



Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities

Moldova Report

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Dr Ingrida Kerusauskaite

IFES

James Sparrow

Palladium

Ruta Nimkar

Meraki Labs

Dr Arina Kraijdan

IFES

Additional research and review inputs: Agata Slota (Palladium), Maja Wesolowska (Palladium), Leila Mulloy (Palladium), Lucinda Jones (Palladium), Witold Stupnicki (Palladium), Lisa Reppell (IFES), Fernanda Buriil (IFES), Vasu Mohan (IFES)



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

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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Table of Contents



Executive Summary.....	1
Economic concerns are a key driver of potential tensions	2
Political discourses, fuelled by disinformation and historic grievances, have the potential to stir tensions.....	3
Many of the challenges are rooted in longstanding operational issues.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Objectives	7
Approach, methodology, and structure of the report.....	7
Chapter 1. Country Overview	10
Chapter 2. Vulnerabilities to Exploitation and Discrimination	12
2.1 Overview	12
2.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits	13
2.3 Healthcare.....	17
2.4 Housing.....	19
2.5 Education	22
2.6 Employment and income	24
2.7 Community, social, and political life	26
Chapter 3. Misleading or Incendiary Discourses About Ukrainian Refugees	28
3.1 Overview	28
Actors spreading misleading or abusive messages	29
Types of messages and approaches	30
Modes of dissemination.....	31
Host community reactions (interpreters)	32
Risks.....	32
3.2 Top five discourses	33

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’.	33
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”’.	35
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’.	37
Discourse 4: ‘Economic challenges and the energy crisis are fuelled by hosting refugees (“they drive prices up”)’.	39
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’.	40
Chapter 4. Potential Tensions	42
4.1 Overview	42
4.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits	43
4.3 Healthcare	45
4.4 Housing	47
4.5 Education	49
4.6 Employment and Income	49
4.7 Community, social, and political life	52
Chapter 5. Programmatic Approach Recommendations	56
5.1 Overview	56
5.2 Cross-cutting programmatic approaches	56
5.3 Legal status, welfare, and benefits	60
5.4 Healthcare	61
5.5 Housing	61
5.6 Education	62
5.7 Employment and income	64
Employment support	64
Entrepreneurship support and work with businesses to boost productivity	66
5.8 Community, social, and political life	67
Annex 1. Acronyms and Abbreviations	73
Annex 2. Key Statistics	74
Annex 3. Statistics, surveys, and research reports	77

List of Tables



Table 1: Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable in Moldova	12
Table 2: Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in Moldova	30
Table 3: Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities.....	42
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	70

List of Figures



Figure 1: The IFES Chain of Harm Framework	28
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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.

¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 6 April 2023.

² UNHCR. 2023. [Operations Data Portal: Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 6 April 2023.

³ Euractiv. 2023. [Growing fear of Russia sparks unease in Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴ Tanas, Alexander. Reuters. 2022. [Thousands take part in anti-government protest in Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁵ Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: Ukraine is preparing to attack Transnistria, and an army of NATO tanks stationed on Romanian soil will head for Crimea](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

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 Chişinău 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 2022.⁶ 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.⁷

⁶ Statistica Moldovei. 2023. [Evolution of consumer prices in the Republic of Moldova in December 2022 and in 2022](#). Accessed 31 March 2023

⁷ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

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,

⁸ Brown, Erin Clare. 2022. The National News. [Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁹ Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. [From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

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 итогах социопроса 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ Strains on

¹¹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

¹² UNDP. 2020. [INEQUALITIES IN URBAN AND RURAL MOLDOVA: Beyond incomes and averages, looking into the future of inequalities](#), page 45. Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹³ WHO. 2022. [Health Systems in Action: Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁴ Gheorghe, Camelia and Kosma, K. 2022. [D4I's work in Moldova: Using data-informed decisions to protect at-risk children](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

housing have become increasingly acute, especially in the context of rising rents and costs of living.¹⁵ As an illustration, between 2013 and 2022, just 556 social houses were built in Moldova.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 focussing 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.¹⁷

¹⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁶ Infotag. 2022. [Ministry of infrastructure invites local authorities to report about social housing construction opportunities](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

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,¹⁸ with 106,634 registered in Moldova and a total of 798,223 recorded entries from Ukraine since the war began.¹⁹

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,²² 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

¹⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 6 April 2023.

