enhancing inclusion (human rights and democracy)

52. Member states were supported in enhancing the resilience of local communities in tackling migration challenges by adhering to human rights obligations and upholding principles of non-discrimination, equality and democratic participation. The activities tackled issues relating to social inclusion in education, building trust in local communities and reshaping the narratives on migration. The capacity of legal professionals was enhanced through specifically designed HELP training modules on migration and asylum. The Anti-Discrimination, Youth and Education Departments supported social inclusion and promoted community cohesion through the implementation of tailor-made initiatives.

3.1 Promoting non-discrimination and diversity

53. In the reporting period, four new HELP online courses related to migration were developed, namely on Transition of Migrant and Refugee Children to Adulthood, on LGBTI Persons in the Asylum Procedure, International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and on Temporary Protection in the European Union. The latter was developed with the agreement of the EU's DG Justice, DG HOME and the EU Asylum Agency, in line with the Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" (2023-2026). These courses aimed at enhancing the capacity of legal professionals to coherently and effectively apply European and international standards in respect of vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum. In the reporting period, there were 10 launches organised for 407 legal professionals on various HELP courses part of the Asylum/Migration package (with funding secured under several Council of Europe projects or the ordinary budget).
54. Resources have been ensured for the translation of the HELP training module on LGBTI persons in the Asylum Procedure into 10 languages, which will be carried out in the forthcoming period.

55. The Education Department, as part of its TOOLKID project on Strengthening the capacity of the education systems to facilitate integration of children with migrant background, developed new resources that address the needs of both adults and children with a migrant and refugee background. In March 2024, the Language Support for Migrants (LSM) Toolkit 2024⁷ was launched at a webinar followed by more than 400 participants. The toolkit, consisting of a set of 80 resources, was created to guide educators who provide language support to adult migrants and migrant children in a wide range of contexts. It also caters to the needs of community volunteers, often not trained language teachers, who work in refugee reception centres or alongside teachers. Many of the tools were subject to a comprehensive piloting initiative in autumn 2023. An international panel of experts assessed them and provided feedback. Approximately 100 teachers in Italy were asked to trial the tools with migrant learners in their classrooms and to give feedback on the experience.
56. A separate concise Guide for educators, volunteers and trainers using the LSM 2024 toolkit was published, providing supervisory support for the organisers of focused training, outlining potential scope and offering practical examples of use in training and professional learning. Within the scope of the project, the Guide and the 80 tools were also translated into Turkish. Partners from Italy, Portugal and Greece expressed interest in translating these resources into their respective languages.
57. Participation of young refugees in youth work was supported through co-operation with the Council of Europe Youth Department; the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees made an intervention at the study session organised by the refugee-led network “Voices of Young Refugees in Europe” in Strasbourg in November 2023.
58. The European Sports Charter is the cornerstone of the work of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), applying a human rights due diligence approach in sport and a policy of zero tolerance for violence and all forms of discrimination, paying particular attention to individuals and groups in a situation of vulnerability, such as children, migrants and persons with disabilities. The biennial Diversity Conference was organised in November 2023 by EPAS in close collaboration with the SRSG and in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein within Liechtenstein’s Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. The conference theme was the inclusion of child migrants and refugees in and through sport, highly relevant in the current geopolitical context and included participants from public authorities, NGOs, sports federations, national and international experts, as well as youth migrants, who shared their powerful stories. The meeting discussed the current state of play and how the Council of Europe can play a meaningful role in the inclusion of child migrants and refugees in and through sport. The deliverables from the conference will include an update and modification of the Sport migrant integration platform, a handbook and a webinar on the inclusion of child migrants and refugees in and through sport.

⁷ English version: Language Support for Migrants (LSM) Toolkit 2024, soon available in French, Italian and Turkish.

