Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities

Moldova Report

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Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities

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Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities

In Moldova, governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens have provided substantial support to Ukrainians fleeing Russia’s 2022 invasion. However, as the war continues, the generosity shown to date might wane due to Moldovan host communities’ challenges, such as the rising cost of living and disinformation campaigns relating to refugees, including by Russia-aligned stakeholders. This report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Moldova in the medium term. It provides programmatic recommendations to local, national, and international stakeholders on what they could do to mitigate those factors. In addition, the report details the characteristics that have increased (or can increase) different Ukrainian refugees’ vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services, as well as incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees that have appeared and have the potential to be spread further.

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Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

Executive Summary

Background

The world was shaken by Russia’s brutal escalation of hostilities, its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the ensuing human suffering. By March 2023, European countries recorded more than 8 million people displaced by the violence in Ukraine. More than 5 million had registered for temporary protection (TP) or similar national protection schemes on the continent,1 with 106,634 registered in Moldova and 798,223 recorded entries from Ukraine since the war began.2

Moldovan institutions and citizens have warmly welcomed Ukrainian refugees. Governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens provided whatever support they could to Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. While a quick end to the war is hoped for, it is possible that it will become prolonged, and therefore, displaced Ukrainians will likely continue to reside in neighbouring and other European countries.

Moldova also faces significant challenges, including rising economic pressures and relentless disinformation efforts. There is a risk that these factors may erode community cohesion in the longer term. In other crises, over time, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities.

Some early signs point to support for refugees beginning to erode in some countries. In Moldova, support has become a polemic issue, symbolic of Moldova’s pro-Western government.3 Opposition politicians and protestors have stoked fears that support for refugees may drive up inflation, increase fuel prices,4 or risk drawing Moldova into the war.5 Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the priorities of organisations that currently support Ukrainian refugees might change, resulting in a drop in funding available to support refugees and the communities hosting them. Despite these challenges, the disruption to the status quo suggests clear opportunities to improve the situation and general living standards for refugees and local communities.

Objectives

Several months into the war’s second year, this report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Moldova in the medium term and provide recommendations for what relevant organisations could do to mitigate those factors. We provide recommendations for specific programmes as well as programmatic and service delivery approaches that local, national, and international stakeholders could take to increase community cohesion and reduce the likelihood of these potential tensions occurring.

Approach and methodology

The research was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023. The team first carried out desk-based research. This was followed by a research workshop in Chișinău on 1–2 March with 52 experts from government, multilateral organisations, local and international NGOs, and academia. The project engaged with 229 workshop participants across the five countries. These research activities focused on (1) the characteristics that can make refugees more vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and difficulty accessing services; (2) incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees in the country; and (3) tensions that might arise between refugees and host communities in the medium term (by September 2023). The research team followed up with a survey that asked key experts to rate the effectiveness of various programmatic responses for mitigating the five tensions that are most likely to affect community cohesion by September 2023 and to share programmatic lessons learnt that could be useful for others working in this space. The team then supplemented the findings from the workshops and surveys with additional desk-based research.

Structure of the report

The report considers the characteristics that have increased, and can increase, different Ukrainian refugees’ vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and their ability to access necessary services (Chapter 2); the incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees that have been noted and have potential to be further spread (Chapter 3); the possible tensions that might occur between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the medium term (Chapter 4); and the various programmatic responses that could be applicable in the region to mitigate the risks at each stage of the refugees’ journey (Chapter 5).

Each chapter covers six stages of Ukrainian refugees’ journeys in the country: (1) entry, legal status, and registration for services; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment and income; and (6) community, social, and political life. This enables the report to bring out more clearly the links between misleading and incendiary discourses, the underlying challenges that such discourses exploit, the increased vulnerabilities of certain groups of Ukrainian refugees, and where tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities might emerge or become more significant, as well as to offer more targeted recommendations.

Key findings

Economic concerns are a key driver of potential tensions

Polling consistently shows that, since mid-2022, the Moldovan population has mostly been worried about economic factors, such as the rising cost of living. Moldova’s inflation rate has been among the highest in Europe, standing at 30.2 percent in December 2022. The unemployment rate rose sharply in the final quarter of 2022 to 4.6 percent and then 5.5 percent in the first quarter of 2023, after a year of stability between 2.5 percent and 3 percent.

Alongside higher prices for energy, fuel, and rented accommodation, economic hardship has given rise to discourses of ‘What about Moldovan citizens?’ or ‘Ukrainian refugees are draining our social system at a time when domestic citizens are being crushed by inflation’. The narrative that Ukrainians are wealthy and not in need of support emerged soon after the arrival of the first refugees and has remained constant. One news report quoted a Moldovan volunteer at the Ukrainian border in March 2022, saying, ‘You feel uneasy about it, seeing someone in a Lexus get a free lunch’.8

Some grievances and potential tensions are heightened by the perception that support to Ukrainians is more significant than that provided to vulnerable Moldovans. This concern is compounded by a lack of understanding of the source of funding, as funding support to refugees from international organisations (that is, from NGOs) and voluntary donations have been mistaken for funding from the Moldovan state.

To mitigate potential tensions around economic concerns, this report recommends the below, with each of the following and other recommendations detailed in Chapter 5:

- Ensure and communicate equity in the distribution of resources amongst the Ukrainian and local populations in need, and publicise the additional resources (international funding and voluntary domestic donations) the country received to support the refugees.
- Implement phasing programmes—change approaches to target support to the most vulnerable as the conflict continues.
- Share positive stories on social media—for example, about Ukrainian and host community relationships, support, and solidarity, and the contributions that Ukrainian refugees make to the country.
- Extend programmes that support refugees to more vulnerable local communities.
- Engage with businesses and organisations to help them make the most of a more diverse workforce.

Political discourses, fuelled by disinformation and historic grievances, have the potential to stir tensions

Russian-aligned stakeholders have been active in spreading disinformation in Moldova.9 This includes anti-Ukraine narratives, such as ‘blaming Ukraine and NATO for the war and pinning high energy prices on their own government rather than Russia cutting gas supplies’ and others targeting Ukrainian refugees. Moldova is more vulnerable than its European neighbours due to a sizeable Russian-speaking population, which has been noted to typically consume news produced in Russian, often from within the Russian Federation. As a result, many have adopted more pro-Russian perspectives.10

Historic tensions are being stirred up as well. Workshop participants in Moldova noted emerging discourses about the role of Ukrainian nationals in supporting Transnistria in the conflict against the Moldovan state in the 1990s,

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10 In 2016, 69 percent of Moldovans claimed to follow Russian-language news, and 40 percent claimed to find it as trustworthy or more so than Moldovan news sources. See Broadcasting Board of Governors. 2016. Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova. Accessed 28 March 2023. Some regions are particularly affected. For example, a recent poll in Gagauzia found that support for the pro-Western Moldovan government was as low as 2 percent, with 85 percent to 90 percent reporting trust in the Russian Federation. agauzyeri.com. 2023. Подробно об умовах союзниц в Гагаузии. Accessed 28 March 2023. See also GLOBSEC. 2022. GLOBSEC Trends 2022: CEE amid the war in Ukraine. Accessed 11 April 2023.
prompting questions about why Moldovans should support Ukrainians when the Ukrainian state is perceived as having fought against Moldovans’ interests historically. Similarly, protests against the government, which initially arose from the cost of living increases, have grown to question the validity of the war in Ukraine and the government’s decision to accept refugees. As unwavering support for the Ukrainian government and, by extension, refugees has become a symbolic policy position for Moldova’s president, opposition groups have challenged the acceptance of refugees as a policy position rather than a humanitarian concern. As a result, negative discourses about the acceptance of refugees feature in online commentary that criticises the government.

To mitigate potential tensions that can arise due to political discourses, this report recommends:

- Conducting more activities to increase interactions that members of both communities enjoy (such as movie screenings or sports activities), providing opportunities for the groups to meet and get to know one another.
- Implementing strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles.
- Creating additional free or affordable after-school activities for the children of both communities, which also provide avenues for parents to become acquainted.
- Improving the training of search engines and generative artificial intelligence to help reduce bias and potential abuse.
- Organising community dialogues around topics such as fear of insecurity and war, Ukrainian history and culture, and the realities of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.
- Producing radio and TV programming to address tensions, including ‘edutainment’ that uses fiction to help build inter-community understanding.
- Working with journalists to support quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses.
- Reviewing school curricula, including the teaching of history and digital literacy.

Many of the challenges are rooted in longstanding operational issues

Many of the concerns that Moldovan host communities expressed, and with them the incendiary and misleading narratives shared by actors with malicious intent and some segments of the population, are rooted in longstanding issues. Moldova’s education system was operating above capacity before the war, and the arrival of Ukrainian refugees added pressure to the already stretched system. The WHO’s assessment of Moldova’s healthcare system found that hospitals had low capacity, staff were burned out, and the health insurance system did not provide universal coverage. Similar issues were observed in Moldova’s social services, with structural reform, scarce resources, and out-migration and family separation all placing pressure on service delivery. Strains on

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11 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
housing have become increasingly acute, especially in the context of rising rents and costs of living.\textsuperscript{15} As an illustration, between 2013 and 2022, just 556 social houses were built in Moldova.\textsuperscript{16}

While the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has made some of these longstanding challenges more apparent, the additional visibility can also speed their resolution. In some cases, different sources of funding may have become accessible to address these issues, which could improve the situation for both Ukrainians and host communities.

To mitigate potential tensions around longstanding operational challenges, this report recommends:

- Linking work focusing on community cohesion with broader efforts to improve operational concerns in Moldova, for example, by mainstreaming equity considerations and communications in designing systems to broaden access to social services and affordable housing.
- Conducting conflict and context analyses to inform programming and communication campaigns and implementing programmes to improve access to services for the local and refugee populations as needed. This might involve facilitating the employment of Ukrainians in the healthcare system or including social intermediaries in rental processes to ensure rent payments and minimum tenancy standards.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
\textsuperscript{17} See for example, Habitat for Humanity. n.d. Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland. Accessed 27 March 2023.
Introduction

The world was shaken by Russia’s brutal escalation of hostilities, its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the ensuing human suffering. By March 2023, European countries recorded more than 8 million people displaced by the violence in Ukraine, with more than 5 million having registered for temporary protection (TP) or similar national protection schemes on the continent, with 106,634 registered in Moldova and a total of 798,223 recorded entries from Ukraine since the war began.18

Moldovan institutions and citizens have warmly welcomed Ukrainian refugees. Governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens provided whatever support they could to Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. Moldovan families had hosted over 95 percent of Ukrainians by May 2022, and 92 refugee accommodation centres (RACs) had been established.20 Ukrainians were granted full access to employment, healthcare, and education as Moldova transposed the European Union (EU) TP directive to facilitate a cohesive international response.21 While a quick end to the war is hoped for, the conflict may become prolonged and, therefore, likely that displaced Ukrainians will continue to reside in neighbouring and other European countries.

Moldova also faces significant challenges—rising economic pressures, relentless disinformation efforts, and potential policy pitfalls, among others. There is a risk that these factors may erode community cohesion in the longer term. In other crises, over time, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities. This can decrease a society’s resilience to disinformation and shocks more broadly and, in the worst cases, increase criminality and violence or conflict between communities and lead to human rights violations, including the exploitation of vulnerable individuals and lack of access to basic services.

Some early signs point to support for Ukrainian refugees beginning to erode in some countries. In Slovakia, for instance, GLOBSEC polling from December 2022 revealed that only 42 percent of the population viewed Ukrainian refugees positively.23 In the Czech Republic in September 2022, energy protestors demanded the government ‘enter into direct gas supply contracts with Russia and return Ukrainian refugees to their homes’.24 In Moldova, support for refugees has become a polemic issue symbolic of Moldova’s pro-Western government.25 Opposition politicians and protestors have stoked fears that support for refugees may drive up inflation and increase fuel prices26 or risk drawing Moldova into the war.27

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23 GLOBSEC. 2022. New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations. Accessed 22 March 2023. There has been debate about methodological approaches to polling conducted by GLOBSEC and the Slovak Academy of Science, such as noting the different scales given to participants to respond to questions (1–5 or 1–10) and how responses were collected (online or in person), even when the question posed is the same. See GLOBSEC. 2002. New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia. Accessed 22 March 2023.
Objectives

As the war enters its second year, this report aims to help understand factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Moldova in the medium term. The Transnistria region of Moldova is outside the scope of this report, given the difficulty of access and information gathering in the region.

We provide recommendations for specific programmes as well as programmatic and service delivery approaches that local, national, and international stakeholders could take to increase community cohesion and reduce the likelihood of these potential tensions occurring.

We understand community cohesion\(^{28}\) as a society in which:

- All communities have a sense of belonging;
- The diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued;
- Similar life opportunities are available to all; and
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, schools, and the wider community.

This report considers community cohesion at the local, regional, and national levels.

Approach, methodology, and structure of the report

The project team conducted research in five focus countries: the Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Six research reports have been produced: five country reports and a regional report. The regional report summarises the findings of the country reports and draws. It draws commonalities and differences in the potential tensions that might arise between the Ukrainian refugee and host communities. This report focusses on Moldova.

To conduct the research, the project engaged a diverse team: a core team responsible for the overall research framework, methodology, and delivery across the five countries; country researchers in each focus country; and an advisory group of subject matter experts to provide specialist inputs. The same approach and methodology were used for each country.

The research was undertaken in two phases. The inception phase took place between November and December 2022. The research team developed the approach and methodology and conducted initial desk-based research. This research examined the key relevant stakeholders in each country; existing programmes in this space, and characteristics that can make different refugee groups vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and challenges accessing services. Finally, the team completed an initial mapping of tensions that might arise between the host communities and refugees in the medium term.

The research phase took place between January and March. The research team organised interactive two-day workshops with key experts from government, multilateral organisations, local and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and academia. The morning session on the first workshop day was

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\(^{28}\) Slight variations of this definition are used by various schools and councils in the UK, and put forward by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, now called the Department for Education.
conducted with Ukrainian refugees and focused on characteristics that can make refugees more vulnerable. Representatives from academia and local NGOs joined for afternoon sessions which focused on refugee journeys. The second day included a broad range of participants and focused on incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees in the country and tensions that might arise in the medium term. The Moldova workshops were conducted on 1 and 2 March with 52 experts from a broad range of organisations. In total, the project engaged with 229 workshop participants across the five countries. The discussions focused on the mid-term future to orient the discussion toward risks that might become significant in that timeframe. The research team then followed up with key experts through a survey, asking them to rate how effectively various programmatic responses could mitigate the five tensions that are most likely to affect community cohesion and to share programmatic lessons learnt that could be useful for others working in this space. Finally, the findings from the workshops and the surveys were supplemented by additional desk-based research.

The report is structured according to the different stages of Ukrainian refugees’ journeys in the country: (1) entry, legal status, and registration for services; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment; and (6) community, social, and political life. This allows the report to bring out more clearly the links between misleading and incendiary discourses, underlying challenges that such discourses exploit, increased vulnerabilities of certain groups of Ukrainian refugees, and where tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities might emerge or become more significant, as well as to offer more targeted recommendations.

Chapter 1 provides a broad overview of the legal structures to facilitate the reception of the refugees and the support provided to refugees by various organisations. It also presents data on the key political, economic, and demographic characteristics of Moldova and statistics on the number of refugees hosted, their demographic characteristics, financial support received, access to services and employment, and host population attitude polling figures.

Chapter 2 details the characteristics that have increased, and can increase, different Ukrainian refugees’ vulnerabilities to exploitation and discrimination and their ability to access necessary services. This chapter draws on the desk-based research and research workshop findings.

Chapter 3 focusses on incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees. This section is based on IFES’s Chain of Harm framework which maps the path by which disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS) move through an information ecosystem. It describes the ways in which directed disinformation commonly amplifies hate speech or other divisive narratives to achieve its aims. This chapter uses three sources of data: (1) findings from the in-country workshops, (2) research from third parties on misleading and incendiary discourses about Ukrainian refugees, and (3) Facebook content found via CrowdTangle. This approach led to the development of recommendations regarding discrete intervention points where the Chain of Harm could be disrupted.

Chapter 4 summarises the tensions that might occur between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the medium term. It presents a long list of potential tensions to highlight the possibility of malign actors relentlessly

30 The team used the CrowdTangle research tool to triangulate the findings from the workshops and third-party research and to identify examples to incorporate in the report. See CrowdTangle. 2023. Welcome page. Accessed 22 March 2023.
promoting related discourses and of underlying challenges that may worsen enough to increase tensions around a particular subject. Chapter 4 draws on the desk-based research and research workshop findings.

**Chapter 5** discusses various programmatic responses that could be applicable in Moldova to mitigate against risks at each stage of the refugees' journey. The programmatic recommendations are intentionally broad; they include illustrative examples to enable a range of organisations—from governments and multilateral organisations to NGOs of various sizes, as well as small community initiatives—to consider and adapt them in their programming.

**Annex 1** is a list of acronyms and abbreviations. **Annex 2** presents data on the key political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the country as well as statistics on the numbers of refugees hosted, their demographic characteristics, financial support received, access to services and employment, and host population attitude polling figures.

Given that the political, economic, and broader context can change very quickly after the publication of this report, **Annex 3** summarises the key links to relevant statistics that can be consulted for an up-to-date picture of the situation. Annex 3 also includes a range of recommended readings for deeper dives into the topics discussed in this report—Ukrainian refugees' needs and challenges, reports on discrimination, pressures on social services, public attitude polling, disinformation discourses, programme lessons learnt, and other topics.

This report was commissioned by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office and delivered by Palladium and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), in collaboration with British embassies in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Moldova.
Chapter 1. Country Overview

In the 13 months following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, 798,223 Ukrainian refugees crossed the border into the Republic of Moldova, and 106,634 registered to remain in the country according to data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—accounting for 4.1 percent of the population, one of the highest numbers of Ukrainians settled per capita in Europe. The government, NGOs, and multilateral organisations have demonstrated strong support in response to the refugees. Such action was taken despite the country having little infrastructure or recent experience supporting large refugee inflows, with most refugees travelling through. In contrast, in 2020 and 2021 Moldova registered only 86 and 59 asylum seekers, respectively.

A large proportion of the Ukrainian refugees entered Moldova through Stefan Voda district, near the Ukrainian city of Odesa, which was subject to multiple aerial attacks from February to July 2022. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in autumn 2022, 44.1 percent of Ukrainians in Moldova came from the Odesa region.

On 1 March 2023, the legal measures providing TP were updated in line with the EU’s Temporary Protection Directive. Ukrainian citizens and eligible third-country nationals (TCNs) from Ukraine have the right to enter and remain in Moldova and to work and access educational opportunities and accommodation in temporary placement centres. This system replaced the emergency legal measures adopted by the government of Moldova in February 2022 which offered similar rights, but for renewable 60-day periods. The new system, accordingly, provides more certainty and stability for refugees; not least by removing the requirement for the situation in Moldova to remain categorised as an ‘emergency’.

Moldova’s Parliament established the Commission for Exceptional Situations which is empowered to take operational decisions with derogation from the existing legal framework. The government manages its programmatic response through the Joint Crisis Management Centre with the support of UNHCR. With support from international and national NGOs, the government created a dedicated platform, Dopomoga.gov.md, to provide information to refugees regarding documentation, accommodation, and social integration in the Republic of Moldova. Multilateral agencies such as UNHCR, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Women, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) all play crucial roles in refugee support. Moldovan international NGOs (including the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, InterSOS, and Catholic Relief Moldova) and national NGOs, such as Casa mărioarei and AVE Copii all deliver humanitarian aid.

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and social programmes; they mobilised quickly to support and fill gaps around government structures. Furthermore, civil society has been critical to the response. The UNHCR estimated that, at the start of the war, up to 95 percent of Ukrainian refugees were hosted by local families. NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, Promo-LEX, and the Association of Independent Press are also active in promoting refugees' human rights and monitoring disinformation and anti-refugee sentiments.

Moldova’s economy was struggling prior to the war, and its social services and infrastructure—housing, health, and education—are all increasingly stretched. Other challenges are likely to arise as the conflict protracts and people’s needs and concerns evolve, particularly in the context of extremely high inflation (the annual inflation rate in 2022 was 30.24 percent), and various Russia-aligned stakeholders continue disinformation campaigns. Incendiary and misleading narratives about refugees—for example, that they are ungrateful or have unfair and preferential access to services—can exacerbate concerns and have the potential to damage community cohesion. Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the priorities of organisations that support Ukrainian refugees might change, with a potential drop in funding available to support refugees and communities hosting them.