¹⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Operations Data Portal: Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 6 April 2023.

²⁰ UNHCR. 2022. [Ukrainian refugees find warm welcome in neighbouring Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

²¹ Government of Moldova. 2023. [Government Decision on temporary protection for displaced people from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

²² Council of the European Union. 2022. [EU Imposes Sanctions on State-Owned Outlets RT/Russia Today and Sputnik's Broadcasting in the EU](#). Accessed 31 March 2023

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. 2022. [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war. Not Russia](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

²⁴ Chastand, Jean-Baptiste. Le Monde. 2022. [In the Czech Republic, the social crisis has awakened pro-Russian forces](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

²⁵ Euractiv. 2023. [Growing fear of Russia sparks unease in Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁶ Tanas, Alexander. Reuters. 2022. [Thousands take part in anti-government protest in Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁷ Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: Ukraine is preparing to attack Transnistria, and an army of NATO tanks stationed on Romanian soil will head for Crimea](#). Accessed 28 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 cohesion²⁸ 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 drawsey 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

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 framework²⁹ 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.³⁰ 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

²⁹ Reppell, Lisa, and Shein, E. IFES. 2019. [Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions](#)

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,³¹ 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.³² 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.³³

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 2022.³⁴ According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in autumn 2022, 44.1 percent of Ukrainians in Moldova came from the Odesa region.³⁵

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.³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ With support from international and national NGOs, the government created a dedicated platform, Dopomoga.gov.md,³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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

³¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Operations Data Portal: Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 6 April 2023.

³² Authors’ calculation, taking total population and refugee population figures from: UNHCR. 2023. [Operations Data Portal: Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 6 April 2023; and Statistica Moldovei, [Population](#). (2023). Accessed 29 March 2023.

³³ UNHCR. 2022. [Country Fact Sheet](#), [Country Profiles](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

³⁴ New York Times. 2022. [Russian Invasion of Ukraine: West condemns Russia’s strike on Odesa port](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

³⁵ IOM. 2022. [Ukraine Response 2022 – Moldova: Surveys with Ukrainian Refugees and Third-Country Nationals – Data collected from 6 September to 6 October 2022](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

³⁶ Reliefweb, 2023. [Ukraine Situation: The Republic of Moldova Operations Update \(January 2023\)](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

³⁷ Council of Europe. 2022. [Report of the fact-finding mission to the Republic of Moldova by Ms Leyla Kayacik](#). Accessed 5 April 2023.

³⁸ Republic of Moldova Parliament, [Law No. 212 of 06-24-2004 regarding the state of emergency, siege and war regime](#). Accessed 5 April 2023; UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 5 April 2023.

³⁹ DOPOMOGA. 2023. dopomoga.gov.md. Accessed 5 April 2023.

⁴⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Refugee Coordination Forum Structure](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

and social programmes; they mobilised quickly to support and fill gaps around government structures.⁴¹ 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.⁴² 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),⁴³ 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.

⁴¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

⁴² UNHCR (2022), [Ukrainian refugees find warm welcome in neighbouring Moldova](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

⁴³ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. 2023. [Consumer Price Indices](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

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

Journey stage	Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities, such as blindness or learning difficulties, are unable to produce the documentation required. • People who lack complete documentation from Ukraine or were not properly recorded on entry. • TCNs and Moldovan citizens who were long-term residents in Ukraine. • Unaccompanied children. • Single-parent families.
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with health conditions for which care is in limited supply or difficult to access. • People who do not speak Romanian. • People (especially children) with disabilities.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with young children or pets, which are perceived as risks to property. • People who are unable to pay high deposits for accommodation, including older people dependent on pensions. • Roma people. • People with disabilities that require specific accommodations. • People staying in rural areas where facilities to host them are limited. • People with informal rent contracts
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with children of pre-school age. • Roma people with limited educational background. • Families without legal status. • Children who are placed in the wrong grade level in the Moldovan school system.
Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with childcare responsibilities who require flexible working hours. • People based outside of Chişinău, especially in the southern regions. • People without informal networks in Moldova, who cannot find opportunities. • People with specialist occupations who cannot find suitable roles.
Community, social, and political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who require psychological support. • People in communities without inclusive decision-making processes that account for Ukrainians. • People in majority Russian-speaking or pro-Russian areas.