3.2 Promoting democratic participation and inclusion

59. Progress was made as regards the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)10 on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration in Cyprus, Finland and Italy through co-operation projects funded by the European Commission's Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM).
60. As regards the co-operation activities, the Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division in June 2023 completed a two-year joint project on "Building structures for intercultural integration in Cyprus", implemented in co-operation with DG REFORM in partnership with the Civil Registry and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus. Since October 2023, a 14-month follow-up project is being implemented by the partners, aiming to enhance and strengthen previous achievements, support the regional intercultural networks, to provide recommendations on their sustainability, as well as to support Cyprus in the establishment of a new National Authority to co-ordinate multilevel governance of integration policy and the preparation of the national integration strategy. The project employs the conceptual, analytical and policymaking tools of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme to address the challenges of migrant integration, related to building trust, fostering community cohesion and managing diversity as a resource.
61. In Finland, a joint project is being implemented on "Building an inclusive integration approach in Finland" in co-operation with the DG REFORM in partnership with the Ministry of Justice of Finland and aims to contribute to the ongoing reform of migrant integration and inclusion in Finland, co-operating with six Finnish municipalities to promote the development and implementation of local intercultural integration strategies and policies through co-ordinated multi-level and multi-stakeholder approaches.
62. In Italy, a joint project is being implemented on Reinforcing multi-level policy co-ordination for integration in Italy in co-operation with DG REFORM and in partnership with the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, aiming to support the Ministry in improving the multi-level and multi-stakeholder co-ordination of migrant integration policies.
63. Furthermore, in 2023 an inter-agency initiative was launched between the Council of Europe, ODIHR, UNHCR and the OECD to offer training courses to Polish city officials, to equip them with the necessary skills and competences related to the welcoming as well as the intercultural integration of migrants and refugees in Poland, in particular of persons fleeing Ukraine. In June 2023, the Intercultural Cities Programme organised the first training course on Intercultural Competences under this initiative, with the support of the SRSG.

64. The implementation of the multilateral European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) aimed at facilitating the educational and professional integration of refugees in Europe, since the start of its implementation by the Council of Europe in 2017, has demonstrated growing recognition and is steadily gaining acceptance among authorities and higher education institutions. This tool helps member states to address the challenges brought by the refugee crisis by building their capacity for a sustainable response to crisis situations. Currently, 22 member states have joined the EQPR and over 940 passports have been issued⁸. This demonstrates the increasing acceptance of the EQPR as a vital tool for integrating refugees. The joint EU and Council of Europe project “Supporting an efficient national mechanism of recognition of refugees’ qualifications in Italy”, co-funded via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the DG REFORM, further strengthens the use of this instrument at a national level.
65. The EQPR has been featured prominently in different meetings, thus strengthening synergies with other sectors of the Council of Europe, such as the Youth Department and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees.
66. At its plenary session in March 2024, the Steering Committee for Education discussed the development of a draft Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation on Valuing the Academic and Professional Skills of Refugees in Europe, accompanied by policy guidelines. The adoption of this new policy document will support the implementation of the EQPR and may lead to an increase in the number of member states using this important instrument, as well as to its wider implementation⁹.
67. In addition, the EQPR may serve to support the implementation of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.

Pillar 4 – Enhancing co-operation between migration and asylum authorities in Council of Europe member states (transversal support)

68. The Council of Europe Network of Focal Points on Migration remained pivotal in facilitating co-operation and dialogue among migration and asylum authorities within member states of the Council of Europe. Throughout the reporting period, the continuous participation of all 46 member states in the Network enhanced inter-agency co-operation, promoting the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt among its members on the protection of the human rights of migrants and refugees. The increased engagement of member states was particularly notable during the organisation of fact-finding missions, as well as during thematic discussions. This served to further reinforce inter-agency co-operation, fostering the exchange of good practices and lessons learnt among network members.

⁸ By the end of 2023, 1 101 candidates had been interviewed (out of which 707 online). As a result, 943 EQPRs had been issued (614 awarded following online interviews). Out of 943 EQPR holders, 571 are male and 372 are female.

⁹ PACE in its Resolution 2522 (2023)¹ “The humanitarian crisis emerging for Afghanistan and Afghan refugees” encourages states “to recognise the EQPR as a valid assessment of the holders’ qualifications to enrol in higher education across Europe, even if to be used in a country that is not part of the EQPR” and to widely promote its implementation (Resolution 2502 (2023)¹ “Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved”).