Despite these challenges, the disruption to the status quo creates opportunities to improve the situation for both refugees and local communities. With the right information to hand, and building on existing support, there is an opening to develop more cohesive communities throughout Moldova.

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Chapter 2. Vulnerabilities to Exploitation and Discrimination

2.1 Overview

Chapter 2 details the refugee journey through six identified stages: (1) registration for legal status, welfare, and benefits; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment; and (6) community, social, and political life. It then delves into the practical challenges, varied experiences, discrimination, and difficulties experienced by specific groups of refugees and identifies some intersectional characteristics that can make people particularly vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination and to experience challenges in accessing services. These characteristics are summarised in Table 1. They were selected because of their impacts on refugees’ experiences to date and likelihood of affecting refugees in the future, particularly if programmatic priorities change, financial support decreases, and/or disinformation efforts gain more traction.

Table 1: Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable in Moldova

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journey stage</th>
<th>Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal status, welfare, and benefits</td>
<td>• People with disabilities, such as blindness or learning difficulties, are unable to produce the documentation required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• People who lack complete documentation from Ukraine or were not properly recorded on entry.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• TCNs and Moldovan citizens who were long-term residents in Ukraine.</td>
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<td>• Unaccompanied children.</td>
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<td>• Single-parent families.</td>
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<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>• People with health conditions for which care is in limited supply or difficult to access.</td>
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<td>• People who do not speak Romanian.</td>
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<td>• People (especially children) with disabilities.</td>
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<td>Housing</td>
<td>• People with young children or pets, which are perceived as risks to property.</td>
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<td>• People who are unable to pay high deposits for accommodation, including older people dependent on pensions.</td>
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<td>• Roma people.</td>
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<td>• People with disabilities that require specific accommodations.</td>
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<td>• People staying in rural areas where facilities to host them are limited.</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>• Roma people with limited educational background.</td>
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<td>• Families without legal status.</td>
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<td>• Children who are placed in the wrong grade level in the Moldovan school system.</td>
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<td>Employment and income</td>
<td>• People with childcare responsibilities who require flexible working hours.</td>
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<td>• People based outside of Chișinău, especially in the southern regions.</td>
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<td>• People without informal networks in Moldova, who cannot find opportunities.</td>
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<td>• People with specialist occupations who cannot find suitable roles.</td>
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<td>Community, social, and political life</td>
<td>• People who require psychological support.</td>
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<td>• People in communities without inclusive decision-making processes that account for Ukrainians.</td>
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<td>• People in majority Russian-speaking or pro-Russian areas.</td>
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2.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Upon entry, the government of Moldova issues each Ukrainian refugee a state identification number (IDNP). IDNPs are obtained by entering data from Ukrainian identification on an online platform and then downloading a PDF of the IDNP. Refugees must present the PDF to register for public services, including enrolling children in schools and opening bank accounts; the PDF also must be submitted to employers upon acceptance of employment. In one year since its introduction on 1 March 2022, the platform has been accessed over 100,000 times via app or telephone. On 1 March 2023, Moldova transposed the EU TP directive that formalises refugees’ right to remain until 1 March 2024 and gives beneficiaries the right to access accommodation in temporary placement centres, primary and emergency healthcare, education for children, and social assistance services. TP also gives them the right to work. This status is available to Ukrainians who resided in Ukraine or Moldova before 24 February 2022; stateless people; and non-Ukrainians who benefitted from protection granted by Ukrainian authorities, along with their family members. There are no additional provisions for TCNs.

Applying for TP requires an online registration and the submission of personal data for applicants and their dependents. This is followed by an in-person interview at the Inspectorate of Migration offices in Chișinău, Cahul, Comrat, or Balti, where documentation is issued. Protection can be withdrawn if the recipient spends a cumulative total of more than 45 days outside of Moldova from 1 March 2023 to 1 March 2024, repatriates voluntarily, or resettles outside of Moldova. TP status also can be revoked if the recipient commits any criminal offence. Notably, Moldovan public services accept identification in Cyrillic script, which enables use of Ukrainian identification alongside the IDNP (this is not the case in all countries). Some initiatives supported by NGOs, international donors, and multilateral organisations help refugees in Moldova to access legal assistance to complete registration for public services. Participants in the workshop, which was conducted shortly after the introduction of TP, pointed out a lack of clarity regarding the documentation required to attain TP status, and that Moldovan officials had not been able to tell them where to obtain the required forms and documentation. Participants also questioned the capacity of the Moldovan state to respond to the number of applications that were likely to be submitted in a short time, and how long it would take to process them.

The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

People with disabilities such as blindness or learning difficulties, who are unable to produce the documentation required: Participants in the research workshops noted disability, especially blindness, as a challenge to accessing TP status. This is linked to the application process, as refugees need to access the internet to acquire the IDNP documentation and must then interview in person. The WHO recognises that people with disabilities experience longer waiting times for required services, due to both the time required to find

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49 UNDP. 2022. Legal aid support to be provided for refugees from Ukraine, supported by Sweden and UNDP. Accessed 23 March 2023.
50 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
51 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
52 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
specialised facilities and lengthy bureaucratic procedures. 53 Deaf Ukrainians face challenges as sign language interpretation is limited, and the Russian (used in Moldova) and Ukrainian sign languages are different. Moldova established a Disability Taskforce under the UNHCR-led intersectoral working group. It has collaborated with the government to introduce simplified entry procedures, information hotlines, financial aid, and temporary accommodation that meets the needs of people living with disabilities. 54 As of 24 February 2023 the group had established a disability-focused information hotline; provided case management, rehabilitation, and medicines to more than 500 individuals; and assembled five mobile support teams to provide ad hoc support. 55 Ongoing cash provision activities had reached over 700 people by February 2023, and food deliveries to people in temporary accommodation are underway. 56 A workshop participant mentioned that an intervention supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Christian Blind Mission, European Disability Forum, and the IOM had trained a number of police and public servants in sign language to meet the needs of Ukrainians arriving in Moldova. 57

People without complete documentation, or who were not properly recorded upon entry: Workshop participants noted that Ukrainian refugees do not always understand the procedures, particularly around the documentation required for the new TP process, and that information available on various sites online is not always correct, adding to the confusion. 58 They also shared that reliance on Russian-language news sites made Ukrainians feel more vulnerable to misleading information and that they were unable to confirm that information against sources in Romanian. 60 Participants suggested that refugees from eastern regions of Ukraine were more likely to have fled without documentation as the hostilities escalated; 61 reporting by HIAS and VOICE echoes this observation. 62 Moldova’s proximity to Ukraine, especially Odessa, makes short trips feasible. Workshop participants stated that this has the potential to increase vulnerability as the new TP status limits the cumulative number of days that refugees can spend outside of Moldova within a year without losing eligibility for support. 64 They also expressed significant concerns that refugees in Transnistria were not receiving adequate humanitarian assistance. 65 Transnistria is outside of the scope of this report, but reporting from UNHCR notes that refugees arriving in that region experience a significantly different legal process than those arriving in the Republic of Moldova. 66

Roma communities are disproportionately likely to enter Moldova without the full documentation required to qualify for TP or access humanitarian assistance. Before the escalation of Russia’s invasion, it is estimated that up to 20 percent of Ukraine’s Roma community were undocumented. 67 Workshop participants who were not members of the community reported that Roma people were less likely to have all the information required to

58 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
59 Disinformation and misinformation from Russian-language news sources was a recurring theme in the workshop discussions in Moldova. Chapter 3 discusses disinformation discourses in Moldova.
60 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
61 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
63 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
65 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
obtain documentation in Ukraine, compounding challenges in accessing legal status in Moldova. Many are functionally stateless, as they or their families were unable to provide proof of their place of birth during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and therefore never fully integrated into the Ukrainian system. For this reason Roma people have reported challenges in leaving Ukraine and accessing support in Moldova. Furthermore, there have been reports that Roma who say they are escaping the war encounter disbelief or are refused the same quality of service as ethnic Ukrainians, although they are fleeing the same hostilities.

Transgender Ukrainians experience particular difficulties at this stage in the legal journey since their legal documentation can be ambiguous or not reflect their lived identity or chosen name. Data on the entry of transgender Ukrainians into Moldova is limited, and political rhetoric leverages transphobia and homophobia. A hotline has been established for LGBTQIA+ people entering Moldova, but there is little public-facing information about the impact of the refugee crisis on transgender people. A joint HIAS and VOICE report notes that transgender people perceive a risk of violence at border crossings and echoed that outdated documentation may prevent them from crossing international borders. UNHCR reported that LGBTQIA+ groups depend on NGOs to inform them of the rights and services available to them within Moldova.

TCNs and Moldovan citizens who were long-term residents in Ukraine: The IOM estimated that 37,034 TCNs had entered Moldova from Ukraine by 22 April 2022, representing less than 10 percent of entrants at the time of the study. UNHCR estimated in February 2023 that 6,000 TCNs had remained in Moldova. TCNs are eligible to apply for TP status if they meet one of three requirements: (1) they were stateless and recognised as living in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022, (2) they were refugees or TCNs reliant on protection from the Ukrainian government before 24 February 2022, or (3) they are relatives of a displaced Ukrainian national. This leaves a significant gap for long- and short-term third country residents of Ukraine now in Moldova—for example, students with academic visas and no family connections in Ukraine. As it stands, people in this position must apply for asylum in Moldova under the existing system, with no additional benefits or access to TP benefits. The IOM reported that TCNs were more likely to enter Moldova on foot than their Ukrainian counterparts but were similarly more likely to leave Ukraine by air. This likely indicates TCNs’ diverse income levels and countries of origin. The largest groups of TCNs entering Moldova from Ukraine since the escalation of hostilities have been from Russia, followed closely by Azerbaijan. Over 75 percent of TCNs entering Moldova come from Russia, Azerbaijan, Romania, Georgia, Belarus, Armenia, Turkey, or Israel.

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68 Chișinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.
Unaccompanied children: Almost half of refugee arrivals in Moldova have been under the age of 18. In March 2022, UNHCR estimated that 2 percent of children crossing the border into Moldova were unaccompanied, meaning at least 1,000 children were at high risk. The European Parliament reports that unaccompanied children face higher risks of abuse and exploitation during displacement, including forced labour and greater barriers to accessing healthcare and social assistance. In the first month following the invasion, authorities in Moldova identified 11 unaccompanied children who were subsequently placed in emergency care. In some cases, family or siblings were drafted into the war effort in Ukraine, or parents chose to send their children alone to escape violence. Moldova’s response seeks to place unaccompanied children in foster care with the support of child protection case workers. This integrates children into the foster system in the Moldovan legal system without the need for TP status, and unaccompanied children in Moldova are eligible to seek help from UNHCR or the Moldovan government. A hotline was also established for unaccompanied children to seek support. As of 30 March 2023, UNHCR advised young people to seek support from the Moldovan Red Cross or International Committee of the Red Cross. Government of Moldova Decision nr. 21/2023 of 18 January 2023 allows an unaccompanied minor to request TP status through an official representative of the institution where he or she is placed or through a legal representative, named according to the legislation. Social assistance measures for families with children, as well as unaccompanied minors, are provided through the territorial social assistance structures.

Single-parent families: From the early stages of the war, Ukraine’s martial law has, with few exceptions, kept men of fighting age in Ukraine. Therefore, large numbers of refugees are women, and many of them have unexpectedly become the heads of single-parent families. As of February 2023, UNHCR estimated that women and children accounted for as much as 86 percent of refugees. CARE estimated that they were 80 percent of refugees in Moldova in July 2022. Single-parent families may face additional challenges attaining legal status due to Moldovan laws that require the consent of both parents for decisions that affect a child’s status. They may also face challenges at the border if family members have different surnames. Moldovan national law requires two parents to be listed on the birth certificate for a child to receive Moldovan documentation. In line with this requirement, the IOM states that a parent travelling alone with a minor child is required to have obtained power of attorney from the other parent to be eligible for its assistance to travel onwards from Moldova. The absence of partners is compounded by the fact that some parents are unaware of each other’s whereabouts, and the war has increased the challenge for families, partners, and ex-partners who share custody to remain in contact with each other and their children.

One participant detailed the case of a woman who, prior to the introduction of TP, was unable to settle the status of her child without her ex-husband’s co-signature. Because she had no way to contact him after the full-scale invasion, it was impossible to register the child for settled status in Moldova.  

2.3 Healthcare

Since 1 March 2023, Moldovan TP status has been the basis for access to healthcare in the country for Ukrainian refugees. Displaced people with TP status can access basic healthcare without additional registration. However, identification or documentary evidence of entry into Moldova is required at the point of service. This requirement applies to TCNs and Moldovans who were resident in Ukraine prior to the escalation of the war. A number of private providers have waived costs for Ukrainian residents in Moldova. Ukrainians have access to mental health and psychosocial support in line with Moldovan counterparts, although NGOs or private practitioners, such as Caritas, and individual clinics, provide these services more widely. Healthcare systems in Moldova receive support from multilateral actors, including the United Nations Population Fund, which provides access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and maternal healthcare at no cost at the point of service for Ukrainian refugees, as it does for Moldovan citizens.  

Broadly speaking, the Moldovan government, with support through bilateral and multilateral funding, has made healthcare access equitable for Ukrainians and Moldovans, although limited information and structural barriers appear to contribute to ongoing challenges for some refugees in accessing healthcare. Healthcare in Moldova is widely available in Russian—easing access for Ukrainians as most speak Russian. However, workshop participants noted that differences between the Russian and Ukrainian languages are keenly felt in healthcare. Ukrainian workshop participants also highlighted that medical facilities have limited capacity and that the lack of integration into and knowledge of the Moldovan healthcare system means Ukrainians require additional support. Participants also observed that, prior to the introduction of TP, Ukrainians often registered directly with the Moldovan healthcare system and were unable to make appointments online. This led to lengthy queues for same-day visits.  

The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

People who require specialist care that is in limited supply or difficult to access: Ukrainian refugees with chronic illnesses are eligible for healthcare under TP. Moldova’s targeted services for HIV positive and high-risk individuals have been extended to refugees. Ukrainians can bring anti-retroviral treatment (ART) medication into Moldova if they have a prescription, and they are eligible for free testing if they show identification. If tests are positive for HIV, refugees can access counselling through state-funded services and can receive a 30-day supply of ART medication, which is refillable. This is in line with services for Moldovan citizens.  

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99 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
104 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
106 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis drugs free of charge to high-risk individuals, including refugees. UNAIDS highlighted that coordination between Moldovan and Ukrainian doctors allows a more cohesive response for Ukrainians living with HIV; however, it also noted that stigma around diagnosis means that many refugees prefer to keep their needs from all but family and medical specialists.

The Ukrainian and Moldovan governments have also agreed on standardised procedures, testing, and policies for the treatment of hepatitis A, B, and C and tuberculosis for refugees. Many specialist, healthcare-focused institutes and NGOs established outreach services for Ukrainians, but workshop participants raised the lack of information as an issue. UNHCR reported in February 2023 that whilst access to urgent healthcare is generally regarded positively in Moldova, access to medication is more challenging—and unaffordable for Ukrainians without medical insurance. Furthermore, drugs that were available in Ukraine are not found in Moldova, raising concerns amongst refugees about how to manage chronic illnesses.

People with disabilities and chronic needs, especially children with disabilities: There is no currently reliable data on how many Ukrainians in Moldova live with disabilities. However, 22 percent of Ukrainian households surveyed by UNHCR in February 2023 reported having a family member with a disability or serious medical condition. Unfamiliarity with the Moldovan health system is a significant problem for Ukrainians with disabilities according to the WHO, as many refugees have found it difficult to get information on the types of care they require versus what is available. In some cases, people with disabilities have been transferred to other countries for specialist help. NGOs deliver many services for people with disabilities, such as food provision or awareness raising around the help for which they are eligible. However, a lack of adequate and accessible facilities remains a challenge, especially in healthcare. Families are eligible for cost-free support funded through the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and UNICEF, although some workshop participants were not fully aware of this. The Commission for Emergency Situations extended access to social services for children with disabilities who are refugees from Ukraine. Those children benefit from social assistance, with eligibility based on a disability certificate obtained in Ukraine or the decision of the relevant local commission. Confusion on this issue suggests that a lack of information or knowledge of where to find information may compound access difficulties. Equally, it may also be confusion experienced before the introduction of TP, when refugees’ knowledge of what the new status would entail was at times limited.
2.4 Housing

Refugees arriving in Moldova typically obtain housing in one of three ways: (1) by renting private accommodation; (2) being hosted in private accommodation, often by family or friends; or (3) living in a RAC. There is no state-sponsored system to assign Ukrainians to privately hosted accommodation; this is arranged through informal networks and facilitated through the significant Ukrainian community living in Moldova before the escalation of hostilities. As of December 2022, 65 RACs in Moldova housed just under 3,000 Ukrainians, down from a peak of over 100 in April 2022. Many RACs are converted public or private facilities, and over 25 percent are student accommodation. Based on interviews with RAC focal points, UNHCR reported that 64 percent of residents in February 2023 were women, down from 75 percent in April 2022. With one exception, all RACs were operating below capacity in December 2022; overall occupation was at 70 percent. Over 90 percent of residents in RACs had been there for more than two months, with the remainder staying for shorter periods. As of February 2023, 23 RACs operated in Chișinău; every other district has three or fewer centres (most have only one). The International Labour Organisation reported that trade unions in Moldova have made their premises available to refugee groups as accommodation. Non-profit initiatives, including People in Need, have provided funding for Moldovans hosting Ukrainians. This support addresses some concerns around providing for Ukrainian refugees’ basic needs.

The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

**People renting privately without formal contracts:** Participants in the workshops emphasised that people without formal rental contracts are among the most vulnerable refugees in Moldova. They noted that many landlords are unwilling to pay the 12 percent withholding tax applied to rent, preferring informal arrangements. They also noted that landlords regard Ukrainians as short-term, unreliable tenants. As a result, many landlords are reluctant to sign formal contracts for less than one year, and informal contracts are commonplace. Rents in Moldova have recently increased alongside climbing costs for utilities and other expenses. Moldovan law allows landlords to change rents on private property to reflect changes in costs without regulation, so renters across the board face a potentially precarious situation which is even more challenging for those without formal contracts, who have no protection from eviction. Participants also reported that informal living arrangements leave Ukrainians unable to claim housing assistance because formal contracts serve as proof of the expense. Thus, landlords’ reluctance to sign short-term leases can limit refugees’ access to cash and other assistance and may prove troublesome when they (re-)register for TP status.

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127 Chișinău research workshop 1 March 2023.
130 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
People who are unable to pay a significant deposit, including older people dependent upon pensions: Workshop participants reported that deposits for rented accommodation often equal a three-month payment—not a possibility for many refugees, especially older people and people living with disabilities. In addition, they noted that rents have increased rapidly since the escalation of the war. One Moldovan participant said rent in Chișinău went from €150 to €250 per month overnight as soon as it became clear that refugees would be arriving. Moldova 1 echoed this assertion, reporting that rent for one-room apartments increased by up to 40 percent between February and August 2022. In October 2022, Gazprom cut gas exports to Moldova, catalysing a 73 percent drop in power production from Moldova’s Cuciurgan power plant by. This left consumers facing price increases of up to 200 percent and average Moldovans spending up to 75 percent of income on energy utilities.

People with young children: Workshop participants reported that landlords are often reluctant to rent to families with young children for fear of damage to their property, adding to the challenge of finding long-term accommodation. The same hesitance also reportedly extends to pregnant women, as participants believe landlords see them as risky tenants who might leave at short notice to stay with family.

People with pets which are perceived as risks to property: Refugees from Ukraine have the right to bring pets to Moldova without presenting veterinary certificates or animal passports. Workshop participants reported that landlords are often reluctant to rent to families with pets for fear of damage to their property, making it more challenging to find long-term accommodation. UNHCR reported the same findings. RACs typically do not accept pets, although there are exceptions.