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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ This is followed by an in-person interview at the Inspectorate of Migration offices in Chişinău, 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.⁴⁷ 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).⁴⁸ Some initiatives supported by NGOs, international donors, and multilateral organisations help refugees in Moldova to access legal assistance to complete registration for public services.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

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.⁵² 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

⁴⁴ E-Governance Agency. 2023. [Refugees from Ukraine may receive their digital IDNP](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁴⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁶ General inspectorate for Migration. 2023. [Apply for Temporary protection](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁸ Visit Ukraine. 2023. [Moldova: Employment for Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁴⁹ UNDP. 2022. [Legal aid support to be provided for refugees from Ukraine, supported by Sweden and UNDP](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁵¹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁵² Chişinău 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 sites⁵⁹ 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 Odesa, makes short trips feasible. Workshop participants stated that this has the potential to increase vulnerability⁶³ 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

⁵³ World Health Organization. 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁴ World Health Organization. 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation – Moldova : Disability Task Force Meeting Minutes \(24 Feb 2023\)](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation – Moldova : Disability Task Force Meeting Minutes \(24 Feb 2023\)](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023; Academia Stefan cel mare. 2022. [Curs intensiv de studiere a limbajului mimico-gestual](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

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.

⁶² HIAS, VOICE. 2022. [Ukraine Assessment Report – Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁶³ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁶⁴ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁶⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁶⁷ Roma Support Group. 2022. [March 2022 Newsletter](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

obtain documentation in Ukraine, compounding challenges in accessing legal status in Moldova.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ For this reason Roma people have reported challenges in leaving Ukraine and accessing support in Moldova.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹

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.⁷² Data on the entry of transgender Ukrainians into Moldova is limited, and political rhetoric leverages transphobia and homophobia.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ UNHCR reported that LGBTQIA+ groups depend on NGOs to inform them of the rights and services available to them within Moldova.⁷⁶

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.⁷⁷ UNHCR estimated in February 2023 that 6,000 TCNs had remained in Moldova.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ The largest groups of TCNs entering Moldova from Ukraine since the escalation of hostilities have been from Russia, followed closely by Azerbaijan.⁸² Over 75 percent of TCNs entering Moldova come from Russia, Azerbaijan, Romania, Georgia, Belarus, Armenia, Turkey, or Israel.⁸³

⁶⁸ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

⁶⁹ Joles, Betsy. NPR. 2022. [Roma refugees who fled Ukraine to Moldova are now in limbo](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷⁰ Joles, Betsy. NPR. 2022. [Roma refugees who fled Ukraine to Moldova are now in limbo](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷¹ Roma Support Group. 2022. [March 2022 Newsletter](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

⁷² Lee, Julia. NBC News. 2022. ['Danger everywhere': War and transphobia create perfect storm for trans Ukrainians](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁷³ Open Democracy. 2017. [LGBT lives in Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

⁷⁴ Stiri MD. 2022. [Refugiabilor LGBT+ din Ucraina li se va acorda ajutor în Moldova](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷⁵ HIAS, VOICE. 2022. [Ukraine Assessment Report – Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷⁷ IOM. 2022. [Republic of Moldova — Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs, Round #03 \(09 March – 22 April 2022\)](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁸⁰ General Inspectorate for Migration. 2023. [Drepturi și obligații](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁸¹ IOM. 2022. [Republic of Moldova — Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs, Round #03 \(09 March – 22 April 2022\)](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁸² IOM. 2022. [Republic of Moldova — Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs, Round #03 \(09 March – 22 April 2022\)](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁸³ IOM. 2022. [Republic of Moldova — Displacement Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine and TCNs, Round #03 \(09 March – 22 April 2022\)](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

Unaccompanied children: Almost half of refugee arrivals in Moldova have been under the age of 18.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ In the first month following the invasion, authorities in Moldova identified 11 unaccompanied children who were subsequently placed in emergency care.⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹ A hotline was also established for unaccompanied children to seek support.⁹⁰ As of 30 March 2023, UNHCR advised young people to seek support from the Moldovan Red Cross or International Committee of the Red Cross.⁹¹ 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.⁹² Social assistance measures for families with children, as well as unaccompanied minors, are provided through the territorial social assistance structures.⁹³

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.⁹⁴ 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,⁹⁵ CARE estimated that they were 80 percent of refugees in Moldova in July 2022.⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷ In line with this requirement, the IOM states that a parent travelling alone with a minor children is required to have obtained power of attorney from the other parent to be eligible for its assistance to travel onwards from Moldova.⁹⁸ 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.