4.1 Promoting inter-agency co-operation

69. During the reporting period, two meetings of the Network of Focal Points on Migration were organised, in June and December 2023. The meetings of the Network ensure that the Council of Europe's activities in the field of migration, as well as the Action Plan, are appropriately adapted to meet the needs of member states. Existing standards and practices are further promoted through the work of the Network.
70. In the reporting period, two fact-finding missions took place, namely to Hungary from 20 to 23 March 2023 and to Bulgaria from 11 to 14 September 2023. The fact-finding missions allowed the SRSG to personally assess the situation on the ground and to provide recommendations and follow-up actions aligned with the Council of Europe Action Plan and expertise focusing on persons in vulnerable situations. Communication with the Permanent Representations and the Network of Focal Points on Migration proved instrumental in organising these missions and conducting associated follow-up activities.
71. Two country visits to Armenia took place in view of preparing a comprehensive response package to the refugee influx in the country. In October 2023 in Yerevan the SRSG conducted meetings with relevant state authorities, international partners and NGOs to discuss the challenges they faced in welcoming over 100 000 people from Karabakh region, with 30 000 of them being children. Specific areas were identified for support that are included in the Action Plan and in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia (2023-2026). In April 2024, in Yerevan, the launch of a comprehensive response package of €2.8 million for the refugee influx in Armenia was announced. The response package aims to protect the human rights of refugees, the resilience of the local communities, social rights, children and women, and to support human rights institutions. It includes the launch of four new initiatives and incorporates additional components into two ongoing projects. The new projects launched are "Strengthening Human Rights Safeguards", "Enhancing Social Human Rights", "Protecting Children's Rights" and "Support to Host Communities". The two ongoing projects that received the additional components are "Promoting Gender Equality and Ending Violence against Women" and "Protection of Human Rights in Biomedicine".
72. In October 2023, the SRSG visited Kyiv, Ukraine, where meetings were held with the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, other government officials and the representatives of relevant NGOs, in which the Special Representative shared findings of the fact-finding mission reports, assessing the situation of people forced to leave Ukraine due to the Russian Federation's ongoing full-scale aggression. The meetings focused on three main areas: a) assessing the situation of people fleeing Ukraine and discussing possibilities to enhance their protection; b) exploring ways to facilitate communication between Ukrainian authorities and people who have fled the country; c) exploring possible avenues of contributing Council of Europe expertise to a survival relief centre in the Czech Republic, based on the existing model in Ukraine providing social, psychological and legal assistance to those affected by the war.

73. In November 2023, as a follow-up to the recommendations of the report of the fact-finding mission of the SRSG to Romania, a two-day training for professionals “Psychological Support to Refugees: Strengthening Professional Capacities” was organised in Bucharest in co-operation with the Directorate of Political Affairs and External Relations and the Romanian Government.
74. Finally, the SRSG participated in several high-level events, such as: the conference “Addressing statelessness in Europe: closing protection gaps and realising everyone’s right to a nationality” in Madrid in November 2023; the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), as one of the panellists in a side-event titled: “Responding to Regional and Global Challenges: Protecting the Rights of Migrant, Refugee and Asylum-seeking Women and Girls” held at the United Nations headquarters in New York in March 2023; the Special Representative addressed sessions of the PACE Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Committee meetings, and CDENF and ECRI plenary sessions, which provided an opportunity to present the work of the Council of Europe in the field of migration and asylum and to strengthen co-operation and information exchange with relevant stakeholders from member states.

4.2 Fostering peer-to-peer exchanges

75. The Network of Focal Points on Migration, at its June 2023 meeting held an exchange of views on the notion of safe third countries for asylum seekers, based on the presentation of the European Court of Human Rights case law, which contributed to the reply of the PACE Resolution and Recommendation 2238 (2022).

4. Additional activities

76. This chapter provides an overview of additional activities that took place within the reporting period. These activities are not directly referenced in the Action Plan; however, they support the overall objective and respective pillars of the Action Plan and further complement its implementation. Most of the activities listed are primarily focused on supporting member states in upholding human rights of vulnerable persons fleeing Ukraine, but are also applicable in other contexts of migration and asylum.