Members of the Roma community: Moldova’s Ombudsman’s report of April 2022 on the rights of migrants arriving in Moldova states that ‘application of the principle of non-discrimination by [temporary accommodation] centres has been problematic from the outset’, citing hostile attitudes of staff toward ethnic and religious minorities. The report cites cases of administrators of the centres refusing to accept Roma refugees, multiple cases in which police warned the centres not to accept Roma refugees, and a case of a heating system being intentionally disconnected at a centre housing a large number of Roma families during below-zero weather, which the Ombudsman’s report attributes to discrimination. The report concludes that discrimination has impacted decisions about the provision of housing to Roma, and that ‘intentionally or not, the accommodation of ethnic groups in some temporary centres was nevertheless affected by existing (predominantly negative) social

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131 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
132 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
136 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
137 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
139 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
stereotypes about them'. The Human Rights Watch reported that the segregation of Roma communities is often driven by informal decisions by Moldovan authorities and cited an agreed approach to segregate Roma refugees in designated state-run reception centres rather than using the range of facilities that might not already house Roma communities. The European Roma support group echoed these concerns, reporting that the few RACs where Roma communities were housed in Moldova lacked food, medicine, and warm clothing and were often overcrowded.

The Moldovan state countered that the functional segregation of Roma groups was a decision to optimise the use of the small number of interpreters and mediators able to communicate with Roma groups. The Ombudsman’s report also notes requests by Roma families to be accommodated together, sometimes in numbers that a site cannot accommodate. In spite of this, concerns remain that this treatment places Roma groups at a significant disadvantage due to the lower quality of accommodation. Some participants in our workshops expressed a perception that Roma communities prefer to be accommodated with people of their own culture; this was linked to stereotyping around the behaviours of Roma communities. Others, however, disputed this point, raising concerns that this policy amounts to discrimination and citing the Ombudsman’s report. Based on available information and the findings of the workshop, there appears to be a significant disconnect in communication regarding what Roma communities require and what some authority representatives believe they want.

People with disabilities requiring specialised facilities: As of December 2022, 42 percent of RAC residents were people living with disabilities and 9 percent had serious medical conditions. This suggests that these groups use RACs more than private housing. Nearly one in five (17 percent) of RACs in Moldova were adapted from specialist facilities to cater for people with mental health issues or disabilities, and these have been the most adequate long-term housing options to date. The WHO highlights that the UNHCR-led disability taskforce has supported people with disabilities to find temporary accommodation, but a lack of suitable facilities and assistive equipment, and lengthy bureaucratic processes, make the transition from temporary accommodation to private or independent living challenging for refugees with disabilities. Another key challenge in facilitating the transition is a lack of information for communities with disabilities, meaning that people do not always know how to access the most appropriate facilities for their circumstances. WHO flags that a lack of data regarding the locations and needs of people with disabilities compounds these issues, and the Moldovan state is not equipped to respond without support from multilateral and international actors.

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148 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

149 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.


People staying in rural areas where there are inadequate facilities to host Ukrainians: Participants in the workshops highlighted that living conditions in the capital and elsewhere in Moldova differ drastically. Moldovans and Ukrainians both stated that some areas of Moldova lack reliable electricity and plumbing. One explained that NGOs and civil society organisations, including Caritas in Moldova, support Moldovans to renovate parts of their homes or install more effective heating and internal plumbing to support hosting Ukrainians. However, this work can cost up to €4000 per house, which is not considered cost-effective for the number of people supported. Conversely, emigration from Moldova has left more houses empty in the countryside, resulting in greater availability and lower rents than in the capital.

2.5 Education

TP status grants refugee children equal access to Moldova’s education system and, as of January 2023, 1,665 Ukrainian children were enrolled in Moldovan schools. Caregivers are required to register their children with the local educational division or directly with an institution in order for children to attend school. Due to some bureaucratic requirements that may challenge families in navigating Moldova’s institutions, the Ministry of Education made it possible for Ukrainians to audit classes and receive certificates of attendance if they are not registered at an institution, although auditing is not considered equivalent to full registration. Many Ukrainian children attend online schooling provided by Ukrainian authorities, citing difficulties including bureaucratic requirements and language barriers; UNHCR also points out that Ukraine may not recognise Moldovan school certifications in future. The UNHCR REACH multi-sector needs assessment for 2022 found preference for online Ukrainian education as the primary driver of non-registration in the Moldovan school system, accounting for 62 percent of instances of nonattendance in the Moldovan system (and up to 82 percent in both the 7- to 10-year-old and 11- to 15-year-old categories). As such, Ukrainians in Moldova may use any of three education streams—Ukrainian online school, Romanian-language Moldovan school, and Russian-language Moldovan school. According to government sources, Moldovan schools have put in place extracurricular activities, psychosocial support, and counselling for Ukrainian refugee children. However, workshop participants raised concerns that free or affordable extracurricular activities for Ukrainian children are limited. Despite de jure access to education through TP, remaining structural barriers make it challenging for Ukrainian children to access education. Ukrainian online schools require a stable space to attend lessons, which many lack if their parents work, and Romanian schools are often inaccessible due to language barriers. Russian schools are more commonly attended by members of Moldovan communities that support Russia in the war, and participants raised concerns about bullying and exclusion of Ukrainian children based on perceptions of the invasion.

The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

155 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
156 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
157 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
164 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
165 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
Families with pre-school-aged children: Kindergartens have been under particular pressure during the refugee crisis: Moldova’s education system operated at capacity before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and the additional strain of large numbers of refugees makes it challenging for young Ukrainian and Moldovan children to get spaces in kindergartens. This issue is compounded by a lack of services for Ukrainians (for example, online school) for younger children. Participants in the workshops also reported being unable to speak to their children’s teachers or to understand instructions for parents that were provided in Romanian. UNHCR also raised language concerns that affect young children, flagging that these impede building relationships between Ukrainian and Moldovan young people.

Members of the Roma community with limited educational experience: Before the escalation of the war, Roma in Ukraine faced a lack of access to education and had higher rates of illiteracy and school dropouts than the wider community. Indeed, almost half of Roma were estimated to have left school without completing secondary education whilst still in Ukraine. This makes it more challenging for Roma communities to integrate into the Moldovan school system. In Ukraine, many Roma children attended schools that were functionally segregated, and estimates suggest that as many as 34 percent of the community do not speak Ukrainian. UNHCR points out that these factors necessitate specific educational consideration for Roma communities, including preparatory courses and homework support to enable integration into the mainstream school system. A lack of warm clothes was also identified as a barrier to education, as many young Roma do not want to continue their studies during winter. The Moldovan government has been accused of replicating discrimination against Roma through the provision of segregated services.

Families without legal status: Due to requirement to register children directly with an institution or local educational division, access to education is entirely dependent on the legal status of caregivers and their ability to navigate the Moldovan bureaucracy. This can present challenges. By June 2022, just over 7,000 Ukrainian children were registered in Moldovan education programmes and 1,665 were registered for full school attendance, although reports also suggest that many Ukrainian caregivers keep their children in online Ukrainian schools. The legislation permitting Moldovan youth to audit classes and receive certificates of attendance seeks to address this challenge.

Children who are placed in the incorrect class when transferring to Moldovan school systems: Workshop participants raised concerns that some children were not receiving adequate or age-appropriate education in Moldova since they could not prove which grade they attended in Ukraine. In some cases, they were placed in classes based on their age or an assumption of their abilities rather than their educational history. This may impact on their eligibility for examinations or the education they receive. Language barriers may contribute to misplacement, as Ukrainian students are held back from education because they do not speak Romanian.
2.6 Employment and income

TP status in Moldova grants Ukrainian refugees the full right to work in the country if they can provide identification and an IDNP number. In Moldova, professions are designated as regulated or unregulated; Ukrainians seeking work in regulated fields must register their qualifications with the Centre for Information and Communication Technologies and Education. The Moldovan government platform for Ukrainian refugees includes a job board where companies can advertise positions in Russian. A workshop participant noted that the government’s employment platform marks opportunities as suitable for Ukrainians, although no Ukrainian participants were aware of this service. The sectors with the most vacancies for Ukrainians were reported to be information technology and computing, manual trades (plumbing, electricity, and others), and light-skilled work including cloth cutting and clothing manufacturing. A number of private companies have offered vocational training to refugees, many supported by multilateral actors. Moldova’s National Employment Agency has also undertaken job-matching to help skilled Ukrainians find opportunities. At the time of writing, data from UNHCR’s operations data portal showed that 27 percent of respondents in Moldova were employed in the country, UNDP reported in May 2022 that over 2,400 Ukrainian refugees had found employment in Moldova.

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Moldova’s unemployment rate has hovered between 2.5 percent and 3 percent, with a sharp rise to 4.6 percent in January 2023. Moldova’s minimum wage is MDL 4,000 per month (approximately £175 at the time of writing). The economic proximity of Moldova and Ukraine has significantly impacted some industries, especially agriculture and energy production, because the war has had a knock-on effect on employment, including for Ukrainian refugees. Moldova also suffers from high inflation; the year-on-year figure in January 2022 was 27.31 percent, down from 30.24 percent in December. Moldova’s national bank expects rates to remain high in 2023, with an expected average annual rate of 13.7 percent.

The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

People with childcare responsibilities who require flexible working hours: Kindergarten and day care spaces are limited in Moldova, limiting primary caregivers’ ability to seek work. Even when remote opportunities are available, living situations may not be conducive to working from home. This reduces the pool of employment opportunities. The issue disproportionately affects women, who are most often the primary caregivers for children and elderly relatives. UNHCR also noted that single mothers requiring flexible work find it difficult to

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access employment due to a lack of social support networks. The report observed that, without friends or relatives to help with childcare, mothers must periodically take time away from work to care for sick children or ensure they can attend school, which employers did not accept.

People based outside Chișinău, especially in the southern regions: Unemployment rates and types of work in Chișinău and the rest of Moldova vary. Agricultural work is disproportionately undeclared in Moldova, unlike other work, and infrastructure challenges relating to roads and electricity impacts on the ability of rural regions to develop economically. A significant brain drain from rural regions to the capital and to other countries limits economic growth and opportunities in rural regions. These factors make finding quality employment more challenging for Ukrainians living in rural settlements or outside the larger cities, especially as the fastest-growing sectors, information technology and computing, are based predominantly in the capital. The slowing of imports through Ukraine’s port in Odesa has also halted some agricultural production, reducing the availability of work and output of Moldova’s agricultural industries since February 2022. In one workshop, a participant commented that Ukraine’s own agricultural industries are direct competitors to Moldova’s and that as Ukraine has cut the cost of agricultural exports due to economic pressures of the war, Moldova’s agricultural industries are under significant economic pressure and unable to support large-scale employment opportunities.

People without informal networks in Moldova, who cannot find opportunities: In spite of efforts by the Moldovan government, workshop participants from Ukraine and representatives of organisations in Moldova said they had trouble connecting Ukrainians to job opportunities. Participants from Moldova indicated that doing so is particularly difficult if a role requires experience (for example in project management). Participants reported that they typically relied on their informal networks since official channels did not provide matches. This presents a challenge for Ukrainians who do not have sufficient informal networks in Moldova to help them identify job opportunities.

Specialists who cannot find suitable roles: A number of research workshop participants raised concerns that highly qualified Ukrainians were not able to find work in their fields in Moldova. This was linked to the perception that Ukrainians are not regarded as a sustainable workforce since most intend to return to Ukraine and that some might leave the country with little notice. Participants also reported a lack of Romanian language skills as a barrier to higher-paying jobs that require proficiency in both Russian and Romanian. Recognition of qualifications in regulated professions was also raised as an issue by workshop participants, although Moldova and Ukraine signed an agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications in 2021, before the war.

In the research workshops, participants reported that some roles are filled through service contracts rather than employment contracts, assigning individual tasks for one-off payments. Participants stated that this practice...
Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

affects financial security and that the per-day rate is often very low. Freelancing and remote work are new to Moldova. Only in 2020 did tax legislation add a freelance category, and the number of freelancers is as low as 0.66 per capita.

2.7 Community, social, and political life

Because it borders Ukraine, Moldova’s priority to date has largely been on providing safe accommodation and humanitarian assistance to refugees, and a range of organisations are now considering integration matters within their activities. NGOs and United Nations agencies play active roles in providing targeted support for local organisations and Ukrainian communities. Maintaining social and community life remains challenging for LGBTQIA+ communities as societal acceptance is very low, although local organisations have set up some targeted services, including hotlines. Workshop participants commented on a lack of social and recreational opportunities for Moldovans and Ukrainians to meet and mix, and that little information on Moldovan culture is easily accessible for Ukrainians, who only learn about Moldovan culture, traditions, and celebrations online.

Language plays an important role in facilitating community life for Ukrainians in Moldova, as both populations have high proficiency in Russian. There are challenges with Russian-language sources and spaces, however. Moldova’s Russian-speaking population largely consumes news from Russian language sources, with exposure to pro-Russian messaging, including disinformation. Participants in the workshop reported that ethnic Ukrainians living in Moldova before the war typically also got their news from Russian sources, and many believed Ukraine’s government had led the country into war.

The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

People requiring psychological support: Although the Moldovan government extends psychosocial and mental health support to Ukrainians, many suffer from psychological trauma associated with the conflict and require specialised support. Stigma around mental health in both Moldova and Ukraine prevents many from seeking help. These problems are compounded by long waiting lists, language barriers, and a lack of provisions for children. A World Vision report predicts that as many as 1.5 million Ukrainian children are expected to suffer mental health difficulties arising from the conflict, and the WHO has observed that they will be particularly stark in children with conditions such as autism. Women’s organisations play a crucial role in connecting Ukrainian

202 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
206 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
209 Chișinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
women and providing space to discuss challenges and share stories, easing the mental health burden.216 Targeted services have been established for women with young children fleeing domestic violence, including through NGOs such as Casa Marioarel.217 The WHO coordinates a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support taskforce to support Ukrainians.

**People in communities without inclusive decision-making processes that account for Ukrainians:** Refugees International recommends access to inclusive decision-making for refugees as a priority for United Nations and international actors to support in Moldova.218 Workshop participants noted that many Ukrainians had now been in Moldova for over a year, and that local governments provide no adequate mechanisms for them to share their opinions or experience with policymakers.219

**People in majority Russian-speaking or pro-Russian areas:** Whilst Moldovans maintain strong proficiency in Russian across the board, there is a distinction between native Russian speakers and others who speak the language. The former typically rely more on Russian-language media, often produced in Russia,220 and have more sympathetic views of Russia in the context of the invasion. These groups are not exclusively ethnically Russian, and ethnic Ukrainians221 and Gagauz people222 are often more confident in Russian than Romanian.

In Gagauzia, in the south of Moldova, a recent poll found that support for the pro-Western Moldovan government was as low as 2 percent, with 85 percent to 90 percent of people reporting trust in the Russian Federation.223 The same poll showed that 93 percent of Gagauzians favour closer relations with the Russian Federation.224 Participants in the workshops highlighted that Ukrainians coming into contact with Russian-language communities are more likely to face discrimination or hostility.225 In some instances, Ukrainians staying with ethnically Ukrainian family members resident in Moldova have experienced anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in their hosts’ homes due to the influence of Russian media sources or historic sympathy for Russia. Participants also noted this as a problem in schools, where Ukrainian children have been bullied or mocked in relation to the war. In discussion of tensions, Ukrainian participants mentioned feeling frightened of pro-Russian protests in towns where they lived, and a passer-by told one participant’s young child, ‘I hate Ukrainians’.226

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219 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
224 Chișinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
225 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
Chapter 3. Misleading or Incendiary Discourses About Ukrainian Refugees

3.1 Overview

Chapter 3 discusses the key misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in Moldova. The analysis is based on the IFES Chain of Harm framework which maps the path by which Disinformation, Misinformation, and Dangerous Speech (DMDS) move through an information ecosystem, depicting the ways in which directed disinformation commonly amplifies hate speech or other divisive narratives to achieve its aims. The Chain of Harm framework allows researchers and practitioners to map DMDS along five stages, from the initial actors creating DMDS to the ultimate risks that manifest. Breaking down the challenges of DMDS in this way allows researchers and practitioners to identify discreet intervention points where the Chain of Harm can be disrupted to reduce the ultimate harms that would otherwise occur.

Figure 1: The IFES Chain of Harm Framework

The five stages of the Chain of Harm—actor, message, mode of dissemination, interpreter, and risk—are used below to analyse the different aspects of narratives in circulation in Moldova.

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Actors spreading misleading or abusive messages

Misleading or incendiary messages are spread in Moldova by different actors, with different intent. Russian actors promote anti-Ukraine narratives, for instance ‘blaming Ukraine and NATO for the war and pinning high energy prices on their own government rather than Russia cutting gas supplies’.228

Pro-Russian Moldovan political actors have also been accused of spreading disinformation. One mayor has spread messages that Ukrainians are harmful to the community and that they steal and are violent toward Moldovans.229 No data supports this assertion, yet this politician has used his platform to repeat these claims. The statements are likely politically driven and may garner support amongst sceptics of the government through antagonistic positioning on a significant policy issue: treatment of refugees. Similar disinformation tactics have been alleged against other political actors in Moldova, including to motivate the population to protest against the government.

Misinformation (the unintentional spreading of incorrect or misleading narratives) is often disseminated by ordinary Moldovans who read or hear a story that shocks or upsets them and want to share it with friends, family, or acquaintances through online platforms or word of mouth.230 These people are likely to feel impacted by the narrative. For example, an unemployed person may be more susceptible to narratives that Ukrainians are stealing Moldovan jobs.

The UK Government Communications Service identified a variety of reasons why actors could spread misleading or incendiary content;231 those listed below could contribute to actors spreading misleading or incendiary narratives about Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

1. **Genuine belief in the messages** which might resonate with strongly held personal beliefs. In some instances, actors may recognise that the messages they share are false or misleading but believe the sentiment is illustrative of ‘the kind of thing that goes on’. In this context, this could refer to existing negative conceptions or stereotypes about Ukrainians.

2. **Grievances**: As inflation rises, for example, some people’s standards of living are deteriorating. Others might have lost their jobs, and Ukrainian refugees may be easy scapegoats for such problems.

3. **Lack of consequences for promoting misleading messages**: Actors may take advantage of the anonymity of online spaces and gain respect within certain online communities.

4. **Personal or institutional gain** by discrediting specific individuals (e.g., politicians) or organisations (e.g., government institutions, businesses, NGOs, multilateral, or other organisations). This may also be to mobilise voters in response to an imagined threat and build support as a result of anti-refugee rhetoric.232

5. **Contributing to polarisation**, aiming to crowd out any differing opinions.

6. **Financial gain**, either from increased traffic to websites to view posts, or by selling products.

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228 Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. *From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda*. Accessed 29 March 2023.


7. **Geopolitical gain**, by aiming to destabilise the financial or security situation of another country. The goal of Russian trolling is often to create a sense of chaos and confusion regarding what information is true, given the large number of conflicting information presented to audiences.\(^{233}\)

### Types of messages and approaches

Table 2 summarises the discourses about refugees that were identified in the workshops and through research from third parties, and then triangulated using CrowdTangle. The five discourses that are likely to have the highest potential to affect community cohesion in the medium term, taking into account the prevalence of the narratives and the likelihood of their having an impact on community cohesion, are boldfaced and analysed below.

**Table 2: Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in Moldova**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journey stage</th>
<th>Misleading or Incendiary Discourses about Ukrainian Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Legal status, welfare, and benefits** | - Those from western Ukraine and regions less affected by the conflict are not genuine refugees; the war hasn't really affected them, and they do not deserve support.  
- Ukrainians abuse the benefit system, for example by crossing the border for short trips to get money.  
- There is corruption in the support given to Ukrainians.  
- Ukrainians receive more support than other refugees. |
| **Healthcare**                  | - Ukrainians create a burden on the healthcare system, taking locals' places.  
- Ukrainians misuse services, for example through unnecessary ambulance calls and emergency room visits. |
| **Housing**                     | - Ukrainians create burdens on the housing system.  
- Refugees have unfair access to housing. |
| **Education**                   | - Ukrainians create burdens on the school and kindergarten system; they take locals' places.  
- Ukrainian students are not making efforts at school. |
| **Employment and income**       | - Economic challenges and the energy crisis are fuelled by refugees driving prices up.  
- New arrivals from Ukraine take jobs from the local populations. They are willing to work for significantly lower wages and are destroying the labour market.  
- Ukrainians don’t want to pay taxes and want to work illegally.  
- Ukrainians don’t want to work.  
- Refugees are supported more financially and get better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of the local community: ‘we should help our poor, not the Ukrainians’.  
- Local populations are excluded from support provided to vulnerable people. |
| **Community, social, and political life** | - Refugees are ungrateful and have high expectations and demands for support and shelter; they abuse hospitality, leaving messy apartments.  
- Refugees are selective about the type of support they receive; they don’t want to live in small cities and only want certain types of products.  
- They should be in Ukraine defending their country, not in Moldova.  
- Refugees are coming to nazify the local society.  
- Ukrainian refugees create diplomatic tensions with Russia. They need to accept their fate, negotiate, become a part of Russia if needed, and move on. They are endangering Moldova by prolonging the conflict. |

### Modes of dissemination

Discourses are spread through the following means:

- **Online (social media, websites, email, and messaging apps):** Platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and Viber featured heavily in the analysis as modes of dissemination. In particular, reporting points to the use of comments sections where individuals and groups spread disinformation by engaging with politicians and political groups. This technique is used to conflate economic issues with anti-refugee discourses. Workshop participants also identified sites such as OK.Ru that are popular with first-language Russian speakers as modes of dissemination. The Chișinău Institute for Public Policy reports that pro-Russian voices play major roles on OK.Ru, including in spreading Russian propaganda such as overtly pro-Russian messaging.