⁸⁴ UNHCR. 2023. [Country – Republic of Moldova \(26 March 2023\)](#)

⁸⁵ UNHCR. 2022. [Moldova Refugee Inter-Agency Child Protection Update #01 – March 2022 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁸⁶ European Parliament. 2021. [Vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated child migrants](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁸⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Moldova Refugee Inter-Agency Child Protection Update #01 – March 2022 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁸⁸ UNICEF. 2022. [Foster families in Moldova provide safety and protection for children fleeing conflict from Ukraine](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁸⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Arrival and assistance information for children and young people from Ukraine](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁹⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Arrival and assistance information for children and young people from Ukraine](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁹¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Arrival and assistance information for children and young people from Ukraine](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁹² Government of Moldova. 2023. [Government Decision on temporary protection for displaced people from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁹³ Government of Moldova. 2023. [Government Decision on temporary protection for displaced people from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁹⁴ Koshiw, Isobel. 2022. [Ukraine's military plans to limit free movement to make conscription easier](#). The Guardian. Accessed 23 March 2023; Visit Ukraine. 2022. [How to go abroad for a man during martial law: All possible legal options](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁹⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional protection profiling and monitoring: Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

⁹⁶ Care. 2022. [Rapid gender analysis brief Ukrainian refugees in Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

⁹⁷ DOPOMOGA.GOV.MD. 2023. [IOM – International Organization for Migration](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

⁹⁸ DOPOMOGA.GOV.MD. 2023. [IOM – International Organization for Migration](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

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.⁹⁹

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.¹⁰⁰ However, identification or documentary evidence of entry into Moldova is required at the point of service.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² Ukrainians have access to mental health and psychosocial support in line with Moldovan counterparts, although NGOs or private practitioners, such as Caritas,¹⁰³ and individual clinics, provide these services more widely.¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵

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.¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷

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.¹⁰⁸ 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. Moldova offers

⁹⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁰⁰ Treatment for Ukraine. 2023. [General Information and legal support within Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁰¹ United for Ukraine. 2023. [Healthcare: Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁰² United for Ukraine. 2023. [Healthcare: Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁰³ United for Ukraine. 2023. [Healthcare: Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Centrul comunitare de sanatate mintala botanica. 2023. [ASISTENȚĂ COMPLEXĂ GRATUITĂ ÎN SĂNĂTATE MINTALĂ PENTRU REFUGIATI ȘI STRĂINI](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Population Fund. 2022. [UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN MOLDOVA GUARANTEED ACCESS TO COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁰⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Treatment for Ukraine. 2023. [General Information and legal support within Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis drugs free of charge to high-risk individuals, including refugees.¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰

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.¹¹¹ Many specialist, healthcare-focused institutes and NGOs established outreach services for Ukrainians,¹¹² 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.¹¹³

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.¹¹⁴ However, 22 percent of Ukrainian households surveyed by UNHCR in February 2023 reported having a family member with a disability or serious medical condition.¹¹⁵ 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.¹¹⁶ 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.¹¹⁷ Families are eligible for cost-free support funded through the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and UNICEF,¹¹⁸ although some workshop participants were not fully aware of this.¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ 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.