Adaptation of the Action Plan implementation

77. Following the Russian Federation’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine, a number of actions were undertaken in close co-operation with other relevant entities within the Organisation, as well as with other international partners, in order to address the needs of the member states. Meetings were organised with EU institutions and relevant international organisations as well as with member states through the Network of Focal Points on Migration. As a follow-up to the consultations and fact-finding visits, the Action Plan was adapted in the form of a “support package” which can offer tailor-made support to member states based on their needs. Several activities have taken place to address the recommendations included in the reports of the fact-finding missions of the SRSG.

Protection of women and children in vulnerable situations

78. Supporting the Czech authorities in strengthening the protection of people fleeing Ukraine, in particular women and children in vulnerable situations, was the main topic of a round table discussion co-organised in January 2023 by the SRSG and the UNHCR offices in Prague and Strasbourg, as a follow-up to the fact-finding mission to the Czech Republic. It also served to present the European Court of Human Rights case law and the Council of Europe standards on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, in particular from violence and human trafficking.
79. As a follow-up to the recommendations of the report of the fact-finding mission of the SRSG to Romania, a round table discussion on Strengthening the protection of children and victims of gender-based violence, in the context of refugee flows in Romania was co-organised with the UNHCR in Bucharest in November 2023. The discussions focused on further strengthening the protection of refugees, in particular women and children in vulnerable situations.
80. GREVIO published baseline evaluation reports concerning Greece, Liechtenstein, Ireland and the Republic of Moldova, as well as carried out evaluation visits to Albania, Austria, Denmark and Monaco in the framework of the first thematic evaluation round, with a focus on the situation of women from Ukraine who fled to other member states of the Istanbul Convention, which entered into force in respect of the EU on 1 October 2023. An evaluation of the situation of the EU, including on issues related to asylum and migration, will be carried out.
81. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) launched its 4th evaluation round on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in June 2023. This round focuses on vulnerabilities relating to human trafficking and measures taken by states parties to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish the offenders. In April 2024 GRETA published its 13th general annual report for 2023, highlighting its key achievements in 2023 that include the publication of 11 new country evaluation reports (in respect of Azerbaijan, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden)¹⁰. In the reporting period, GRETA also published several reports with relevant recommendations on Greece, Spain, Hungary, Lithuania and Italy.
82. Furthermore, the Secretariat of GRETA is working on a specific checklist for measuring the implementation of CM Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)21 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation, as human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation is on the rise in Europe, affecting an increasing number of women, men and children. This recommendation is also very relevant in the context of preventing the trafficking and exploitation of Ukrainian refugees.

¹⁰ GRETA's 2023 annual report takes into account conclusions from GRETA's third evaluation round on trafficking victims' access to justice and effective remedies, which is essential for victims' rehabilitation and reinstatement of rights and reflects a victim-centred and human-rights based approach to the fight against human trafficking.

83. The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) published in March 2024 its Conclusions on Children, Family and Migrants and its Findings for 2023 regarding state compliance with the articles of the European Social Charter relating to Children, Family and Migrants, including Article 19 of the Charter with regard to the right of migrant workers and their families to social, legal and economic protection.

Strengthening human rights protection of refugees and migrants

84. A joint seminar was held in Bratislava in June 2023 by the Council of Europe project ("HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) for Ukraine, including during wartime"), the European Commission and UNHCR for European lawyers on European asylum/migration legal practices to assist people fleeing the consequences of the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine. The seminar was held on the invitation of and in co-operation with the Slovak Bar Association, and provided useful and practical information for lawyers from the EU and from Ukraine who are assisting people fleeing the war in Ukraine. Within the same framework, in April 2024 a joint EU-Council of Europe seminar for European lawyers on Temporary Protection in the European Union was held in Brussels and online, in co-operation with the French- and German-speaking Bar Associations in Belgium. It was open to European lawyers and covered aspects related to the Temporary Protection Directive covering people fleeing the war in Ukraine. A new HELP course on Temporary Protection in the European Union was also presented.
85. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published a Factsheet on integration and inclusion of migrants in March 2024 that provides an overview of the most important ECRI recommendations made in its fifth- and sixth-cycle country reports since 2012, which aims to assist the member states in designing their integration and inclusion policies and effectively implementing them in order to ensure that migrants can fully contribute to and thrive in the social realities of their host societies. In September 2023, ECRI issued a General policy recommendation on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons, which includes specific sections detailing the rights of LGBTI persons during asylum procedures and the special measures that can be asked for by applicants belonging to this community. Furthermore, ECRI reports on Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Poland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein and North Macedonia all include sections regarding the integration and inclusion of migrants (including – when relevant – the situation of people displaced from Ukraine as a result of the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression).