- **Traditional media:** Television and radio are also modes for disseminating harmful narratives, and media produced in Russia and by pro-Russian groups is more likely to spread anti-refugee rhetoric and is often hostile to Ukraine. The Moldovan government’s decision to ban news and political analysis produced in Russia, along with some domestic television channels, has limited their ability to push disinformation through traditional media. However, the ban has led to accusations of bias against Russia through the censorship laws. The ban applies to analysis from countries that have not ratified the Convention on Transfrontier Television. Since the early stages of the war, the Moldovan Audiovisual Council has monitored coverage of the conflict and the refugee situation in Moldova and levied fines on television stations for misleading, partisan, and incorrect coverage.

- **Events and public announcements:** Political groups and individuals sympathetic to Russia use public statements and events to share harmful discourses about refugees. Senior local politicians or political party officials may use their platforms to suggest that supporting refugees comes at a cost to local

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236 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.


239 Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. *From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda*. Accessed 29 March 2023.


citizens or that Ukrainians are robbing Moldovan businesses. These messages can reach a wide audience and may be repeated without fact-checking, in part due to the status of the messengers.  

- **Word of mouth:** One-on-one discussion emerged repeatedly in the workshop as a theme, whether with harmful intent or not.  

**Host community reactions (interpreters)**

The economic crisis, inflation, and growing unemployment have contributed to significant increases in vulnerability to negative discourses amongst the Moldovan population. Many discourses compare the circumstances of Ukrainians and Moldovans, often juxtaposing refugees’ perceived wealth against the hardships that elderly, unemployed, and disabled Moldovans face. Those most vulnerable to these messages are Moldovans who face precarious circumstances, including the unemployed and people with limited incomes.

Certain ethnic and cultural groups that are historically more positive toward Russia are also more vulnerable to these messages—for example Gagauzians and ethnic Russians. Allegations that the Moldovan state is acting against Russia or seeking to remove groups sympathetic to Russia provoke these communities and contribute to growing resentment of the government and scepticism of the war in Ukraine.

**Risks**

Incendiary and misleading discourses about refugees present risks at various levels. Harmful narratives can foster inter-community resentment, drive discrimination, and reduce support for accepting and supporting refugees.

One risk is potential growth in hostility against Ukrainians, worsening the situation for the most vulnerable in the refugee community, and risking cohesion between the refugee and the Moldovan populations. Whilst the majority of Moldovans remain supportive of refugees, disinformation has led to online tirades and aggression against refugees. The comments sections of political leaders’ websites regularly include accusations that the country is accepting too many refugees or that refugees are responsible for theft and damage to property. Many of these risks intersect with the vulnerabilities identified in Chapter 2—for example, the perception that Ukrainians with children may damage property—and foment discrimination that restricts Ukrainians’ participation in Moldovan society. The acceptance of discrimination and internalisation of negative attitudes toward refugees may also lead to the denial of key public services, or refusal of support by Ukrainians who do not want to subject themselves to possible negative responses. There are also risks that Ukrainians will be scapegoated for various challenges in Moldova, for example rising inflation.

A second risk is division in the Moldovan population. Moldova is diverse ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. Harmful discourses seek to drive a wedge between communities and use proxies such as economic crises to

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245 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.


generate negative discourses about hospitality toward refugees. Highly politicised discourses are present on social media, often targeting government figures.\textsuperscript{249} If successful, they could weaken the fabric of Moldovan society and contribute to reduced trust in government and public institutions.

A final risk is that reactions against disinformation are perceived as authoritarian. This has already come to pass, as the Russian Federation has criticised the government as an authoritarian dictatorship following the administration’s decision to ban Russian media outlets that disseminate falsehoods.\textsuperscript{250} Many Moldovans feel sympathy toward the Russian state, in part due to historic and cultural ties. Therefore, discourses that pit the Moldovan government against Russia can damage trust in the government.

\textbf{Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:}

Nudges for people to look at different sources of information could be considered. The redirect method is a way to do this online: When an internet user enters keywords ‘that indicate an interest in extremist propaganda’, a pop-up ad directs the user to content that counters the extremist messaging. This could be set up through partnerships with social media platforms or search engines such as Google.\textsuperscript{251}

Similarly, accuracy prompts—reminders that ‘most people want to share accurate information’ can be used online, for example as promoted posts on social media platforms. Such non-political and non-ideological prompts have been shown to reduce the spread of misinformation.\textsuperscript{252}

\section*{3.2 Top five discourses}

The top five discourses identified during the desk-based research and the workshops are analysed below.

\textbf{Discourse 1: ‘Ukrainians are rich, drive around in fancy cars, and spend their time in malls and cafés while locals are working; they're here on holiday—they don’t need assistance’.

Message:} This narrative portrays Ukrainian refugees as wealthy, opportunistic, and unwilling to work. It suggests that Ukrainians do not deserve support since they have significant disposable income, as evidenced by their fancy cars, time spent in malls, and treating their displacement like a ‘holiday’. The narrative seeks to invalidate their experience and undermine the validity of their refugee status and eligibility for assistance.\textsuperscript{253} The suggestion that Ukrainians treat their displacement as a vacation links to themes that they do not want to work and minimises the impact of the increased cost of living on Ukrainians. Sightings of expensive cars can easily generate rumours or discussion that later appears on social media in a distorted form.\textsuperscript{254}


Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Develop and promote counternarratives that highlight the challenges that Ukrainian refugees face and their contributions to the host community. Share positive stories and case studies of Ukrainian refugees successfully integrating into the workforce and local communities.

Mode of dissemination: This discourse has spread through the comments sections of online posts; social media platforms like Facebook, Telegram, TikTok, and Viber; traditional media; and by word of mouth. Veridica, an online Romanian-language disinformation monitoring platform, reports that the comment sections of online posts by Moldova’s president include commentary such as ‘[refugees] ask for apartments, insist that they have luxury cars […] Our world is in immense poverty but we help the millionaires of Ukraine’. One workshop participant reported social media claims that ‘queues of expensive cars’ fled Odesa to enter Chișinău at the start of the conflict. Participants also claimed to have seen cars with Ukrainian license plates, spreading the narrative further. Media reports of car accidents involving Ukrainians are perceived to focus on the value of the vehicles rather than the incidents themselves, reinforcing the narrative that Ukrainians arrive in Chișinău with little concern for the people, city, and community they have joined. Some of these narratives have been reported on in international news coverage that mentions the use of TikTok and Instagram to share opinions about the refugees.

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Collaborate with media actors to address misinformation and promote accurate information about refugees, including through social media platforms. To that end, support and amplify responsible journalism which presents a balanced analysis rather than repeating claims seen online, and identify and engage trusted messengers amongst host community and refugee populations to help spread credible information. These actors could be encouraged to use fact-checking resources such as the Moldovan government’s Prima Sursa.

Interpreter: Workshop participants reported that vulnerable groups in Moldova who need support are most susceptible to this type of narrative. In the context of growing unemployment and high inflation, unemployed Moldovans and those living on limited incomes may be particularly resentful of this narrative, believing they are placed at a disadvantage in their home country. One news report quoted a resident volunteering at the border in March 2022, saying ‘You feel uneasy about it, seeing someone in a Lexus get a free lunch’. The same report shared that some volunteers took to Instagram and TikTok to express frustration that Moldova’s scarce resources were being used for people with significant assets. The comparison between Moldova’s situation and the financial circumstances of a particular group of refugees features heavily in interpretations of this narrative, as noted above and by Veridica. This is especially effective at present, given that some macroeconomic indicators
for Moldova are worse than for Ukraine—for example, year-on-year inflation in Moldova reached 30.24 percent in December 2023\textsuperscript{263} compared to Ukraine’s seven-year-peak in the same month at 26.6 percent.\textsuperscript{264}

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Offer resources and support for refugees to integrate into the host community, such as language courses and cultural exchange programmes which enable Moldovans and Ukrainians to interact in person, build relationships, and better understand each other. Facilitate opportunities and motivation for refugees to leave refugee centres and integrate into local communities, such as by offering job training and housing assistance.

Communication and education efforts can be made to help host communities understand when they are being manipulated through disinformation. An example of this type of intervention is videos on building resilience to anti-refugee narratives aimed at the public that were created through a partnership between Google’s Jigsaw division and Info Interventions in Poland.

**Underlying challenges:** The challenge in countering this discourse is that parts of it are based in facts that have been misrepresented or distorted. Some Ukrainians have expensive cars and enjoy going to malls, and Moldova faces a macroeconomic crisis. Unemployment is increasing after a year of stability, and rises in rent and utility costs challenge Moldovans and refugees alike.\textsuperscript{265} Structural barriers also prevent Ukrainians from taking employment, which may contribute to perceptions that they treat their displacement as a holiday.\textsuperscript{266} The assertion that Ukrainians do not require assistance ignores the change in circumstances that delivered refugees to Moldova in the first place. It may be reasonable to assume that a person driving a Lexus would not need access to food support in peacetime; however, Ukrainians entered Moldova fleeing violence, and the majority lack access to possessions, funds, and jobs, all of which contribute to increased instability.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Counternarratives must address the potential dissonance between outward appearance and possible reality for refugees. Information campaigns could clarify eligibility for TP support and address misconceptions about refugees’ financial situations.

**Discourse 2: ‘Refugees are supported more financially and get better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of the local population: “We should help our poor, not the Ukrainians”’.**

**Message:** The core message of this narrative is the perceived imbalance of support and resources between refugees and host communities. The discourse juxtaposes the circumstances of Moldova’s vulnerable population, ‘our poor’, against Ukrainian refugees, thereby ‘othering’ refugees as outsiders who receive support in the place of vulnerable Moldovans. This narrative is linked to anti-government messaging which implies that the government helps refugees more than Moldovans. The messaging focusses on both financial and material


benefits—likely a reaction to schemes such as cash assistance and housing support for Ukrainians whilst Moldova undergoes a macroeconomic crisis with skyrocketing rent and utility bills.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Counternarratives should highlight the positive aspects of refugee assistance and how it benefits both Ukrainians and Moldovans. This could include emphasising Ukrainians' contributions to the Moldovan economy, financial support provided to host families, and the long-term benefits of donations for refugees, such as the creation of child-friendly spaces.

Given Moldova's macroeconomic crisis, this approach should be combined with a messaging strategy that seeks to assure as much as to convince. This means including messaging such as 'There's enough to go around' or 'We're in this together'. It is also important to use evocative language to capture attention and increase recall of the messages shared and to build on the target audience's values.

As much as possible, counternarratives should target specific audiences and the fora with which they engage; they should be tailored to these audiences' attitudes, perceptions, values, and norms. When accurate information is used to counter specific falsehoods, the facts should be repeated multiple times within targeted fora because repeated statements are perceived to be more truthful. Repeating facts is crucial because they counter falsehoods that the audiences have been exposed to multiple times.

**Mode of dissemination:** According to workshop participants, this narrative is disseminated through various channels. They include television stations that platform Russian disinformation and narratives about the war, such as TV6 and Orhei TV briefings and interviews with political figures for Russian-language television and radio, and anti-government protests and events organised by political actors. The narrative also spreads through social media platforms such as Telegram channels (for example, Eurasia Daily), OK.ru, VK.ru, Facebook, and Russian influencers such as Soloviov. In some cases, misleading and incendiary subtitles are provided in Russian misrepresenting the videos' messages in their original language, thus further distorting the narrative.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Given the nature of emerging disinformation, it is important for Moldovans to be able to identify the proprietors or editors of disinformation-spreading websites registered overseas. Enacting laws mandating all media entities, including online platforms, to divulge their ownership will support critical analysis of news sources.

The government and civil society, encompassing media and human rights organisations, should foster media literacy amongst Moldovans through outreach across diverse communities and professional backgrounds. However, research suggests that increasing media literacy does not automatically reduce resistance to misinformation because it '[does] not include building trust between journalists and the public'. Therefore, media

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270 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

271 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

literacy efforts should be accompanied by efforts to build trust in credible sources of information.

**Interpreter:** The narrative leverages imagery regarding social assistance and benefits to appeal to vulnerable segments of Moldovan society, comparing them to refugees. Participants in workshops indicated that audiences might include people in small villages, with less education, or those who are more vulnerable, including the elderly and unemployed. A 2023 survey conducted by REACH found that, while Moldovans held generally positive views of national and international support for refugees, a notable share also thought Moldova should prioritise assisting its own citizens and that refugees receive more help than Moldovans (42 percent strongly agreed and 30 percent agreed with this statement). This notion was supported by key informant interviews with two local authorities who pointed out that tensions between communities emerged because refugees were seen as competing with local disadvantaged groups for aid allocations.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Both host community members and refugees may need additional information to navigate the media landscape and make informed decisions. Narratives that sow division will be more effective if citizens are unclear on funding or support mechanisms provided to refugees. This links to concerns around the creation of a parallel but inequitable system in provision of social services for Moldovans and Ukrainians.

**Underlying challenges:** As with the first discourse, Moldova’s underlying macroeconomic challenges and status amongst poorer countries in Europe provide some grounding for this narrative. In particular, the country’s slow growth, aging population, and high out-migration have left Moldova’s vulnerable groups in serious instability. Workshop participants also highlighted the long history of Russian media outlets as key sources of news in Moldova as a driving factor behind this narrative since it reflects positioning by the Russian state. Indeed, a 2016 study found that Moldovans trusted news from the Russian Federation to the same extent as domestic sources, suggesting that messaging from Russian state sources is likely to gain at least some traction. Participants also claimed that state inefficiency, bureaucracy, and failure to care for the most vulnerable in Moldova had contributed to the success of this narrative.

**Discourse 3:** ‘Refugees are ungrateful, have high expectations and demands for support and shelter, and they abuse hospitality; they leave messy apartments and are disrespectful; they are selective about the types of support that they receive: they don’t want to live in small cities and only want certain types of products’.

**Message:** This narrative seeks to villainise Ukrainians since their arrival in Moldova. The discourse draws on day-to-day examples, such as abuse of hospitality and damaged rental apartments, to make the message resonate for the target audience whilst implying that Ukrainians’ selectivity around support demonstrates that they consider themselves superior to Moldovans. The discourse is broad. Examples range from alleging that

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273 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
275 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
278 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
Ukrainians are ungrateful or unwelcome guests\(^{279}\) to accusations that they commit crimes.\(^ {280}\) This echoes the experience of some Ukrainian workshop participants, who felt landlords perceived Ukrainians as unreliable and bad tenants who are more likely than Moldovans to steal or to damage rental properties.\(^ {281}\) The discourse can be exaggerated or used to distort legitimate concerns, such as the need for liveable conditions, as materialism. The narrative also implies that whilst Moldovan public services are good enough for Moldovans, they are perceived as not good enough for Ukrainians—linking to the two previous discourses which contrast Ukrainians with the poorest Moldovans.

### Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Counter-narratives should focus on positive stories about refugees and their contributions to Moldovan society. Sharing examples of successful integration, cultural exchange, and the benefits of hosting refugees can help dispel harmful narratives and promote understanding between host communities and refugees.

**Mode of dissemination:** These messages are disseminated through online platforms, including social media like Viber, Telegram, and TikTok. Veridica found considerable evidence of this type of discourse in comments directed against the government, including through comparisons between supposed refugee violence by Syrians in Germany and what might happen if Moldova continues to accept Ukrainian refugees.\(^ {282}\)

### Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Social media campaigns could target the groups most likely to be swayed by this narrative and engage influencers for these groups (for example, sports personalities might influence some relevant audiences and could be engaged to promote alternative messages). Social media, especially in the form of engaging videos and visuals, could also provide guidance on how to talk to friends and family members who make incendiary comments about refugees.

**Interpreter:** Workshop participants blamed some political parties for spreading this narrative as part of a drive to strengthen ties with the Russian Federation.\(^ {283}\) The politically charged nature of comments uncovered by Veridica also suggests political divisions on the subject matter. As anti-refugee discourse targets the government alongside criticism of its policy; the messaging evolves from ‘refugees are ungrateful and abuse hospitality’ to add ‘… and the government is to blame’.\(^ {284}\) Media Forward’s November 2022 report states that senior political figures perpetuated this narrative, claiming that Moldovans will be victims of theft and violence in return for their hospitality.\(^ {285}\) A former senior national politician used his platform to suggest that Ukrainians would violate Moldovan law and should be deported ‘back to Ukraine’ in spite of the police saying that they had registered several types of misdemeanours committed by Ukrainians, but no crimes.\(^ {286}\)


\(^{281}\) Chișinău research workshops 1–2 March 2023.


\(^{283}\) Chișinău research workshops 1–2 March 2023.


Underlying challenges: This discourse may be based on or exacerbated by underlying challenges, such as disparity in services received by Moldovans and accounts of individual refugees abusing hospitality that have likely been exaggerated and shared until they become unattributed rumours.

Discourse 4: ‘Economic challenges and the energy crisis are fuelled by hosting refugees (“they drive prices up”)’.

Message: The message of this discourse is that Moldova’s economic woes are due to hosting refugees. In addition to displacing large numbers of Ukrainians, the war has catalysed an economic downturn for countries, including Moldova, which has close economic ties to Russia and Ukraine (see Chapter 2). In December 2022, inflation in Moldova outpaced Ukraine’s, reaching record levels. During the same period, consumer gas prices have risen up to 200 percent, and some Moldovans were spending up to 75 percent of their income on utility bills. Some disinformation links rising prices in Ukraine and Moldova to profiteering by the Ukrainian government with the goal of driving a wedge between the Moldovan and Ukrainian communities. The arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Moldova has coincided with macroeconomic challenges for the country, since both are directly related to the war in Ukraine. This makes it easy for detractors to link the two issues.

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

The Moldovan government or international actors should make efforts to distance the refugee crisis from price increases and clarify the role of Russian institutions such as Gazprom in driving price increases. Communications to highlight Ukrainians’ economic contributions to Moldova may foster understanding of refugees as an opportunity rather than a burden.

Mode of dissemination: Participants in the workshop noted that this discourse is spread through word of mouth, as well as social platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, where related messages are often found in comment sections.

Interpreter: All consumers in Moldova are experiencing increases in the cost of living. Therefore, all Moldovans are susceptible to this narrative. Moldovans in more precarious situations, such as people on fixed incomes, unemployed, or relying on cross-border markets were identified as high-risk in the participant workshops.

Underlying challenges: The primary underlying challenge is that costs are rising, making it more challenging for Moldovans to pay their bills. This narrative exploits this issue by suggesting that refugees are exacerbating the situation, and portraying Moldova’s hospitality as an unnecessary cost. Simultaneously, free market–driven services, such as rent, are impacted by the refugee crisis. Limited housing space in Chişinău is further restricted by the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Workshop participants reported that landlords were raising prices even as refugees arrived, recognising that the relative value of accommodation was increasing. Veridica also

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287 Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
291 Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
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highlights war fatigue amongst Ukrainians, making the population more susceptible to disinformation related to price hikes and the economic crisis.\textsuperscript{294} A similar phenomenon is likely to emerge in Moldova, as people who struggle to provide for themselves resent the impact of the war on Moldova’s economy and regard refugees as the catalyst.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Policies designed to limit fluctuations in rent in response to the refugee crisis could limit a propensity to blame refugees for price increases.