¹⁰⁹ Treatment for Ukraine. 2023. [General Information and legal support within Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹⁰ UNAIDS. 2022. [Urgently needed HIV services are supporting Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹¹ Treatment for Ukraine. 2023. [General Information and legal support within Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹² Treatment for Ukraine. 2023. [General Information and legal support within Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹³ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹¹⁴ European Disability Forum. 2023. [High-level event with Moldovan partners to support Ukrainian refugees with disabilities](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹¹⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional protection profiling and monitoring: Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

¹¹⁶ WHO 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainian refugees with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 22 March 2023. <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/16-03-2023-enabling-support-for-ukrainian-refugees-with-disabilities-in-the-republic-of-moldova>

¹¹⁷ European Disability Forum. 2023. <https://www.edf-fehp.org/high-level-event-with-moldovan-partners-to-support-ukrainian-refugees-with-disabilities/>. Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹¹⁸ Government of Moldova. 2022. [Comisia pentru Situatii Excepționale a Republicii Moldova: DISPOZITIA](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

¹¹⁹ Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹²⁰ Government of Moldova. 2022. [Comisia pentru Situatii Excepționale a Republicii Moldova: DISPOZITIA](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

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.¹²¹ 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 2022.¹²² 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 Chişinău; every other district has three or fewer centres (most have only one).¹²³ The International Labour Organisation reported that trade unions in Moldova have made their premises available to refugee groups as accommodation.¹²⁴ 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.¹²⁵

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 percent¹²⁶ withholding tax applied to rent, preferring informal arrangements.¹²⁷ 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 increased¹²⁸ 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 situation¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ 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.

¹²¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring: Update as of 27.12.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹²² UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Monthly Needs Monitoring: Update as of 27.02.2023 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹²³ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Monthly Needs Monitoring: Update as of 27.02.2023 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹²⁴ International Labour Organisation. 2022. [Moldova trade unions help Ukrainian refugees to help themselves](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹²⁵ People in Need. 2023. [ONE YEAR SINCE THE INVASION: WE ARE HELPING PEOPLE IN MOLDOVA SUPPORT REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹²⁶ PWC. 2023. [Worldwide Tax Summaries: Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹²⁷ Chişinău research workshop 1 March 2023.

¹²⁸ TRM.MD. 2022. [On the rental market in Chişinău, prices have exploded](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹²⁹ Global Property Guide (2019). [Income tax in Moldova](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

¹³⁰ Chişinău 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.¹³¹ In addition, they noted that rents have increased rapidly since the escalation of the war. One Moldovan participant said rent in Chişinău went from €150 to €250 per month overnight as soon as it became clear that refugees would be arriving.¹³² Moldova 1 echoed this assertion, reporting that rent for one-room apartments increased by up to 40 percent between February and August 2022.¹³³ In October 2022, Gazprom cut gas exports to Moldova, catalysing a 73 percent drop in power production from Moldova's Cuciurgan power plant by.¹³⁴ This left consumers facing price increases of up to 200 percent and average Moldovans spending up to 75 percent of income on energy utilities.¹³⁵

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.¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷

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.¹³⁸ 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.¹³⁹ UNHCR reported the same findings.¹⁴⁰ RACs typically do not accept pets, although there are exceptions.¹⁴¹

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',¹⁴² 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

¹³¹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹³² Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹³³ TRM.MD. 2022. [On the rental market in Chisinau, prices have exploded](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹³⁴ St. Leger, Alexander. 2022. [Russia's Ukraine invasion is fueling an energy crisis in neighboring Moldova](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹³⁵ St. Leger, Alexander. 2022. [Russia's Ukraine invasion is fueling an energy crisis in neighboring Moldova](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹³⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹³⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹³⁸ IFAW. 2022. [Helpful information for people fleeing Ukraine with their pets](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹³⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁴⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁴¹ Peace Winds. 2022. [\[Ukraine\] RAC \(Refugee Accommodation Center\) Support Activities Carry on to Their Sixth Month](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁴² Avocatul Poporului, Ombudsman. 2022. [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#). Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor. Accessed 28 March 2023.

stereotypes about them'.¹⁴³ 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.¹⁴⁴ 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.¹⁴⁵

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.¹⁴⁶ The Ombudsman's report also notes requests by Roma families to be accommodated together, sometimes in numbers that a site cannot accommodate.¹⁴⁷ 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.¹⁴⁸ Others, however, disputed this point, raising concerns that this policy amounts to discrimination and citing the Ombudsman's report.¹⁴⁹ 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.¹⁵⁰ 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.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵² 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.¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴³ Avocatul Poporului, Ombudsman. 2022. [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#). Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor. Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch. 2022. [Moldova: Romani Refugees from Ukraine Face Segregation](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁴⁵ Roma Support Group. 2022. [March 2022 Newsletter](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁴⁶ Joles, Betsy. NPR. 2022. [Roma refugees who fled Ukraine to Moldova are now in limbo](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁴⁷ Avocatul Poporului, Ombudsman. 2022. [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#). Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor. Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁴⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