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

86. The PACE has contributed valuable reports, resolutions and discussions on various migration-related topics. Such themes include, but are not limited to: European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection; Deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to Russian Federation or to Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators; Addressing the specific challenges faced by the Belarusians in exile; Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved; Social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons through sport; Ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor; Humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh; and The theme of migration and asylum in election campaigns and its consequences on the reception of migrants and their rights. Resolution 2536(2024) was adopted on Precarious and irregular work situations of migrant seasonal and domestic workers.

Congress of Regional and Local Authorities

87. A fully-fledged project on strengthening resilience in local and regional authorities facing migration challenges is being implemented with the aim of providing support to local and regional authorities and their national associations in Poland, Romania and the Republic of Moldova, as the countries neighbouring Ukraine that faced the most significant migration flows, in upholding migrants' rights, especially those of women and children, delivering inclusive services and promoting their integration in local communities by complying with human rights obligations and ensuring the respect of principles of non-discrimination, equality, and democratic participation. Three baseline country assessment reports were produced on identifying the needs and challenges of local authorities on migration and inclusion mechanisms. In the reporting period, national-level events have been organised to enable multilevel co-operation in March 2024 in The Republic of Moldova, and in April 2024 in Romania.
88. In 2023 with the direct involvement of the three partner associations of local and regional authorities in all stages of the project, the induction phase and building trust partnerships with all relevant stakeholders resulted in the signature of a quadripartite Memorandum of Understanding with the Congress.
89. The establishment and launch of the Community of Practice on Migration and Human rights at local level by the Congress enabled the setting-up of a space for collaboration regarding the capacity development activities and tools, needs analysis and feedback. Good practices on migration management are emerging from the partner local authorities and are being documented for further dissemination. In November 2023 the second meeting of the Community of Practice took place in Bucharest, where the members shared their concrete experiences and discussed good practices related to inclusive policy making, social mapping and intercultural dialogue and integration.

Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)

90. The CEB through its Migrant and Refugee Fund (MRF), continued to support member states in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups. The MRF has received €39 million in contributions from 22 CEB member states, as well as the CEB and the European Investment Bank. The CEB has approved €37 million in grants from the MRF.
91. In 2023 Ukraine became the 43rd member of the CEB. In July 2023, the first grant for Ukraine was approved, one month after the country became a CEB member¹¹. The CEB's Strategic Framework 2023-2027 sets out the path for the CEB to initiate activities in Ukraine, to continue to assist migrants and their host communities as well as to address other social challenges across Europe.
92. Since the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the CEB has approved a total of €9.6 million in grants to support projects related to Ukraine, including for neighbouring member states hosting refugees. The grants are primarily financed by two CEB trust funds namely the MRF and the Ukraine Solidarity Fund, established in 2022 to assist displaced Ukrainians and to support the reconstruction of the country. The Ukraine Solidarity Fund has received €4 million in contributions from the CEB, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic.