**Discourse 5: ‘New arrivals from Ukraine are taking jobs from the local population, they are willing to work for significantly lower wages, they are destroying the labour market’.

**Message:** This narrative seeks to blame Ukrainian migrants for economic challenges in Moldova. By stating that Ukrainians are taking jobs for significantly lower wages, the narrative targets people earning lower incomes and suggests that refugees make Moldovans’ situation more precarious. The narrative also paints Ukrainians as undercutting Moldova’s labour market to the detriment of local people.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

Counternarratives to address this discourse could support Moldovans to find work or to provide information about online and public resources that can support them to find decent employment.

**Mode of dissemination:** Workshop participants indicated that this narrative is shared by word of mouth and on social media. They mentioned the comments sections on TikTok, OK.Ru, Viber, and Telegram.\textsuperscript{295}

**Interpreter:** Workshop participants suggested that people without jobs or with unstable employment are likely to be most susceptible to this rhetoric. Equally, people on fixed incomes, such as pensioners, were named.\textsuperscript{296} People with less education are also likely to be more susceptible because refugees’ lack of informal networks and clarity in the recognition of qualifications continues to exclude Ukrainians from the highest-paying roles,\textsuperscript{297} forcing them to compete for jobs with less educated Moldovans.

**Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:**

The comparative nature of this discourse suggests that the most effective counternarrative is to target Moldovans who are out of work or struggling to find work. Tailored information that addresses their needs may help them be less likely to resent refugees for macroeconomic issues.

Underlying challenges: Unemployment in Moldova was recorded at 4.6 percent in January 2023 compared to 2.6 percent in January 2022. The rise occurred in the final quarter of 2022.\textsuperscript{298} Simultaneously increasing prices...
and growing unemployment mean that this narrative is likely to gain traction, especially amongst the recently unemployed. Employment in Moldova is complex, experiencing challenges since before the war and Ukrainian refugee arrival in Moldova. Supply is greater than demand, and whilst some decent jobs have been available, the number of qualified individuals is insufficient. Two research workshop participants commented that Moldova’s rural agricultural sector is at higher risk of growing unemployment, as Ukraine began to sell agricultural goods at lower prices after the escalation of the war. Thus, there is a dual burden on industry to compete with Ukraine’s deflated prices and to provide work for Ukrainians in Moldova—which, some participants argued, is not feasible.

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Policy to improve challenges in mismatched supply and demand could have a strong potential impact on Moldova’s unemployment. This could include supporting awareness raising regarding key sectors that are lacking qualified workers.

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300 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
Chapter 4. Potential Tensions

4.1 Overview

Chapter 4 discusses the different phenomena, policies, and characteristics which are, or could in the future be, sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities. It is important to stress that, at the time of writing, these have not necessarily harmed community cohesion, but they could do so in the medium term, for example, should contextual factors change or intentional actions be taken (for instance, by disinformation actors) to magnify the tensions. Below we note the types of risks related to each aspect of the refugee journey, how they have manifested to date, and signs pointing to the likelihood of the tensions becoming more significant.

The five tensions that are likely to have the highest potential to affect community cohesion in the medium term, considering the possibility of occurring and their potential impact, are boldfaced in Table 3. While the overall risks are generally low, the risk ratings relate to risks to community cohesion in Moldova. This means that the top five tensions may still be unlikely to materialise, but they are likely to be higher risks than other tensions. For example, tensions around the generally lower benefits received by TCNs not eligible for TP are unlikely to significantly threaten community cohesion given the few such TCNs in Moldova; on the other hand, economic concerns are widely felt by the host and refugee populations.

Table 3: Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journey stage</th>
<th>Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal status, welfare, and</td>
<td>• Claims that Ukrainian refugees abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get money).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefits</td>
<td>• Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; perceived lack of information and clarity on rights and obligations of people with TP status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Newly created infrastructure is parallel to state institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Differences in welcome and support to refugee or migrant groups not from Ukraine.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ukrainian men are allegedly being smuggled across borders; they take low-paid positions and work illegally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>• Additional pressures on a health system which already experiences challenges (including long waiting times).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pressures on social services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>• Additional pressures on housing and the rising cost of housing (also in the context of lack of social housing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More support provided to Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups, such as better housing options.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories, creating pressures on surrounding communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ukrainian refugees, and Roma in particular, are seen as undesirable tenants.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova leads to lack of commitment to long-term contracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>• Integration issues in schools and lack of specialised programmes result in negative social experiences (such as Ukrainian children experiencing bullying, especially in Russian schools).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Claims that Ukrainian refugees abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get money): Moldova’s proximity to Ukraine, especially Odesa, facilitates travel between the countries. By November 2022, 370,918 Ukrainian refugees who had entered Moldova had crossed back into Ukraine.301 About half (46 percent) intended to make a short visit and then either return to Moldova or migrate onward. 302 Ukrainians explained that they made these trips to reunite with family (60 percent) or collect belongings (46 percent),303 but Moldovans could see them as efforts to claim benefits in Moldova while living in Ukraine. Under the TP directive, however,
remaining outside of Moldova for more than 45 cumulative days between 1 March 2023 and 1 March 2024 cancels TP status and the right to work and access key public services in Moldova. Participants in workshops also reported that benefits such as cash assistance for housing would not be available after the introduction of TP without showing a formal lease or rental contract for accommodation in Moldova, suggesting that short trips to Moldova to secure financial assistance are unlikely to be commonplace. This tension could damage the reputations of all Ukrainian refugees in Moldova; if one case were discovered, it could contribute to stereotyping and generate resentment of Ukrainian communities.

**Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; perceived lack of information on the rights and obligations of people with TP status; new procedures make Ukrainians feel unwelcome:** Workshop participants commented that a lack of clarity around the introduction of TP raised concerns amongst Ukrainian communities. In particular, they mentioned questions about which documentation is required to obtain TP status, the availability of appointments at the General Inspectorate of Migration, and the ability to access legal assistance. Workshop participants reported confusion about the shift to TP.

One workshop participant described visiting the information office to ask where to access an attestation of place of residence, which was not previously required, to register for TP. An employee at the office treated her dismissively, suggesting that she figure it out herself.

The National Congress of Ukrainians in Moldova also commented that procedures for obtaining TP created confusion and anxiety in the Ukrainian community around their status in Moldova and eligibility for humanitarian assistance. These concerns were felt more broadly across the regional response to the refugee influx: One UNHCR report found that long queues and lack of interpretation services and information were key issues across states offering TP. As such, the lack of clarity around a change in the legal framework could contribute to Ukrainians feeling unwelcome.

**Newly created infrastructure is parallel to state institutions:** A potential tension that emerged consistently in the workshops was the creation of parallel support systems for Moldovans and Ukrainians. Workshop participants shared that often services for Ukrainians supported by NGOs and multilateral were assumed to be superior to state-provided ones, which may be a factor encouraging the creation of parallel structures. Before the inflow of Ukrainian refugees, humanitarian actors had a weak presence in Central and Eastern Europe, but they quickly established structures following the outbreak of the conflict. In 2022, over $200 million USD was dedicated to support for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova—approximately $1,868 USD for each refugee in Moldova in the medium to long term. This spending takes place in a country with relatively limited financial resources; as an illustration, spending on health for each Moldovan citizen is only $284 USD per year.

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305 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
306 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
307 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
308 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
311 Chișinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.
312 Chișinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.
dedication of large-scale resources to a specific group in a country with development challenges can pose issues. Some humanitarian actors work through the government system; for example, the World Food Programme aims to use Moldovan social protection systems to provide support. Working through national systems is important to avoid both parallel infrastructure being created and the potential perception that refugees are getting more/better services and support.

Differences in welcome and support to refugee or migrant groups not from Ukraine: Moldova’s TP status is open to Ukrainians, their families, and TCNs who were dependent on the protection of the state of Ukraine at the time of the outbreak of war. Moldova made no similar provisions in other recent refugee crises, although refugees from other countries, such as Afghanistan, have arrived in Moldova in recent years. Moldova’s Ombudsman stated that RACs’ non-discrimination toward ethnic minorities was ‘problematic from the outset’.

This issue has been closely linked to concerns about the welfare of Roma migrants; in a number of cases, Roma and TCNs have been accommodated together, away from ethnic Ukrainians. Some workshop participants noted that this could create resentment and associated tensions amongst other refugee groups that did not receive such treatment, as it can be perceived as unfair.

Ukrainian men are being smuggled across borders, take up low-paid positions, and work illegally: Under Ukraine’s martial law, most men of fighting age are restricted from leaving the country, although there are some exceptions, such as on the basis of their dependents. In workshops in Chișinău, participants expressed concern that men may enter Moldova illegally to take up low-paying positions. It is unclear whether they are being smuggled from Ukraine to work in low-paid, informal positions, although the international media has covered cases of smuggling men to Moldova to escape fighting. In light of Moldova’s rising unemployment and economic inequality, individual cases that seem to validate this discourse have the potential to stoke tensions.

4.3 Healthcare

Ukrainians add to pressures on the health system which already experiences challenges (including long waits): The WHO’s 2022 assessment of the Moldovan healthcare system highlights burned-out staff, low hospital capacity, and lack of access to medical insurance as key challenges. Ukrainian participants in the workshops also reported feeling that they were a burden to doctors. In the early stages of the war, Moldova’s health
minister stated that the refugee crisis had placed the country’s health system under ‘very big pressure’, and the system was supported by international donors and multilateral organisations throughout 2022. As a core public service, falling standards in healthcare are likely to be talking points for Moldovan politicians and the public. Ukrainian communities may be scapegoats for systemic issues, and as such, the pressure placed on the healthcare system has potential to contribute to tensions. This is also an important talking point for tensions around the services available specifically for Ukrainians which may fuel further rhetoric that Moldovans are at a disadvantage compared to refugees.

**Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare:** Workshop participants reported that registration requirements add to bureaucratic barriers for Ukrainians seeking healthcare. Under the TP directive, full access to emergency and general healthcare has been extended to all Ukrainian refugees in Moldova (see Chapter 2). Despite this, Ukrainian refugees highlighted some barriers to access that predated the new law, including risks of bribery and corruption related to long wait times. Workshop participants generally attributed long wait times to access issues for Ukrainians rather than systemic problems. Female survivors of gender-based violence were particularly likely to face challenges in accessing healthcare, according to UNHCR.

Challenges to healthcare access may contribute to additional feelings among Ukrainians that they are not welcome, and fuel tensions.

**Pressures on social services:** Social work, including in child welfare, elder care, and mental health support, has faced systemic issues in Moldova since before the war in Ukraine escalated. Recent structural reforms, scarce resources, and high out-migration and family separation have all placed pressure on Moldova’s social services. Workshop participants raised concerns that social services staff, like healthcare workers, were overworked, and noted that psychosocial and mental health problems often go unrecognised (and untreated) and can cause conflict between and within communities. The WHO has raised concerns about language barriers, social stigma, and a lack of provision for children in Moldova’s mental health services.

A workshop participant raised concerns that, whilst systemic healthcare issues impact Ukrainian refugees, they also receive support from international organisations whereas Moldovans are perceived not to. The participant pointed to social services, in particular for the elderly and people with disabilities, as an example of differing priorities in caring for Ukrainian and Moldovan citizens.

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327 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
329 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
334 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
336 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
International actors have provided support for Ukrainian refugees’ mental health in part responding to mental health pressures created by the need to flee conflict. This tension has the potential to increase if it is misreported or used in harmful rhetoric to illustrate the disparity in treatment between Ukrainians and Moldovans.

4.4 Housing

Ukrainians add to pressures on housing and its rising cost (also in the context of lack of social housing): In 2022, rent prices climbed by as much as 40 percent. Moldova’s social housing is very limited; as of March 2022, only 556 social houses had been built since 2013 under the government’s social housing construction initiatives. In these challenging circumstances, it is easy for tensions to arise as increasing costs can threaten the stability of lower-income Moldovans’ living situation and way of life. Workshop participants also raised concerns around comparative treatment of vulnerable Moldovans (such as the elderly or people with disabilities) and Ukrainians as a potential source of tension regarding housing. Ukrainians have been eligible for support of up to MDL 2,200 per person per month to assist with housing and other needs, along with access to RACs and private apartments in the short term through a partnership between IOM and Airbnb. Perceptions that the most vulnerable in Moldova do not receive adequate housing support from the government could increase tensions if out-of-context representations of working-age Ukrainians receiving housing support are pitted against the plight of elderly, poor Moldovans and spread through inflammatory discourses or disinformation.

More support for Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups, such as better housing options: Comparisons in the treatment of TCNs and ethnic minorities versus ethnic Ukrainians can stoke tensions between minority communities and the Moldovan government. The Ombudsman’s report noted that TCNs, especially Azerbaijanis, Pakistanis, and Iraqis, were housed away from ethnic Ukrainians, typically in worse conditions. Due in part to cultural links between Ukraine and Moldova, Ukrainians have also had greater access to privately hosted accommodation by family and friends or Moldovans who open their homes. TCNs are less likely to have personal networks in neighbouring countries and have had fewer housing options upon arrival. These factors may contribute to tension between Ukrainians and other refugee groups, although overall risks to community cohesion at a national scale are low due to the low number of other refugee groups in Moldova.

Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories create pressures on surrounding communities: Workshop participants suggested that overcrowding may impact on the housing circumstances of Ukrainian refugees, especially given the short period in which large numbers arrived in Moldova. As of February 2023, all of Moldova’s RACs were operating within capacity, with the exception of the centre in Besarabeasca. By late February, 70 percent of all RAC spaces were occupied. Notably, the Besarabeasca RAC was operating at 70 percent capacity in December 2022, and the Drochia RAC was the only one operating over capacity. This suggests that fluctuations in occupancy occur in the short term but that the system’s capacity was sufficient
at the time of writing. Concerns around overcrowding are consistently raised about RACs that house Roma refugees. Oxfam’s October 2022 report highlighted crowding and lack of privacy as humanitarian priorities, citing one RAC where 10 to 16 people were staying on one large, dormitory-style room. This suggests that whilst systemic overcrowding is not an issue, the problem can occur in some spaces, such as those occupied by Roma communities. Reporting on overcrowding in private rented accommodation or hosted accommodation is limited, and this appears to be a lower priority than overcrowding in RACs—although tensions might arise as rent and utility costs increase.

**Ukrainian refugees, and Roma in particular, are seen as undesirable tenants:** Workshop participants commented that landlords may regard Ukrainian refugees as undesirable tenants. Ukrainians recounted difficulties renting with young children or pets due to higher perceived risks of property damage and quoted Moldovan landlords saying they did not want Ukrainian cars to be seen outside their properties.

Participants reported instances of advertisements that explicitly excluded Ukrainians, or being told that they could not view properties because they were Ukrainian.

Such problems are magnified in the Roma community. Discrimination, social stereotyping, and challenges such as lack of documentation or the need for mediators and interpreters have allegedly caused public authorities to turn away Roma refugees or offer them sub-standard accommodation. In addition, Oxfam reported that members of Roma communities whom they interviewed spoke of being turned away from private rental accommodation, suggesting that some landlords were not willing to consider them as tenants.

**Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova, leading to lack of commitment to long-term rentals:** Participants in the workshops reported a perception that landlords do not want to rent to Ukrainians, regarding refugees as a risky investment since their length of stay in Moldova was unclear. This uncertainty also contributed to Ukrainians’ reluctance to sign contracts.

‘No one thought the war would last this long’ was repeated during the workshops in Chișinău and in Ukrainians’ accounts of interactions with landlords who were unwilling to sign short-term contracts or asked for prohibitively high deposits (equal to at least three months’ rent) before entering into agreements.

Landlords’ reluctance to sign short-term rental contracts can contribute to instability in refugees’ circumstances.

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347 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
348 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
349 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
352 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
353 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
354 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
355 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
4.5 Education

Integration issues in schools and a lack of specialised programmes, resulting in poor social experiences (such as bullying of Ukrainian children, especially in Russian schools): A total of 1,665 Ukrainian children attended Moldovan schools in early 2023. In workshops in Chișinău, participants raised concerns that Ukrainian children integrated into the Russian-language stream of Moldovan education were subject to bullying and intimidation by classmates. 

Ukrainians shared concerns that their children felt that they could not express pride in where they were from and that school lessons emphasised Russia’s culture and history and, in some cases, pro-Russian political views.

UNHCR have reported similar concerns around bullying and urged the government to support the sensitisation of teachers to bullying concerns arising from refugees’ experiences. This issue has the potential to grow into a source of tensions, as bullying could drive absenteeism or parents’ withdrawal of their children from schools. The existence of Ukrainian online schools mitigates this risk somewhat, but it presents other risks such as loneliness and social isolation.

Uncertainty regarding length of stay in Moldova, leading to poor school attendance or high dropout rates: As discussed in section 2.5, most Ukrainian parents have chosen to continue their children’s education in online Ukrainian schools. Participants in the project’s research workshops raised concerns that in the long term, the Ukrainian state might not recognise certifications from Moldovan schools. Lack of attendance of in-person education alongside Moldovan children is also a missed opportunity for social interaction and building friendships and trust between communities, that may address barriers to community cohesion.

4.6 Employment and Income

High inflation pressures on host and refugee communities: Moldova’s year-on-year inflation rate reached 30.24 percent in December 2022 and remained high at 27.31 percent in January 2023. The National Bureau of Statistics expects inflation to fall in 2023 to an annual average at 13.7 percent. Concurrently, a reduction in Russian gas exports catalysed a spike in energy prices, and consumers faced increases of up to 200 percent in 2022. This has had a significant impact on the cost of living in Moldova. In this context, workshop participants predicted that tensions could arise around Ukrainians’ inability to contribute to their hosts’ household expenses.

This concern affected Moldovans who reported on potential tensions for host families, as well as Ukrainians who struggled to find work that would enable them to contribute more to their hosts. As inflation rises, there is a risk that frustrations about the economy will be directed at Ukrainian refugees. This is an important tension to monitor moving forward.
Ukrainians don't engage in the labour market or start businesses: Participants in the workshops identified discourses that Ukrainians in Moldova do not engage in the labour market or set up businesses. As discussed in Chapter 2, access to employment is challenging for Ukrainians due to a lack of understanding of where to access information and opportunities, language barriers, and limited opportunities for employment in some fields. A Europe-wide assessment by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that Ukrainians’ current employment patterns reflect networks available to them rather than their skills and that, with facilitation of job matching, they could make important contributions to the labour market. To support entrepreneurial activities amongst both Ukrainian refugees and Moldovans, the European Bank of Development and Reconstruction launched an online platform and business guide, ghidul afacerii, to facilitate the establishment of start-ups. The perception that Ukrainians do not engage in the labour market may be misattributed, and lack of information on opportunities or structural barriers may be more serious than many Moldovans perceive. These misunderstandings have strong potential to develop into a notable tension, especially in tandem with discourses that Ukrainians receive more state support than that available to Moldovans, or that they do not entirely deserve this support.

Tensions over the distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged local populations and Ukrainians: Similar to the housing and healthcare issues discussed above, a potential tension was raised in the research workshop that Ukrainians receive more support than similarly disadvantaged Moldovans. Moldova’s unemployment rate is rising, and economic challenges existed before the refugee crisis, especially in rural and agricultural regions. Many Moldovans face challenging financial circumstances, and support extended to Ukrainian refugees, such as cash assistance and job matching, is perceived as overlooking the needs of Moldovans.

Workshop participants raised concerns that the experience of Ukrainians is prioritised over that of Moldovans. One example given was that whilst older people and people with disabilities receive limited government support, refugees with similar profiles would receive additional support from NGOs or multilateral organisations. This leaves Moldovans at a disadvantage in their own country. The government has made efforts to resolve the issue: TP status seeks to bring the legal status of Ukrainians in line with that of Moldovan citizens by granting equitable access to healthcare, employment, and education. The perception of differential treatment has the potential to contribute to tensions, and comparisons between Ukrainians and Moldovans were raised throughout discussions of public services and support that Ukrainians receive in Moldova.

Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities; communication about the amount and sources of support is poor: Ukrainian workshop participants suggested that many Moldovans believe support for Ukrainian refugees comes from the state budget and that scarce resources funded by Moldovan taxes are divided between Moldovans and Ukrainians. In the context of rising unemployment and cost of living, this inflammatory claim may stoke anti-refugee rhetoric or contribute to disinformation about the type of support that

367 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
372 Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.
374 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
is given to Ukrainians and supposedly withheld from Moldovans. The issue is particularly relevant in relation to anti-government protests over the cost of living that took place in early 2023 (see Section 4.7).