¹⁴⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

¹⁵⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring; Update as of 27.12.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹⁵¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring; Update as of 27.12.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

¹⁵² WHO. 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁵³ WHO. 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁵⁴ WHO. 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 23 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.¹⁵⁵ 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.¹⁵⁶ However, this work can cost up to €4000 per house, which is not considered cost-effective for the number of people supported.¹⁵⁷ 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.¹⁵⁸ Caregivers are required to register their children with the local educational division or directly with an institution in order for children to attend school.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ 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.¹⁶¹ 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).¹⁶² 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.¹⁶³ However, workshop participants raised concerns that free or affordable extracurricular activities for Ukrainian children are limited.¹⁶⁴ 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.¹⁶⁵

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 Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁵⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁵⁸ Moldpres. 2023. [Over 1,600 Ukrainian children study in schools in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁵⁹ ISSA. 2022. [Non-formal education for refugee children in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁶⁰ UNESCO. 2023. [Moldova's education responses to the influx of Ukrainian students](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁶¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁶² REACH UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment: Key Findings](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

¹⁶³ Ministry of Education of Moldova. 2022. [Anatolie Topală: MEC asigură drepturile copiilor din familiile refugiaților la educație](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

¹⁶⁴ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

¹⁶⁵ Chişinău 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.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷ UNHCR also raised language concerns that affect young children, flagging that these impede building relationships between Ukrainian and Moldovan young people.¹⁶⁸

Members of the Roma community with limited educational experience: Before the escalation of the war, Roma in Ukraine faced a lack of access to education¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰ 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.¹⁷¹ 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.¹⁷² The Moldovan government has been accused of replicating discrimination against Roma through the provision of segregated services.¹⁷³

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,¹⁷⁴ although reports also suggest that many Ukrainian caregivers keep their children in online Ukrainian schools.¹⁷⁵ 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.¹⁷⁶ 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.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁶ UNDP. 2020. [inequalities in Urban and Rural Moldova: Beyond incomes and averages, looking into the future of inequalities](#). Page 45. Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁶⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁶⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch. 2022. [Moldova: Romani Refugees from Ukraine Face Segregation](#). Accessed 23 March 2023

¹⁷⁰ Roma Support Group. 2022. [March 2022 Newsletter](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁷¹ Roma Support Group. 2022. [March 2022 Newsletter](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁷² UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch. 2022. [Moldova: Romani Refugees from Ukraine Face Segregation](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁷⁴ UNHCR. 2022. [Moldova: Inter-agency Operational Update](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁷⁵ Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group. 2022. [Education Rapid Needs Assessment](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁷⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁷⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

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.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ 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,¹⁸⁰ manual trades (plumbing, electricity, and others), and light-skilled work including cloth cutting and clothing manufacturing.¹⁸¹ 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.¹⁸² 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;¹⁸³ UNDP reported in May 2022 that over 2,400 Ukrainian refugees had found employment in Moldova.¹⁸⁴

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 2023.¹⁸⁵ Moldova's minimum wage is MDL 4,000 per month (approximately £175 at the time of writing).¹⁸⁶ 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.¹⁸⁷ 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.¹⁸⁸

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.¹⁸⁹ 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

¹⁷⁸ In Moldova, Ukrainian identification, written in Cyrillic script, is accepted, which is not universal in other European countries. Visit Ukraine. 2023. [Moldova: Employment for Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 23 March 2023

¹⁷⁹ Government of Moldova. 2023. [Работа](#). Accessed 6 April 2023.