5. Multilateral co-operation

93. The Action Plan strengthens multilateral co-operation on migration and creates new synergies with key international partners, aiming to contribute to reinforced co-operation and co-ordination with international organisations, but also to promote relations with national human rights institutions, ombudspersons and civil society.
94. In line with the mandate, the SRSG liaises and exchanges information with relevant international organisations and specialised agencies in order to foster co-operation in the field of refugees and migration. In this context, the role of the SRSG is to 1) explain the standards and obligations stemming from the European Convention on Human Rights, as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights, as well as other Council of Europe standards; 2) inform on the Council of Europe's assistance and support available to its member states in order to fulfil their obligations under these standards; and 3) work with other relevant international organisations in a co-ordinated manner to create synergies.
95. In the process of co-ordinating and co-operating with international partners, the SRSG prioritised the promotion of the Action Plan and remains committed to fostering collaborations with the goal of generating synergies and pursuing joint projects in the context of its implementation and beyond.

¹¹ The €2 million grant to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) will finance repairs to homes damaged by the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, including replacing windows and doors, fixing cracks in walls and roofs. The grant is expected to benefit more than 500 vulnerable households, including the elderly.

European Union and its Agencies

96. Regular meetings occur at a high political level involving relevant interlocutors at the level of the European Commission, the External Action Service (EEAS), the Council of the EU and with the European Parliament/LIBE. Meetings are also organised at a more technical level with DG HOME. These exchanges allow for informing of developments on each side and presenting relevant standards and obligations, as well as enhanced and co-ordinated approaches where and whenever possible. This dialogue at the political level also aims to facilitate the financing of capacity building projects related to migration and refugees in the framework of the Action Plan.
97. Co-operation with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has continued in the area of migration and refugees. A joint note "Children in migration: fundamental rights at European borders" was issued in December 2023 by the Council of Europe and FRA outlining the relevant human rights standards at Europe's borders that apply to children.
98. Following the nomination by the Secretary General, the SRSG represents the Council of Europe in the newly-established Consultative Forum of the EUAA, the Agency's main channel for co-operation with nearly 120 civil society organisations and other competent bodies working in the field of asylum at local, regional, national, European Union, or international level.
99. The regular participation of the SRSG representing the Council of Europe in the Consultative Forum of Frontex provides an opportunity to inform, explain and recall the relevant Council of Europe standards and the obligations of member states derived from these standards. The most recent participation of the Office of the SRSG in the Consultative Forum of Frontex took place in Cyprus in April 2024 and focused on fundamental rights. The event discussed the current support activities of Frontex to the Cypriot authorities relating to the management of the migration influx.
100. In January 2024 the Office of the SRSG organised a study visit for the representatives of EUAA and FRA to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, which included meetings with the Office of the SRSG, members of GRETA, CPT, ECRI, GREVIO, HELP, Registry of the European Court of Human Rights, Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, and Parliamentary Assembly / Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Secretariat.
101. The SRSG met with the new Director of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna in April 2024 to discuss the Council of Europe's co-operation with FRA in the field of migration and refugees.
102. Ongoing engagement with the European Migration Network contributes to a comprehensive information exchange on addressing migration challenges across Europe.

United Nations (UN)

103. Within the UN family, relations are most developed with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and are facilitated by UNHCR's Office presence in Strasbourg and its field presence in many Council of Europe member states. Events were jointly organised in different member states of the Council of Europe focusing on relevant European Court of Human Rights' case law and Council of Europe, European Union and UNHCR actions on asylum and migration. The joint events and the actions contributed to concrete thematic co-operation, such as on alternatives to immigration detention, on statelessness, on education (EQPR) and resulted in the development of new training modules provided in the framework of the HELP free online courses on refugee and migrant children and on alternatives to immigration detention. Capacity building activities are carried out in the context of the current Action Plan and as a follow-up to the fact-finding visits conducted in the past 16 months.
104. The SRSG participates and intervenes regularly on behalf of the Organisation in meetings organised by the UNHCR, as well as representing the Council of Europe at other UN fora. The SRSG also provides feedback and follow-up on behalf of the Organisation to the stock-taking on the implementation of the Global Compacts in line with the relevant provisions of the UNGA Resolution on the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the UN. In this context, the SRSG promotes the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025). Emphasis is given not only to its complementary nature and importance in the context of implementing the Global Compacts, but also to supporting the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Action Plan contributes to SDG 3, 4, 5, 8, and globally contributes to achieving SDG 10.
105. During the second Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, the SRSG announced the new pledges on behalf of the Council of Europe: addressing the statelessness of children and their access to nationality; ensuring gender equality and protection from gender-based violence; achieving inclusion in national health systems and fostering mental health and psychosocial wellbeing; promoting localisation - cities - a call to local action for migrants and refugees.
106. Relations with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNODC were further strengthened in the past 16 months. Bilateral exchanges are regular and aim to explore possible synergies relevant to the implementation of the Action Plan.