**Reduced financial assistance to refugees could increase their poverty, and the state (or other organisations) might need to support the vulnerable:** Participants in the Chișinău workshop raised concerns that future reductions in financial assistance may leave Ukrainians in Moldova more vulnerable to poverty.\(^{375}\)

Since the initial displacement, support to Ukrainians has shifted away from emergency food and cash provision toward long-term housing and healthcare and psychosocial support.\(^{376}\) As displacement continues, evolving needs and support may entail reductions in financial assistance to refugees. Supplementary financial assistance to the more vulnerable may be required from the Moldovan state, or other organisations and could stoke tensions within host communities, especially if misunderstandings arise or disinformation is spread about the sources or amounts of funding and the aims of interventions.

**High and rising unemployment strains the host community and Ukrainian refugees and could lead to scapegoating of refugees:** Unemployment in Moldova rose sharply in early 2023 to 4.6 percent after a year of stability between 2.5 percent and 3 percent.\(^{377}\) The arrival of over 100,000 medium- and long-term residents places pressure on the labour market and provides an easy target for frustration about economic challenges, including unemployment. Participants in the Chișinău workshops expressed fear that political parties would leverage economic troubles to scapegoat refugees.\(^{378}\) This concern has been linked to protests against the government from December 2022 to March 2023 which were nominally driven by economic concerns. However, refugees sensed pro-Russian sympathy and, by extension, some resentment toward Ukrainian refugees.\(^{379}\)

Scapegoating of refugees can focus on economic woes but is also closely linked to many of the tensions discussed in Section 4.7. It can be easy for negative rhetoric to emerge and catalyse growing discord between refugees and host communities.

**Funds received by NGOs are earmarked for Ukrainians and cannot be used for local populations:** The workshops surfaced a prevalent concern that the most vulnerable Moldovans were not receiving support, whereas seemingly less eligible Ukrainians benefited from international humanitarian efforts.\(^{380}\)

Participants raised concerns that funds from NGOs were used to establish public service support structures that should have existed before but were only prioritised once refugees arrived. This contributed to a perception that Moldovans were treated as second-class citizens in their own country.\(^{381}\)

**Uncertainty regarding the length of Ukrainian refugees’ stay in Moldova could result in low employment and job retention:** Some Moldovan participants in the workshops suggested that, since the war in Ukraine has moved eastward, more western Ukrainians are returning home and do not offer employers the long-term commitments that they expect.\(^{382}\) These factors, and perceptions thereof, can impact on refugees’ financial stability and further reduce private sector support for Ukrainians, especially by micro, small, and medium-sized

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\(^{375}\) Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.


\(^{378}\) Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

\(^{379}\) Chișinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

\(^{380}\) Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

\(^{381}\) Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

\(^{382}\) Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
enterprises which may be more impacted by staffing changes. This issue has may increase tensions between communities.

**Brain drain from the public sector to multilaterals and INGOs:** A workshop participant expressed concern that public sector staff in Moldova have sought better-paying jobs with INGOs and multilaterals since the beginning of the crisis. International organisations were perceived as offering better career prospects, resulting in a brain drain from public services at exactly the time when they are under the most pressure. If the phenomenon continues, this may reduce the capacity of Moldova’s public sector.

### 4.7 Community, social, and political life

**Xenophobia and discrimination:** The warm welcome extended to Ukrainian refugees in Moldova and other neighbouring countries has been notable; in general, communities have accepted them with open arms. Prejudice and discrimination did not feature strongly in the workshop discussions, and online commentary suggests that xenophobia and discrimination in Moldova against Ukrainians are not widely practiced behaviours. Policy recommendations by Refugees International note that, as the war continues, empathy fatigue may engender some level of xenophobia and suggest that continued, vocal, and visible support for Ukrainians is important to counteract this risk. Discrimination has impacted on the experience of Roma and some third country nationals, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the Ombudsman’s report found that prejudice, especially against Roma, had contributed to unequal provision of accommodation.

**Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties:** Potential tensions arising via political discourses featured heavily in the workshops in Chișinău. Participants saw protests against the western-leaning government as inherently pro-Russian, and some Ukrainian participants shared that the protests frightened them or their children. Ukrainian and Moldovan participants alike repeated claims that people were paid to attend the events. Participants linked pro-Russian mobilisations to an opposition party. They suggested that politicians have manipulated economic issues to build opposition to the war in Ukraine and scapegoated Ukrainian refugees by extension. They also commented that this activity could continue or worsen if the Moldovan economy continues to struggle. Participants identified this issue as a main area of concern. The public visibility of protests and some politicians’ pro-Russian rhetoric can be inflammatory, making Ukrainian refugees feel unwelcome and isolated and stoking tensions.

**Lack of integration of Ukrainian refugees into host society:** Ukrainian participants in the workshop saw limited opportunities to integrate into Moldovan society and learn about their host culture directly from Moldovans. Initiatives supported by multilaterals that address cultural enrichment include a UNICEF-sponsored children’s

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383 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
384 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
388 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
389 Chișinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.
390 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
choir in Chișinău[^393] and women’s clubs supported by World Vision.[^394] However, workshop participants observed that participants in these activities are often primarily Ukrainians and that they have not fostered direct links with Moldovans.[^395] Direct relationships are important to build interpersonal understanding and empathy between host communities and refugees; without understanding and integration, tensions may increase.

**Language barriers; not learning the local language due to lack of opportunity or difficulty:** Most Ukrainians are proficient in Russian, and participants reported that language barriers seldom limit opportunities because many Moldovans are also proficient in Russian.[^396] With the exception of some areas, such as education and healthcare, Ukrainians are generally comfortable speaking Russian to Moldovans.[^397] By contrast, when Moldovans spoke of integration and language barriers, they almost exclusively referred to Ukrainians not speaking Romanian.

Ukrainians reported that they found Romanian difficult to learn and had limited opportunities to do so. One refugee noted that funding and opportunities to learn Romanian have been made available to adults but are not as regularly available for children.[^398] Another commented, to general agreement, on an age gap in language learning, suggesting that younger Ukrainians who speak English find it easier to learn Romanian than their older counterparts.[^399]

**Tensions between western and eastern Ukrainians and those who arrived before and after the invasion:** Moldova has had a significant ethnic Ukrainian population since the Soviet era. In the workshops, it was noted that ethnic Ukrainians typically watch Russian-language news produced in the Russian Federation and that many hold pro-Russian views. This tendency was seen as contributing to tensions, since Ukrainians fleeing the war may be housed by relatives in Moldova and experience negative views of the Ukrainian state in the context of the on-going war. Workshop participants cited discourses that Ukrainians from the western regions of the country are not genuine refugees—that they rented their flats to internally displaced people from the east of Ukraine and came to Moldova to claim financial support.[^401] The differing perceptions amongst ethnic Ukrainians have contributed to tensions within families and have the potential to divide communities.

**Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences:** World Vision estimates that as many as 1.5 million Ukrainian children are likely to need psychosocial support as a result of the conflict.[^402] Research identifies stigma around seeking mental health support in both Ukraine[^403] and Moldova.[^404] Mental health was not a prominent topic in the Chișinău workshop, and discussions of disparate services for vulnerable Moldovans and Ukrainians suggest that considerations of trauma arising from fleeing the war were not prioritised. Refugees International notes that training additional mental healthcare and psychosocial workers should be a priority in

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[^394]: Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
[^395]: Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
[^396]: Chișinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
[^397]: Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
[^398]: Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
[^399]: Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
[^400]: Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
Moldova and links unaddressed mental health issues with increased risks of gender-based violence within communities. This is likely to remain an important issue throughout the war and beyond, and mental health services in Moldova and around Europe would benefit from comprehensive action plans to respond.

**Protracted crisis in Transnistria:** The situation in Transnistria is beyond the scope of this research project, and the differential services and treatment received by Ukrainians in Transnistria require separate research. However, the protracted crisis emerged as a concern amongst Moldovans and Ukrainians in the Chişinău workshops. Moldovans repeated the perception that Ukrainian soldiers had supported Transnistria against the Moldovan state in the 1990s. One participant stated that questions were asked about why Moldovans should support Ukrainians when the Ukrainian state had opposed Moldovans' interests historically. The protracted crisis has the potential to divide Moldovan host communities and stoke aggressive nationalistic or pro-Russian feelings.

**Fear of insecurity and war, and refugees seen as exacerbating the situation:** International and national media have reported that the war may expand to Moldova. In 2023, Moldovan intelligence confirmed it was monitoring potentially hostile activities in the country, and the president has spoken internationally about the potential that the conflict will spread. These fears have intensified since the revelation of a plot supposedly sponsored by Russia to remove Moldova’s government. Participants in the workshops raised concerns that, if war spreads to Moldova, refugees might be victims of collateral damage. The fear of war undoubtedly contributes to a sense of insecurity by some and has the potential to stoke tensions in Moldova, although it has not targeted refugees to date. This may change if Ukraine is seen as an instigator, as suggested by a recent online claim, apparently intended to build pro-Russian sympathy, that Ukraine plans to invade Transnistria.

**Tensions between Ukrainians and the host community about who started, is responsible for, and should de-escalate the war, and how:** In 2016, 69 percent of Moldovans claimed to consume Russian-language news, and 40 claimed to find it as trustworthy or more so than Moldovan news. This level of use and trust is notably higher than in any of the Baltic states with comparable Russian-speaking populations. Russian news sources consistently present Ukraine as instigators in the war, in particular regarding self-determination in Crimea, which has been under Russian control since 2014.

Workshop participants reported cases of Ukrainians in Moldova hosted by families that claimed Ukraine was the aggressor in the war; this made some refugees feel unsafe and unwelcome in their accommodation and led to tensions within families and between friends.

As the war continues, this potential tension may become entangled with fatigue in supporting refugees, as Moldovans who are sympathetic to Russia question why the conflict has continued for so long or why Ukraine has not sought peaceful means of de-escalation, even if this means giving up territories to Russia.

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406 Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.


409 Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.


412 Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

Perceived violations of human rights and freedom of speech as a result of banning Russian media for spreading disinformation: In December 2022, six Moldovan television channels broadcasting in both Russian and Romanian were banned for airing pro-Russian propaganda. Russia denounced the ban as political censorship. Banning Russian media emerged as a theme in anti-government protests in 2023 that has sharpened divides between the pro-EU government and pro-Russian opposition parties. Russian narratives allege that media censorship is another step toward an authoritarian regime in Moldova. Such concerns may provoke tension in the population and are likely to be especially inflammatory in the context of ongoing protests against the government regarding the high cost of living.

Moldovan territories of North Bucovina and South Basarabia transferred to Soviet Ukraine in 1940: Historic tensions remain regarding the transfer of North Bukovina and South Basarabia, parts of the ancestor state to modern Moldova, to Soviet Ukraine. Workshop participants raised the issue as a potential area of tension between Moldovans and refugees. Although it did not emerge as a pervasive point, it may hold greater weight in the parts of the two regions that remain in Moldova, and actors may use the narrative in disseminating disinformation. There is potential for this historic grievance to be leveraged to divide Ukrainian and Moldovan communities and stoke tensions.

Locals' fatigue with supporting refugees: After a year of war, participants in the Chișinău workshop reported that they had not expected it to last so long. Fatigue with support for Ukrainian refugees is closely linked to perceptions that Moldovan citizens do not receive the same level or quality of support and is likely to worsen over time. Fatigue is exacerbated by scarce resources and rising costs. This is an area with growing potential for tension.

Expectation of more gratitude from refugees: One participant in the workshop commented that Ukrainians did not seem grateful for the support received. Although not dominant, this sentiment emerged in relation to perceptions that Ukrainians do not need support as they are better off than many Moldovans. Workshop participants recognised that a lack of integration and direct relationships between Moldovans and Ukrainians may have limited opportunities for Ukrainians to express appreciation to Moldovan society as a whole. Whilst this does not currently appear to be a significant source of tension, the rhetoric closely correlates with the idea that Ukrainians do not deserve support. Depicting Ukrainians as ungrateful has the potential to stoke further division and tension between the Moldovan and Ukrainian communities.

417 Chișinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
418 Chișinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
419 Chișinău research workshop 1 March 2023.
420 Chișinău research workshop 1 March 2023.
Chapter 5. Programmatic Approach Recommendations

5.1 Overview

This report has focused on medium-term risks to community cohesion. While we present a range of overarching recommendations to facilitate the Ukrainian and host communities getting to know one another better and developing strong relations and trust, other recommendations are more operational. In addition, our research demonstrates that many of the concerns that host communities expressed—and, with them, incendiary and misleading narratives shared by actors with malicious intent as well as some segments of the population—are rooted in longstanding issues such as the strained healthcare and housing systems which the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has highlighted. Indeed, their arrival could speed the resolution of some issues which have become even more visible and which (because in some cases different sources of funding might become available to address them) could improve the situation for both Ukrainians and host communities.

The research team selected the potential approaches discussed below based on desk-based research and a survey circulated to key experts. The survey focused on the key five tensions in each country, the potential effectiveness of the proposed mitigation approaches, and lessons learnt from existing programmatic interventions in each country.

5.2 Cross-cutting programmatic approaches

Some best practice programmatic approaches can be integrated across programme interventions and funding streams to better understand and reduce potential tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities.

Conduct conflict and context analysis: A cornerstone of cohesive and conflict-sensitive programming is solid conflict and context analysis.\(^{421}\) Conflict analyses can take a variety of forms and cover different elements, but at a minimum it should include (1) a situation profile or an overview of the historic, economic, security, socio-cultural, and environmental contexts; (2) causal analysis of conflict factors, including proximate causes, intermediate factors, and potential triggers of conflict; (3) mapping and analysis of stakeholders and their relationships that might directly or indirectly influence or be affected by the topic; and (4) conflict dynamics or drivers of change, including outlining the interactions between causes of conflict and the actors.\(^{422}\) To be effective, conflict and context analyses must examine various points of view, including those of women and marginalised groups. Analyses can be performed at various levels (from the intervention or project level to entire sectors) and should outline current political, economic, and social factors as well as historical contexts and conditions that may contribute to conflict. Some factors that should be taken into account in the context of the community cohesion of refugee and local populations include (1) the medium-term macroeconomic context, including inflation rates; (2) analysis of who stands to gain or lose from various changes and the likelihood of rising inequalities; (3) historical and cultural ties and grievances, risks related to Transnistria, and Moldova’s relationship with Russia;

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(4) polarised domestic politics and ongoing debates about Moldova’s relationship with the EU and Russia; and
(5) the role and presence of multilateral organisations that support Moldova’s response to the refugee crisis.

Share positive stories through social media: Social media is used as a tool to disseminate incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees (see Chapter 3). This use of social media corresponds with wider literature showing that it can be an effective conduit for misinformation and disinformation. In part to counter this use, sharing positive stories on social media would support the creation of a counter-movement to mobilise communities to come together. There is evidence that counter-messaging can be effective, particularly when coupled with local in-person activism. Sharing stories, including which ones to share, by whom, and through what outlets, should be planned around the most effective ways to penetrate information bubbles. Findings from business research show that sharing positive stories can improve morale; there is also evidence that social cohesion, or ‘glue,’ can formed around social media messages and stories. Positive stories and messages can and should be developed around both Ukrainians’ contributions to the Moldovan economy and society and Moldovans’ hospitality toward Ukrainians. Positive messages should be based on a strong contextual analysis and should pre-tested to confirm the framing has the intended effect. In Moldova, the common use of both Romanian and Russian makes the selection of channel and messenger important; in sharing positive messaging, language, channel, and assumptions must be carefully tailored to reach the desired audience. Structural measures and capacity to combat misinformation should be reinforced.

Communicate strategically to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles: A range of tools is available to counteract misleading and incendiary discourses. These support proactive efforts to ‘pre-bunk’ myths and increase society’s resilience to misleading content, including through communications campaigns and building of resilience and networks. Reactive debunking efforts could include counter-narratives, crisis communications, and policy responses. Communication efforts should be tailored and targeted to specific audiences and their interests, values, language, norms, and beliefs. While providing accurate information to audiences is important—for example, by engaging dedicated fact-checkers—disseminating facts is not usually sufficient to change attitudes and behaviours around sensitive issues. An Overseas Development Institute report on understanding public attitudes toward refugees and migrants suggests that communications should point out that the situation is manageable and emphasise shared values. Fact-checking, while particularly important to policy debates and strategy, should be accompanied by other strategies that will resonate with diverse groups. These can include (1) framing messaging to align with the target audiences’ moral values, which is proven to shift attitudes on highly sensitive and often politicised topics; (2) appealing to emotions, which are strong drivers of decisions and behaviours and which make content more likely to be accessed and
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remembered, and (3) shifting social norms or using normative messaging to promote a behaviour, or its frequency.

When using factual information to counter specific falsehoods, it should be repeated multiple times in targeted fora. Repeated statements are shown to be easier to process and are therefore perceived as more truthful, even for those with prior knowledge of the facts. Repeating facts is crucial because to counter falsehoods to which audiences have been exposed multiple times. Research indicates that misinformation and disinformation can be promoted through specific hubs—media outlets that both local and foreign actors use to influence public opinion. This is an important consideration in Moldova, where public trust in Russian news sources is higher than in comparable post-Soviet countries and there is demonstrable use of disinformation through Russian sources to build tensions against Ukrainian refugees. After information is disseminated, it can be taken up by individuals who do not actively question it since there is global bias toward believing that fake news is something that affects other people. Finally, it is crucial that the target audience consider the messenger credible and that as much care is taken in selecting the messenger as the message.

Organise joint activities that allow refugees and host populations to get to know one another: Due to the pressures of work, family life, and broader challenges (see Section 4.7), Moldovan and refugee communities might not engage socially. Ukrainian workshop participants in Chișinău shared that they had not found the right channels to meet Moldovans and were concerned about their children’s ability to integrate. All types of stakeholders could organise activities to bring the host and refugee communities together socially and build informal networks—governments, municipalities, NGOs, and citizens’ groups. Such activities are shown to reduce prejudice. Some activities to engage refugee and host communities do take place in Moldova. For example, UNICEF supports Ukrainian youth to become involved in a choir and Moldova’s National Youth Orchestra, and UN Women supports local civil society efforts to connect female refugees with Moldovans through cultural activities. A workshop participant in the Czech Republic described community film screenings with short ‘chat to your neighbour’ intervals to help audience members get to know each other, with the movie providing a basis for conversation. In Slovakia, some NGOs noted that activities designed to bring Ukrainian and host community youth together were poorly attended, but one NGO usually draws equal numbers of local and refugee children. It does not advertise the activities as ‘come meet Ukrainians’, focusing instead on games or activities that the children enjoy and advertising separately to Ukrainian and Slovak youth, using posters in both languages.

441 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
446 Bratislava research workshop, 7–8 March 2023.
Offer free or affordable after-school activities: Support for free or highly subsidised after-school activities has multiple benefits. First, those activities can help to bridge the gap between the school day and the working day, allowing mothers to work without seeking childcare or incurring additional costs. Second, they create opportunities for Ukrainian and Moldovan students to meet and get to know each other, starting to engage with issues around integration. Third, they could include language classes, which would benefit Ukrainian students. Such activities can also facilitate organic language learning by engaging Ukrainian and Moldovan children in joint activities. Fourth, after-school activities could be beneficial for young people’s mental and physical health. Participants in project workshops in all five countries commented that teenagers are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and poor mental health; some noted potential risks of their engaging in harmful behaviours if they do not have hobbies or other activities.