¹⁸⁰ Stimson, Brie. Fox News. 2022. [Moldova welcomes Ukrainian refugees, offers them jobs amid labor shortage](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹⁸¹ Visit Ukraine. 2023. [Moldova: Employment for Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹⁸² UNDP. 2022. [Refugees from Ukraine start from scratch on the Moldovan job market](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹⁸³ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional protection profiling and monitoring](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁸⁴ UNDP in Moldova. 2022. [Refugees from Ukraine start from scratch on the Moldovan job market](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁸⁵ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Oanda. 20 March 2023. <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/?from=MDL&to=GBP&amount=4000>

¹⁸⁷ International Labour Organisation. 2022. [Turning Moldova "white" – The Moldovan government takes bold steps to encourage the formalization of employment](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹⁸⁸ Reuters. 2023. [Moldova's y/y consumer price inflation slows to 27.31% in January](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁸⁹ UN Women. 2022. [Ana Afanasova: At iHUB, I have a comfortable workplace and valuable communication with my co-workers](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

access employment due to a lack of social support networks.¹⁹⁰ 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 Chişinău, especially in the southern regions: Unemployment rates and types of work in Chişinău and the rest of Moldova vary. Agricultural work is disproportionately undeclared in Moldova, unlike other work,¹⁹¹ and infrastructure challenges relating to roads and electricity impacts on the ability of rural regions to develop economically.¹⁹² A significant brain drain from rural regions to the capital and to other countries limits economic growth and opportunities in rural regions.¹⁹³ 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 2022.¹⁹⁴ 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.¹⁹⁵

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.¹⁹⁶ Participants from Moldova indicated that doing so is particularly difficult if a role requires experience (for example in project management).¹⁹⁷ Participants reported that they typically relied on their informal networks since official channels did not provide matches.¹⁹⁸ 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.¹⁹⁹ 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.²⁰⁰ 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.²⁰¹

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

¹⁹⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁹¹ International Labour Organisation. 2022. [Turning Moldova "white" – The Moldovan government takes bold steps to encourage the formalization of employment](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

¹⁹² World Bank. 2020. [Local roads bring greater connectivity and support to rural communities in Moldova](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

¹⁹³ Chemonics International. 2023. [Turning Moldova's Brain Drain into Brain Gain](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

¹⁹⁴ IFAD. 2022. [What is life like for farmers on Moldova's border with Ukraine?](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

¹⁹⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

¹⁹⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁹⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁹⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

¹⁹⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

²⁰⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

²⁰¹ Moldpres. 2021. [Moldova, Ukraine to sign agreement on mutual recognition of education documents](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

affects financial security and that the per-day rate is often very low.²⁰² Freelancing and remote work are new to Moldova. Only in 2020 did tax legislation add a freelance category,²⁰³ and the number of freelancers is as low as 0.66 per capita.²⁰⁴

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,²⁰⁵ 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.²⁰⁶ 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,²⁰⁷ with exposure to pro-Russian messaging, including disinformation.²⁰⁸ 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.²⁰⁹

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.²¹⁰ Stigma around mental health in both Moldova²¹¹ and Ukraine prevents many from seeking help.²¹² These problems are compounded by long waiting lists, language barriers, and a lack of provisions for children.²¹³ 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,²¹⁴ and the WHO has observed that they will be particularly stark in children with conditions such as autism.²¹⁵ Women's organisations play a crucial role in connecting Ukrainian

²⁰² Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

²⁰³ Orbitax. 2020. [Moldova Clarifies Taxation of Individual Freelancers — Orbitax Tax News & Alerts](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

²⁰⁴ ETF. 2021. [NEW FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES: PLATFORM WORK – MOLDOVA: Country profile](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

²⁰⁵ Shupac, Marina. 2017. [LGBT Lives in Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁰⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

²⁰⁷ Broadcasting Board of Governors. 2016. [Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁰⁸ Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. [From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda](#). Accessed 26 March 2023; EU vs Disinfo. 2023. [A Russian psychological operation pressures Moldova](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

²⁰⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

²¹⁰ WHO. 2023. [Ukrainian refugees granted mental health and psychosocial support in Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

²¹¹ de Vetten-McMahon, Marjonke, Shields-Zeeman, L. S., Petrea, I., and N. S. Klazinga. 2019. [Assessing the need for a mental health services reform in Moldova: a situation analysis](#). *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 13, 45.

²¹² Romaniuk Piotr, and Semigina, T. *Global Health*. 2018. [Ukrainian health care system and its chances for successful transition from Soviet legacies](#). 2018 Nov 23;14(1):116. doi: 10.1186/s12992-018-0439-5. PMID: 30470237; PMCID: PMC6260664.