Other international relations

107. Relations with OSCE/ODIHR have been consistently upheld. The Special Representative paid a visit to ODIHR in Warsaw in February 2024 and met with officials at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna in April 2024. In addition, information exchange was maintained with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) regarding co-operation in areas of shared interest.

6. Financial overview

108. The overall budget of the Action Plan currently amounts to € 11 759 756. To date, a total of €6 093 911 has been secured. The amount of funding secured includes the Ordinary Budget and extra budgetary funding. Extra budgetary funding is split under: 1) Unearmarked through voluntary contributions in the amount of € 408 652 which includes contributions from Andorra, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Slovenia, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. 2) Earmarked to specific project or part of joint programmes in the amount of € 4 888 092¹² including contributions from the European Union, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Monaco and Norway.
109. The total budget includes 20 projects currently associated with the Action Plan, out of which nine projects are fully funded while 11 projects are partially funded or require full funding.
110. To respond to the consequences of the Russian Federation's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in line with the recommendations from the fact-finding mission reports and within the implementation of the Action Plan, prioritisation of funding needs has been made.
111. Priorities focus on activities relating to the strengthening of human rights, protection of refugees and migrants, promotion of effective vulnerability screening and safeguards, psychological trauma rehabilitation for Ukrainian war-affected women and children, provision of support and protection to migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, strengthening the capacity of education systems to facilitate the integration of children with a migrant background and strengthening resilience in local and regional authorities facing migration challenges.

7. Conclusion

112. The implementation of the Action Plan affirmed its significance by its ability to adapt and efficiently allocate resources to address the needs of member states. It proved to be well positioned to respond to the current migration crisis with concrete actions. Co-ordination with key international stakeholders in migration and asylum has been enhanced, and communication with member states has been reinforced.
113. Activities developed and implemented within the Action Plan have significantly contributed to raising awareness about the challenges in migration and asylum and sustained the engagement of diverse stakeholders in the implementation of relevant standards and practical tools.
114. The challenges faced over the course of these 16 months of implementation in the reporting period have provided valuable insights and lessons that should be carefully considered in the upcoming period.

¹²The project "Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova" is funded as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024.

115. *Internal co-ordination*: the Action Plan contains 28 actions, which are supplemented by many tailor-made initiatives, including co-operation projects implemented by different entities within the Organisation. It is essential to ensure adequate overall co-ordination by making links and synergies between different actions and projects, while aligning them with the Action Plan objectives and communication. The co-ordinating role of the SRSG focuses on creating opportunities, including through the work of the inter-secretariat Co-ordination Group on Migration, for shared management rather than unilateral action.
116. *Adaptability*: the Action Plan is a living strategic framework allowing the Council of Europe to respond to emerging challenges with concrete actions. It mobilises and channels expertise and rapidly adapts it to different contexts thanks to the longstanding programmatic and technical expertise of the competent Council of Europe entities in this field. A number of actions have been adapted and are currently focused on supporting the efforts of member states addressing the needs of people who have fled Ukraine.
117. *Mobilisation of funding and resources*: additional funding is required in order to meet the newly emerged needs, as well as to consolidate the investment made to date. The implementation of the Action Plan is being carried out with limited financial means and challenges remain to ensure adequate resources to provide systemic and medium-term support in response to the requests of member states.
118. In conclusion, the implementation of the Action Plan requires continuous co-ordination and involvement of all relevant stakeholders within and outside of the Council of Europe. It is important to ensure that member states take ownership over its implementation and achievements. At the same time, maintaining regular co-ordination with international partners is essential to ensure that the activities of the Action Plan complement all ongoing efforts on the ground. With just over a year remaining, its implementation relies on the sustained commitment of the Organisation and its member states.