Train search engines and generative artificial intelligence to recognise bias and potential abuse: Digital advances, including social media platforms, enable the faster spread of messages and disinformation by facilitating the creation of echo chambers that can reinforce confirmation bias. Research shows that false information can spread more quickly than facts, perhaps due to the degree of novelty and emotional reactions the false stories can evoke. However, some technological advances, such as ChatGPT, incorporate safeguards to prevent the spread of negative rumours about refugees. When asked to generate negative headlines about Ukrainian refugees, ChatGPT instead recommended ways to approach news stories about refugees ‘with empathy and sensitivity, and to give a voice to those who are often marginalized and underrepresented in the media’. The software appears to have built-in mechanisms to recognise false assumptions, as illustrated below. Similar notices could be used by search engines, for example, to seek to minimise the spread of falsehoods about refugees. An example is the redirect method, which has been used to counter harmful narratives from white supremacy, violent misogyny and extremism, and conspiracy theories: when an internet user enters keywords ‘that indicate an interest in extremist propaganda’, a pop-up ad directs them to information on the topic, including content that counters the extremist messaging.

| Request: Why do Ukrainian refugees in Poland not want to integrate? |
| GPT-3: I’m sorry, but I cannot provide an answer to this question as it is based on a false assumption. The majority of Ukrainian refugees in Poland do want to integrate and establish a new life in their host country. Like any other refugees, they face significant challenges in terms of language, culture, and finding employment, which can make integration difficult. However, many Ukrainian refugees actively seek out language classes, job training, and other resources to help them integrate successfully. |

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450 General guidelines for how to do so were also provided:
1. Avoid sensationalism: Avoid using inflammatory language or sensational headlines that can stigmatize refugees or perpetuate stereotypes.
2. Use person-centered language: When reporting on refugees, refer to them as individuals rather than as a monolithic group. Use person-centered language that acknowledges their humanity and individual experiences.
3. Provide context: Provide context for why refugees are fleeing their home countries and the challenges they face in their host countries. This can help readers understand the complexities of the issue and challenge any misconceptions or misrepresentations.
4. Interview refugees and stakeholders: Seek out perspectives from refugees themselves as well as experts and stakeholders in the field. This can help humanize the issue and provide more nuanced and accurate reporting.
5. Highlight stories of resilience and hope: Highlight stories of refugees who have overcome challenges and made positive contributions to their host communities. This can help counter negative stereotypes and give a more balanced perspective of refugees’ experiences.
6. Remember that every person has inherent dignity and deserves to be treated with respect and compassion.
5.3 Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Any changes to (re)registration processes and procedures should be simple and should be communicated clearly to refugees via a range of media. Digital literacy support could help vulnerable groups understand and use online services. Processes and procedures that streamline the complexity and length of time required for Ukrainian refugees to prove they qualify under the refugee definition could also be provided to other refugees fleeing war and persecution who are eligible under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Implement phasing programmes that focus on the most vulnerable: Phasing programmes involve changing targeting approaches to support more vulnerable people, as would be done for longer-term conflicts. Phasing is an underlying principle of ‘nexus’ programming that brings together humanitarian, development, and peace actors and links relief, rehabilitation, and development programming. Shortcuts associated with quick assistance—notably, status-based targeting with little analysis of needs (for example, providing the same assistance to all people granted TP)—are likely to be used during the initial phases of a crisis. However, over time it is possible to change the structure of support to ensure equitability and access. This might involve extending more support to those who are most vulnerable and need additional assistance (e.g., the disabled or unemployed), in line with national benefit systems. Across all countries, respondents have expressed concern about the degree to which Ukrainians are in need. Adopting needs-based targeting criteria is likely to be an effective method for mitigating such tensions. Phasing programmes can help manage potential tensions associated with resentment of refugees who receive support while poorer segments of the host populations continue to struggle.452 They help to demonstrate that refugees who receive benefits are in need, and that determinations of their needs align with evaluations of host-country citizens’ eligibility for benefits.

Link humanitarian funds to social protection: One potential source of tension in Moldova involves concerns about the establishment of a parallel system to support Ukrainians through humanitarian actors, along with concerns about inequity in support to Ukrainians and Moldovans for healthcare, housing, and other benefits. A parallel system can open opportunities for Ukrainians to receive more benefits through a smoother distribution mechanism than that extended to Moldovans. Such concerns can be mitigated in part by linking the humanitarian system to the national government benefits system. Expanding the system horizontally to include Moldovan citizens and Ukrainian refugees can help alleviate concerns about inequity as everyone is subject to the same type of means testing and will receive benefits through the same systems.453 Humanitarian actors are making efforts to do this, and a range of tools has been developed to do so in response to COVID-19.454 One key well-documented weakness in linking humanitarian cash and social protection, however, is coordination.455 Implementing this recommendation will require humanitarian actors and national governments to develop streamlined systems and for humanitarian assistance to be delivered through existing government social protection systems to support egalitarian distribution of support.

Utilise inclusive beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms: Beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms developed and implemented by INGOs, the United Nations system, and other

452 Analysed in more detail in Sections 3.2 and 4.6.
stakeholders should focus on inclusivity to ensure that complaints from the host community and refugees are registered, for instance within the education systems. Such mechanisms could be linked with a wider effort to regularly monitor tensions at the community level.456

5.4 Healthcare

Overarching recommendations to mitigate potential tensions in healthcare revolve around addressing the operational challenges related to an overstretched healthcare system457 which predated the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. The inflow of Ukrainians could be seen as further stressing already weak healthcare systems. It may be possible to mitigate some of these tensions by channelling part of the funding received as part of support to Ukrainian refugees to broader existing efforts to reform or improve the health system.458 In the short term, this report makes the recommendations below.

Streamline staffing processes to involve skilled Ukrainians in the health sector: Programmes that identify Ukrainians with appropriate health sector qualifications and skills, support them with language or other needed training, and place them in local health systems could be beneficial. Such programmes would likely involve outreach to identify qualified Ukrainians, processes to accelerate the recognition of their skills and register their qualifications, tailored language training, and placement in national hospitals and clinics. In the Czech Republic, UNICEF conducts similar programming with the Institute for Post Graduate Medical Education in Prague and the Centre for Nursing and Other Healthcare Professionals in Brno to help Ukrainian healthcare professionals obtain required accreditations.459 The 2021 agreement between Ukraine and Moldova to mutually recognise academic qualifications from each country covers medical qualifications.460 The agreement may facilitate the integration of Ukrainian health workers into the Moldovan system. However, more targeted outreach to identify displaced Ukrainians in Moldova with relevant skills would be beneficial, along with efforts to integrate professionals into Moldovan workplaces and providing any additional training required.

5.5 Housing

Availability in Moldova’s housing and rental market was limited for years before the escalation of the war in Ukraine.461 In 2022, greater demand for accommodation, alongside the recent cut-off of Russian gas imports, resulted in increased rent and utility prices. At an overarching level, addressing the operational challenges of the lack of affordable housing, including social housing,462 would help mitigate tensions related to housing and could benefit both the Ukrainian and Moldovan communities. The Moldovan government is making efforts to construct more social housing, and NGOs support renovations of properties. However, the small scale of these

458 Discussed in Section 4.3.
459 Channelling international support to healthcare through national systems can help alleviate pressure on the social services system in a way that also mitigates tensions between host communities and refugees. In Moldova, support from multilateral organisations such as UNHCR helps Moldovan hospitals alleviate challenges that both refugees and host communities face, and the IOM has donated equipment for cancer treatment. Humanitarian funding from the European Commission has totalled over €48 million since 2022, including to support Moldova’s healthcare system. Accessed 4 July 2023.
interventions limits their potential impact. To the degree possible, housing aid to Ukrainians should be harmonised with these efforts. In addition, this report specifically recommends the programmatic approaches below.

**Provide viable opportunities for people to live, work, and go to school outside of major cities:** Choosing whether to live in large or smaller cities or in rural areas often poses a dilemma for refugees. Larger cities have more employment opportunities and options for education and often provide greater proximity to healthcare facilities. Smaller cities have more affordable housing options. A workshop participant in Poland described a pilot project offering relocation to smaller villages or towns, with housing and employment offers and funding to renovate old homes. This kind of scheme could be expanded in Moldova to ease housing pressures in cities. Good practice also exists around companies (including in the private sector) providing well-rounded support to refugees. For example, PepsiCo supported 900 Ukrainian PepsiCo associates and their families to relocate to Romania, arranged for the employees to continue working for PepsiCo after relocation, recruited other Ukrainian refugees, arranged housing, and established the PepsiCo learning centre—a Ukrainian school for refugee children, employing Ukrainian teachers. Such holistic, multi-sectoral models that enable Ukrainians to participate meaningfully in work could be explored, and policies could help address the barriers that companies might face in moving some operations from Ukraine to host countries.

**Support social intermediaries in rental processes:** A social rental agency model could be piloted. In this model, a non-profit intermediary would negotiate between property owners and people in need of housing. The intermediary would guarantee rent payments and minimum tenancy standards to owners, who would discount rents and guarantee stable, affordable, and quality accommodation to tenants. The intermediary could help mitigate challenges and issues associated with discrimination against Ukrainian tenants and could help manage concerns and issues related to Ukrainian refugees’ short-term housing needs. Habitat for Humanity founded the Social Rental Agency in Poland, which provides such housing and employment services. The approach could be leveraged to support the provision of housing to refugee groups, particularly those who are more likely to experience discrimination and stigma, such as Roma. Social intermediaries can act as interlocutors between Ukrainian tenants and landlords to mitigate stigma; they might also be able to act as guarantors to protect against risks associated with short-term tenancies.

### 5.6 Education

Education can be a source of tensions if places, particularly in kindergartens, are scarce, and some families are turned away. On the other hand, joint classes for local and refugee children can help build relationships between different communities and increase trust and cohesion. Investment in kindergartens and early childhood education may be useful in the five countries of research, as it would support parents to find jobs and work standard hours and would encourage contact between host communities and Ukrainian children and their parents. In Moldova, contact between refugee children and host communities may be particularly valuable in the

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463 International actors can support housing availability and system resilience by (1) funding coordination by national actors; (2) channelling housing and rent support through the government housing allowance and subsidies systems (i.e., adapting mechanisms that link cash and social protection to the housing market); and (3) supporting and investing in the development of new housing. All activities should take place in line with, and ideally directly through, existing government mechanisms to enhance housing infrastructure and access to housing. See OECD. 2021. *Housing Affordability in the Czech Republic: Chapter 2*; Housing 2030. 2023, *Slovak State Housing Policy*; and Spirkova, D. 2018, *Housing Policy in the Slovak Republic*.


context of more community polarisation due to the war in Ukraine—often exacerbated amongst young people by the functional segregation of school systems in Romanian- and Russian-speaking and Ukrainian online schooling. This could lay a foundation for longer-term positive perceptions. To enable this, this report recommends:

**Provide Romanian language support for Ukrainian children:** UNHCR identified the lack of language skills as an important factor in preventing Ukrainians from accessing education and integrating with Moldovan peers.\(^{468}\) Whilst many Ukrainians and Moldovans are proficient in Russian, Romanian is significantly different to Ukrainian, and few Ukrainian youth knew Romanian before arriving in Moldova. The Moldova Inter-agency Refugee Education working group reports that there are more Romanian than Russian schools in Moldova and that proficiency in Russian amongst Ukrainian youth does not necessarily prepare them for schooling in Russian.\(^{469}\) The same report found that 19 percent of girls and 14 percent of boys cited language barriers as their reason for not attending school.\(^{470}\) Both UNHCR and the Inter-agency working group name language courses for young people as a priority for integration into education.\(^{471}\) Language classes have not been identified as a key need for students enrolled in the Ukrainian online system—but the lack of language skills could create challenges with integration in the medium to long term.

**Embed mental health support into the education system:** Mental health issues are prevalent and likely to be undertreated amongst Ukrainian refugees. As discussed in Chapter 2, some refugees experience difficulties in accessing care for mental health issues in Moldova despite equitable access granted through TP status. Integrating more mental health services into the school system could support children and help identify parents who need support (and it could be possible to support parents at school). As the time spent in displacement extends, and given that children’s mental health situation is particularly fragile, embedding mental health services in schools is promising.

**Train teachers and other educational staff to better support Ukrainian students:** Training teachers in how to support Ukrainian refugees could address mitigating conflict, managing and providing support for psychosocial issues, and tailoring pedagogical methods to language learners. There are some indications, primarily from a project conducted by International Alert in Lebanon that focussed on Syrian refugees, that training for social services workers (teachers, health workers, and others) can generate positive community cohesion benefits.\(^{472}\) Trainings include analysis of the context with social services workers, the development and implementation of tailored capacity development programmes, accompanying service providers in their work, and raising awareness around the impacts of psychosocial issues and the health requirements of refugees.\(^{473}\) The results of this programme were demonstrable: shorter waiting times, more willingness by refugees to discuss issues and problems, and the return of host community members to service centres that they had left.\(^{474}\)

**Provide spaces in schools, libraries, and community centres for refugee children to follow the Ukrainian online curriculum in a social setting:** Continuing education in an online Ukrainian school is the preferred option

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for many refugee children,\textsuperscript{475} although it carries risks of social isolation. Making spaces available in schools, libraries, or community centres could facilitate social interaction and bonding amongst Ukrainian students and with local students. This approach could also enable parents to work more easily. The Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education working group found that 48 percent of parents polled prioritised making opportunities to socialise, demonstrating demand for such services.\textsuperscript{476} There have been initiatives to support socialisation within online learning, for example establishing shared classrooms for children, supported through collaboration with the Ukrainian government.\textsuperscript{477} Young people could benefit from the expansion of such pilots to reach a broader population.

### 5.7 Employment and income

Moldova’s record inflation of 30.2 percent in December 2022,\textsuperscript{478} alongside sharply growing unemployment in early to mid-2023,\textsuperscript{479} has the potential to contribute to tensions between the refugee and host communities. The financial support received by Ukrainians since 2022 and relentless disinformation and misinformation efforts regarding the wealth of Ukrainians compared to Moldovans are exacerbating factors. Approaches to alleviate these tensions should be broad-ranging: higher-level macroeconomic approaches and further engagement with multilateral organisations for macroeconomic support on imports and exports,\textsuperscript{480} approaches to ensure and communicate equity in the distribution of resources amongst the Ukrainian and local populations that are in need, and boosting labour market participation and entrepreneurship. Shorter-term recommendations are explored in more detail below.

#### Employment support

**Increase job advertising in Ukrainian or offer language and job counselling support programmes to enable refugees to respond to advertisements and interview for jobs:** Support to Ukrainian refugees to access job advertisements could help them enter the labour market. However, advertising and recruitment should be tailored. Information should be available in Ukrainian as well as Russian and Romanian, and available relevant websites should be widely promoted amongst Ukrainian refugee communities. Participants in the Chişinău workshop repeatedly stated that they did not know where to look for jobs that were suitable for Ukrainians, implying that more work is needed to support communications and outreach about available job platforms.\textsuperscript{481} In addition, linkages with employers are needed to ensure there are sufficient jobs to support long-term credibility. For example, in Romania, over 9,000 refugees registered on an online platform to seek work, but only 2,200 employers were on the platform.\textsuperscript{482} Tailoring the platform and outreach to different segments (e.g., employers) could support the effectiveness of job advertisement programmes. Counselling and coaching support

\textsuperscript{475} As discussed in Section 2.5.
\textsuperscript{480} For example, in response to the war in Ukraine, the World Bank mobilised $159.24 million USD as of June 2022 to support Moldova’s economy. World Bank. 2022. The World Bank in Moldova. Accessed 28 March 2023. The International Monetary Fund also actively supports Moldova through governmental and regulatory reform in the longer term.
\textsuperscript{481} Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.
\textsuperscript{482} Romania Insider. 2023. Jobs for Ukraine: 9,000 users active on recruitment platform launched in Romania for Ukrainian refugees.
programmes for Ukrainians who want to respond to job advertisements could also be useful. In Bucharest, a workshop participant described a private sector company that hosting workshops with Ukrainian refugees to help them find job opportunities and subsequently supporting them to practice interviewing, which can be daunting in an unfamiliar language.483

**Establish employment creation programmes with flexible work structures:** Efforts have been made to establish employment creation programmes to support peacebuilding and conflict mitigation initiatives.484 Such programmes could address areas with labour shortfalls, such as healthcare. Flexible work structures could include work-from-home arrangements and flexible work hours so, for instance, mothers can pick up their children from school. It will be critical to tailor employment opportunities to the skills of the target populations.485 A good practice could be taken from Turkey and Jordan, where employment creation programmes systematically included host and refugee communities, with host community beneficiaries often representing 50 percent of those supported.486

**Increase day care provision, possibly by employers:** UNHCR identified childcare as a prohibitive factor for refugees entering the labour market in Moldova,487 and this was echoed in our research workshops.488 Provision of day care could support refugees’ engagement in the labour market. Possibilities include (1) subsidising care for refugee children, (2) supporting the start-up of day care centres by Ukrainian refugees, which would support both businesses and day care needs, and (3) encouraging businesses to provide day care, together with conflict sensitivity training.

**Offer community facilitators and peer support groups for parents:** It can be challenging for refugee parents arriving in a host country to engage in the labour market. The provision of community facilitators could ease entry into the labour market, and support network building for new arrivals. As discussed in Section 2.6, informal networks play a significant role in enabling access to the labour market for Ukrainian refugees, including in Moldova. Community facilitators have been deployed in the country to support work with targeted groups of refugees, such as Roma, to address areas of concern, including around exploitation and trafficking.489 Community facilitators could support refugees in building networks and discussing common issues and solutions, or provide individual coaching and mentorship. Specific groups could be set up for parents. Lessons could be learnt from current programmes. For example, the WHO has recruited and deployed cultural mediators who raise awareness of health systems amongst refugee communities490 by building on the recognised profession of cultural mediation, which has a base in Romania. The programme could offer lessons and possibilities for greater effectiveness for other countries and sectors, including employment.

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483 Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023. UNHCR REACH survey respondents also identified lack of employment options (or knowledge of them), and language barriers, as two top reasons for livelihood challenges. UNHCR REACH. 2022. Romania: Multi-sector Needs Assessment (December 2022).


488 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.


490 WHO. 2023. *The crucial role of cultural mediators in Romania’s Ukrainian refugee response*. 
**Offer Romanian language courses:** The lack of language skills has been identified as a barrier to employment for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova—particularly for certain higher-skilled positions. Increasing the provision of Romanian language courses will support engagement in the labour market.

**Provide education about decent labour conditions, including agency contract risks:** International Alert’s studies on business and conflict in East Africa and Nepal point out the importance of fair recruitment practices and appropriate use of outcome-based contracts to minimise exploitation, and of analysing the effect of investments on different communities before making final business decisions. Pre-investment considerations (e.g., before a factory is built) should include a conflict analysis, considering matters such as how the investment will affect host and refugee communities, and who the suppliers will be. In multiple workshops, participants noted that Ukrainian refugees have been exposed to risks associated with output-based contracts which they felt pressured to accept to avoid financial insecurity. Education for business leaders and refugees about decent labour conditions and contract types, risks, and mitigation could reduce vulnerabilities.

**Entrepreneurship support and work with businesses to boost productivity**

**Introduce and publicise incentives to start businesses:** A more favourable environment for starting businesses could reduce challenges associated with unemployment and contribute to economic growth. Literature on best practices for supporting small business start-ups advises focusing funding on innovation labs rather than investing directly in small businesses. Learnings from multilateral organisations recommend (1) profiling migrants’ and refugees’ skills and their complementary to host community skills and associated entrepreneurship possibilities; (2) clarifying and simplifying the regulatory environment for refugee-owned businesses, including by removing restrictions on ownership of property, access to finance, and the right to work; (3) strengthening synergies amongst education initiatives (e.g., vocational training) and entrepreneurship opportunities; and (4) developing digital ‘bazaars’ to support the export of products and exchange of information. Business start-up programmes could also consider conflict sensitivity training for entrepreneurs and encouraging joint Moldovan-Ukrainian initiatives.

**Engage with businesses and organisations to make the most of a more diverse workforce:** For decades, business research has found that a diverse workforce boosts creativity and innovation, enhances problem-solving and understanding of consumers’ diverse needs, leads to better decisions, and can have reputational benefits.

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493 Through which an individual is paid a certain amount for a job done, but the wages per hour or day might be very low, often below minimum wage, if the contracts are drawn up in an exploitative manner, and the refugees do not know how long a task is likely to take.

494 Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023; Prague research workshop, 1–2 February 2023; Bratislava workshop, 7–8 March 2023.


and reduce prejudice. These benefits can boost the economy. The Ukrainian population, and particularly Ukrainian professionals, can help catalyse such benefits for national businesses. To take full advantage of the benefits of a more diverse workforce or candidate pool, it would be useful to train businesses on working in diverse environments and identifying and addressing potential bias in recruitment processes. This might also include working to reduce challenges that skilled Ukrainians face in accessing employment, such as through language training and workplace activities that engage both Ukrainian and Moldovan staff.

5.8 Community, social, and political life

The significant presence of Russian-language media in Moldova and, with it, more Russian propaganda, can cause challenges between communities. Activities to bring the Ukrainian refugee and Moldovan communities closer together (see Section 5.2) could be a first step in reducing potential divides that political discourses and deep-seated beliefs can cause. Diverse potential tensions in community, social, and political life (see Section 4.7), could scale up if appropriate mitigation measures and prevention measures are not put in place. The approaches discussed below could be useful.

Establish an infrastructure to support refugees’ dialogue with local and national governments: A significant amount of literature discusses infrastructures for peace; these can take place in a bottom-up fashion or through top-down mechanisms. Such infrastructure could allow for clearer and more open discussion between representatives of disadvantaged local groups, such as the Roma and rural communities, and refugees. Top-down mechanisms are those in which formal structures for discussion and engagement are built between a host country government and a displaced community, often involving local and national institutions. The advantages of a top-down approach are that a government agency has a clear mandate for conflict resolution, accountability mechanisms can be established, and media coverage and strategic communications can take place around established peacebuilding efforts. The disadvantages include reliance on the willingness of the national government and the possibility that the process might become excessively bureaucratic. Such structures may be particularly pertinent to Moldova, where geopolitics and questions of autonomy for ethnic minority groups have driven polarisation, especially around the issue of Moldova’s relationship to Russia. Participants in workshops also highlighted a lack of opportunities for Ukrainian refugees to participate in local decision-making processes. Opportunities for direct engagement with local and national government may therefore support integration.

Foster community dialogues: Community dialogue programming involves targeted efforts to bring different elements of a community together to exchange information, experiences, and stories around specific topics.

499 For example, Brunow, Stephen, and Brenzel, H. 2012. The effect of a culturally diverse labour supply on regional income in the EU; Shaban, Abdul, and Khan, S. 2022. Cultural diversity, human capital, and regional economic growth in India.
500 For example, through community dialogues, as discussed in the paragraph below.
503 Chișinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.
Dialogues could be organised around sources of tension such as fear of insecurity and war, Ukrainian history and culture, distribution of resources between disadvantaged host community populations and refugees, and the realities of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The goal would be the development of mutual understanding and mitigation of emerging issues. Community dialogue programmes have been used across geographies including the Balkans, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Benefits include the ability to scale up over time, leverage local resources, and put forward practical small-scale solutions; cost-effectiveness; and relevance to local contexts. Challenges include the possibility of sabotage, lack of sustained funding, and reliance on volunteers. The literature indicates a slight but positive relationship between the presence of community dialogues and mitigation of local tensions. In the context of Moldova, dialogues can be accompanied by efforts for communities to develop and engage in longer-term activities that encourage interaction between Ukrainians and Moldovans.

**Address tensions through radio and TV programming:** Radio and TV dramas have been used as peacebuilding tools over decades and in many contexts. In general, there is evidence that such dramas can affect attitudes and counteract negative messages, although they do not significantly affect deep-seated beliefs. Challenges associated with setting up radio and TV drama programmes relate to the willingness and interests of media owners; lack of audiences for peace stories compared to those on violence and conflict; resource constraints; legal and regulatory restrictions; and lack of media outreach. Stabilisation funding might be used to overcome some of these hurdles. Radio and TV dramas and mass campaigns can be aired in collaboration with governments, academic institutions, and civil society. This joint engagement can focus on reconciliation around historical tensions.

**Work with the media to avoid spreading incendiary messages:** Quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses should be supported, including by providing journalists evidence of what works and what does not to debunk misinformation, as this is not always obvious. For example, directly countering ‘fake news’ by repeating it brings it to the attention of audiences again—and can therefore reinforce acceptance. Countering disinformation requires strong collaboration amongst multiple actors and a variety of actions—mapping and tracking disinformation actors, providing intelligence reports, and conducting information literacy activities. It is possible to build or leverage coalitions amongst media, civil society, and government entities that would allow access to disinformation tracking mechanisms and promote information sharing amongst different types of actors (specifically, mapping and analysis by civil society, academia, and government actors that influence policy).

**Develop codes of conduct for organisations that work in politics, data, and the media:** Developing and disseminating codes of conduct might help limit the effects of disinformation. Signatories are likely to include academics and civil society organisations; they could also include media outlets, trade associations, fact-checkers, and politicians. Such an initiative would clearly spell out obligations and minimum standards. A code of conduct would be particularly timely in Moldova, where the ban on Russian television stations in summer 2022

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and some Moldovan stations in December 2022 provoked protests against regulations that were intended to curb disinformation and accusations of political bias and censorship. Given the highly political nature of these decisions, public and private sector interest in implementing a code of conduct on disinformation would be valuable to drive broad-based support for such an initiative.

**Review school curricula, including in history and digital literacy:** Various organisations have recognised the role of history education in helping students to better understand the past, approach information critically, and reduce prejudice and discrimination. The historical relationships between Moldova and Ukraine, and Moldova and Russia, loom large in Moldovan politics, in part due to the status of Transnistria. Ukrainian participants in the workshops raised concerns that the history taught in Russian-language schools reflects a Russian slant and undermines Ukraine's autonomy. During the workshops, participants discussed the need for longer-term engagement of young people in critical analysis—including through mainstream education curricula—to proactively prevent polarisation, misinformation, and prejudice. Apart from the curricula themselves, history and/or social sciences education can be used effectively to improve critical thinking and source analysis. A 2021 OECD publication that examined digital literacy amongst young people found that only 54 percent of students reported receiving training at school to identify bias in information sources. However, the European Commission has recognised the role of education, particularly in source literacy, in combatting misinformation.

**Increase opportunities for Ukrainians and host community members to meet and help each other learn languages:** ‘Conversation cafes’ are amongst many approaches to support host communities and refugees to interact. In Moldova, these could be particularly important to help Ukrainians to learn Romanian. Such initiatives for Ukrainian and host communities could support further engagement.

**Analyse tensions between different groups:** One cross-cutting programmatic approach suggested in this report is conflict analysis. For Moldova, societal divisions that are likely to cause strain could be identified through a joint conflict analysis. Particularly pertinent divisions may be those between rural and urban populations and between groups of native Russian- and Romanian-speakers. A joint analysis exercise, conducted with government, humanitarian, and civil society representation, could result in an agreed set of priority divisions that different actors could then address systematically in a coordinated fashion.

Table 4 compiles the lists of incendiary and misleading discourses, underlying challenges, characteristics that can make Ukrainian refugees vulnerable, and tensions at each stage of the refugees’ journey.

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515 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.
516 Warsaw research workshop, 9 February 2023.
518 European Commission. 2022. *Commission steps up action to tackle disinformation and promote digital literacy among young people*.
Table 4: Summary of the key discourses, underlying challenges, characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable, and potential tensions between refugees and host communities in Moldova

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journey stage</th>
<th>Discourses about Ukrainian refugees</th>
<th>Underlying challenges</th>
<th>Characteristics that can make Ukrainian refugees vulnerable at the stage of the journey</th>
<th>Potential tensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Entry, legal status, and registration for services** | • Refugees from western Ukraine and regions less affected by the conflict are not ‘genuine’ refugees; the war hasn’t really affected them, and they do not deserve support.  
• Ukrainians abuse the benefit system, for example crossing the border for short trips to get money.  
• The support given to Ukrainians is corrupt.  
• Ukrainians receive more support than other refugees. | • Moldova is not part of the EU, yet it has transposed the EU TP directive.  
• Requirements for in-person interviews for TP can be challenging.  
• Documentation requirements create a double burden for TCNs and transgender people.  
• People with disabilities such as blindness or learning difficulties who are unable to produce the documentation required.  
• People without complete documentation from Ukraine, or who were not recorded upon entry.  
• TCNs and Moldovan citizens who were long-term residents in Ukraine.  
• Unaccompanied children.  
• Single-parent families. | • Claims that Ukrainian refugees abuse the benefits system.  
• Unclear procedures to register for TP; lack of clarity on the rights and obligations of people with TP status.  
• Newly created infrastructure is parallel to state institutions.  
• Differences in provision of support to refugee or migrant groups not from Ukraine.  
• Claims that Ukrainian men are smuggled in to work illegally. |
| **Healthcare** | • Ukrainians create a burden on the healthcare system.  
• Ukrainians misuse services, for example with unnecessary ambulance calls and emergency room visits. | • Moldova’s healthcare system was strained before the war.  
• Language barriers. | • People with specialist healthcare requirements that are in limited supply or difficult to access.  
• People who do not speak Romanian.  
• People with disabilities, especially children. | • Additional pressures on the health system.  
• Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles, in receiving healthcare.  
• Pressures on social services. |
| **Housing** | • Ukrainians are creating a burden on the housing system.  
• Refugees have unfair access to more housing. | • Housing is very expensive for locals in Moldova.  
• Economic crises are increasing costs of living.  
• There is a lack of available social housing.  
• Dependency on Russia for gas has increased utility prices significantly since the war. | • People with young children, due to perceived risk to property.  
• People with pets.  
• People who are unable to pay for a significant deposit, including older people dependent upon pension funding.  
• Roma people.  
• People with disabilities who have facility requirements. | • Additional pressures on housing and rising cost of housing.  
• Better housing support provided to Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups.  
• Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories.  
• Ukrainians, especially Roma, seen as undesirable tenants. |
### Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

#### Education
- Ukrainians create burdens on the school and kindergarten system; take locals’ places.
- Ukrainian students are not making an effort at school.
- Moldova has a two-language school stream (Romanian and Russian).
- The kindergarten system has been under significant pressure since before the war.
- Families with pre-school-aged children.
- Roma people with limited education.
- Children who are placed in the wrong grade when transferring to Moldovan school systems.
- Integration issues in schools and a lack of specialised programmes, resulting in negative social experiences (e.g., bullying in Russian schools).
- Uncertainty regarding length of stay for refugees, leading to poor school attendance.

#### Employment and income
- Economic challenges and the energy crisis are fuelled by refugees driving prices up.
- New arrivals from Ukraine take jobs from local populations. They are willing to work for lower wages and are destroying the labour market.
- Ukrainians don’t want to pay taxes and want to work illegally.
- Ukrainians don’t want to work.
- Refugees are supported more financially and get better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of the local community: ‘we should help our poor, not the Ukrainians’.
- Local populations are excluded from support provided to vulnerable people.
- Moldova is experiencing high inflation.
- Moldova’s unemployment rate is growing, especially in certain sectors and regions (e.g., agricultural regions).
- Moldova’s economy was closely linked with both the Russian and Ukrainian economies before the war.
- People with specialist occupations who cannot find suitable roles.
- People with childcare responsibilities who need flexible working hours.
- People based outside of Chișinău, especially in the southern regions.
- People with no informal networks in Moldova who cannot find opportunities.
- High inflation and rising inequality.
- Ukrainians don’t engage in the labour market or start businesses.
- Tensions over distribution of resources between local population and Ukrainians.
- Reduced financial assistance to refugees could lead to more refugee poverty and state intervention.
- Rising unemployment strains communities and leads to scapegoating.
- Funds received by NGOs are used for Ukrainians, not for local populations.
- Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities.
- Uncertainty regarding length of stay for refugees in host country.
- Brain drain from the public sector to multilaterals and INGOs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community, social, and political life</th>
<th>Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Refugees are ungrateful and have high expectations.</td>
<td>● Language barriers contribute significantly to lack of integration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Refugees are selective about the type of support they receive.</td>
<td>● Moldova has more sympathy for Russia than other refugee-hosting countries, and this is a politically fraught issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● They should be in Ukraine defending their country, not in Moldova.</td>
<td>● Psychosocial support is limited; there is stigma around seeking help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Refugees will nazify local society.</td>
<td>● People requiring psychological support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Refugees create diplomatic tensions with Russia. They endanger Moldova.</td>
<td>● People in communities without inclusive decision-making processes that account for Ukrainians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Historic tensions (Transnistria).</td>
<td>● People in majority Russian-speaking or pro-Russian areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Refugees are ‘not Moldova’s responsibility’.</td>
<td>● Xenophobia and discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Negative perceptions of refugees caused by political views.</td>
<td>● Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Local men will have to enlist in the military if support to refugees persists.</td>
<td>● Lack of integration into host society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Refugees are a crime risk.</td>
<td>● Language barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Lack of understanding of trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Tensions between Ukrainians and host community about who started or is responsible for the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Perceived freedom of speech violations as a result of the ban on Russian media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Historic tensions over Bucovina (1940).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Locals’ fatigue in supporting refugees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Expectation of more gratitude.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 1. Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>Anti-retroviral Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChatGPT</td>
<td>Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>Coronavirus Disease 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMDS</td>
<td>Disinformation, Misinformation, and Dangerous Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCDO</td>
<td>Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDNP</td>
<td>Moldovan State Identification Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFES</td>
<td>International Foundation for Electoral Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA+</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing Power Parity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAC</td>
<td>Refugee Accommodation Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCN</td>
<td>Third Country National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP</td>
<td>Temporary Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States’ Dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Annex 2. Key Statistics

The table below summarises Moldova’s key economic, political, and demographic factors, and the numbers and characteristics of refugees hosted by the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Moldova statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic factors</strong></td>
<td>GDP/per capita purchasing power parity in for 2021 (USD thousands)</td>
<td>15.4&lt;sup&gt;519&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmonized index of consumer prices in December 2022</td>
<td>30.2%&lt;sup&gt;520&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Official development assistance eligible?</td>
<td>Yes&lt;sup&gt;521&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Refugee Response Plan funding requested for 2022 (USD million)</td>
<td>391.5&lt;sup&gt;522&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Refugee Response Plan funding requested for 2023 (USD million)</td>
<td>427.0&lt;sup&gt;523&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political factors</strong></td>
<td>Political party in power</td>
<td>Party of Action and Solidarity&lt;sup&gt;524&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next presidential election</td>
<td>2024&lt;sup&gt;525&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next parliamentary election</td>
<td>2025&lt;sup&gt;526&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next local election</td>
<td>2023&lt;sup&gt;527&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country demography</strong></td>
<td>Total population (million)</td>
<td>2.6&lt;sup&gt;528&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty rates</td>
<td>28.6%&lt;sup&gt;529&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployment rate in December 2022</td>
<td>4.6%&lt;sup&gt;530&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size of Russian minority or citizens living in country before 2022</td>
<td>111,726 (2014); does not include Transnistria&lt;sup&gt;531&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>519</sup> The World Bank. 2021. *GDP per capita, PPP (current international $)*. Accessed 30 March 2023.<br>
<sup>521</sup> OECD. *DAC List of Official Development Assistance Recipients | Effective for reporting on 2022 and 2023 flows*. Accessed 30 March 2023.<br>
### Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of refugees hosted</th>
<th>Size of Ukrainian minority or Ukrainians living in country before 2022</th>
<th>Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of March 2023</th>
<th>Ukrainian refugees in Moldova as a % of total population</th>
<th>Total refugees hosted in 2022</th>
<th>Total refugees hosted in 2021</th>
<th>Total refugees hosted in 2020</th>
<th>Total refugees hosted in 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>181,035 (2014); does not include Transnistria</td>
<td>106,634</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>79,477</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ukrainian refugee demographics</th>
<th>% women and children</th>
<th>% refugee households with at least 1 member with disability</th>
<th>% refugee households with at least 1 elderly member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83% (March 2023)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support received by Ukrainian refugees</th>
<th>Funds received upon arrival/registration</th>
<th>Total funds received per adult/month</th>
<th>Total funds received per child/month</th>
<th>Total funds received by hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On arrival (after registration) each person is supported with MDL 2,200 (£96.96, $120.88 USD) on a personal card.</td>
<td>MDL 2,200 per month (£96.96, $120.88 USD) from November to March 2023 per family for communal services.</td>
<td>MDL 2,200 per child (£96.96, 120.88 USD)</td>
<td>MDL 3,500 (£154.26, $192.31 USD) per host family (monthly cap). During winter (November 2022–March 2023), additional funding of MDL 700 (£30.85, $38.46 USD) per month for household.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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535 Author’s calculation based on information in the same table: Moldova’s population was 2.6 million, as of 23 March 2023, 106,634 Ukrainians were registered in Moldova as of 29 March 2023.  
### Access to services

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<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate</td>
<td>800 to 850 individuals (September–November 2022) 548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Ukrainian children in country enrolled in school</td>
<td>1,665549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% hosted by local family (May 2022)</td>
<td>13% 550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% rental (paid) accommodation (May 2022)</td>
<td>30% 551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% hosted in refugee centres (November 2022)</td>
<td>3% 552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Host population attitude polling

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of host population believing that Russia is not responsible for starting the war (it’s NATO/Ukraine)</td>
<td>22% 553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of host population positive toward Ukrainian refugees (spring 2022)</td>
<td>51.4% 554</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Annex 3. Statistics, surveys, and research reports

The sources below provide up-to-date statistics and deeper dives into the specific subject matter areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject area</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type555</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Ukrainian refugees</td>
<td>UNHCR. 2023. <a href="https://www.unhcr.org/data/2023">Operational Data Portal</a></td>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Ukrainians under TP</td>
<td>UNHCR. 2023. <a href="https://www.unhcr.org.data/2023">Quick Assessment on the Implementation of Temporary Protection in Moldova: Key Findings and Recommendations</a></td>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to social services</td>
<td>WHO. 2023. <a href="https://www.who.int/health-topics/ukrainian-refugees-granted-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-in-republic-of-moldova">Ukrainian refugees granted mental health and psychosocial support in Republic of Moldova</a></td>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation for Ukrainians under TP</td>
<td>UNHCR. 2023. <a href="https://www.unhcr.org/data/2023">Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre Monthly Update as of 27 February 2023</a></td>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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555 Abbreviations: AR = Academic research; MLR = Multilateral report; MR = Media report; NG = National government; SM = Social media; NGO = NGO report; PD = Polling data. ENG = English; RO = Romanian; RU = Russian.
## Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deeper dives</td>
<td>UNHCR. 2022. [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine](Regional protection analysis)</td>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td>Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Data as of 30 September 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNHCR. 2023. Regional Protection and Monitoring, Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine</td>
<td>MLR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNHCR. 2022. [The 2022 Participatory Assessment Report for refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons in the Republic of Moldova]</td>
<td>MLR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Risks to Community Cohesion</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch. 2022. Romani refugees from Ukraine face segregation</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>ENG</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popenko, Viola. 2022. European Roma Rights Centre. Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova.</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressures on social services</td>
<td>Reuters. 2022. Refugee crisis strains Moldova’s healthcare system, minister says.</td>
<td>MR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile of host communities</td>
<td>UNDP Moldova. 2022. Profiling poverty beyond income shows where to have the biggest impact in a world in crisis.</td>
<td>MLR</td>
<td>ENG</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Center of Insights. 2022. Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>ENG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public attitudes</td>
<td>Hargrave, Karen, Homel, K., and Dražanová, L. Overseas Development Institute. 2023. Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile.</td>
<td>NGO/A</td>
<td>ENG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions between host and refugee communities</td>
<td>World Vision. 2022. warm Welcomes, Lurking Tensions, Vital lessons from the global south for countries hosting refugees from Ukraine.</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>ENG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disinformation discourses</td>
<td>Media Forward. 2022. The society wide battle against disinformation in Moldova.</td>
<td>NGO/A</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IFES. 2019. Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions.</td>
<td>NGO</td>
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</table>
## Subject area | Source | Type | Language | Notes
---|---|---|---|---
**Risks to Community Cohesion**

### Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova

- **IOM. 2023.** *One Year Later: Online discourse in Moldova about Ukrainian refugees.*
  - MLR
  - ENG

- **OECD. 2022.** *Disinformation and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine: Threats and governance responses.*
  - MLR
  - ENG

- **European Commission. 2022.** *Dezinformare la granița războiului*
  - MLR
  - RO

- **Mediacritica. 2022.** *Studiu CJI // O bună parte a membrilor unor grupuri vulnerabile, precum bătrâni, romii sau refugiații, sunt expuși la un volum mare de dezinformare.*
  - MR
  - RO

### Good practice examples

- **Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, D., and Aral, S. Science. 2018.** *The spread of true and false news online.*
  - AR
  - ENG

- **Saferworld. n.d.** *Conflict Analysis, Chapter 2*
  - MLR
  - ENG

- **Cecchi-Dimeglio, Paola. MIT Sloan Management Review. 2020.** *Why sharing good news matters.*
  - MR
  - ENG

- **International Alert. 2020.** *Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision.*
  - NGO
  - ENG
Risks to Community Cohesion: Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities – Moldova