²¹³ World Health Organization. 2023. [Ukrainian refugees granted mental health and psychosocial support in Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

²¹⁴ World Vision International. 2022. [No Peace of Mind](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

²¹⁵ World Health Organization. 2023. [Enabling support for Ukrainian refugees with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 22 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 Marioarei.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

²¹⁶ World Vision International. 2023. [Ukrainian mothers find strength from fellow women in Moldova's refugee center](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

²¹⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Moldovan GBV shelter offers safety and a community for refugees from Ukraine](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²¹⁸ Refugees International. 2022. [Preparing for the Unpredictable: Ensuring the Protection and Inclusion of Refugees from Ukraine in Romania and Moldova](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

²¹⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

²²⁰ Broadcasting Board of Governors. 2016. [Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²²¹ Minority Rights Group International. 2018. [Moldova: Ukrainians](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²²² Chapple, Amos. Radio Free Liberty Europe. 2023. [In Moldova's pro-Russian Gagauzia region, old loyalties die hard](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²²³ Gagauzyeri.com. 2023. [Подробно об итогах соцопроса в Гагаузии](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²²⁴ Gagauzyeri.com. 2023. [Подробно об итогах соцопроса в Гагаузии](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²²⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

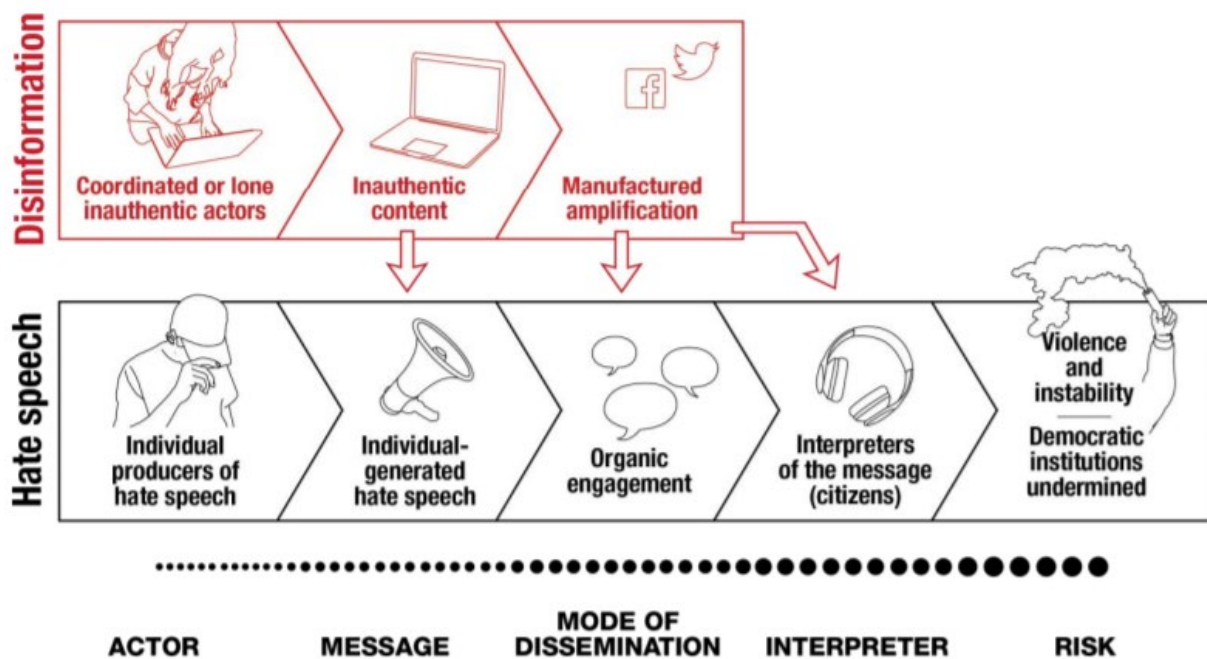
²²⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

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 framework²²⁷ 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.

²²⁷ [Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions](#). (2019).

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.

²²⁸ Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. [From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²²⁹ Cosoi, Petru. 2022. [Refugiați ucraineni „OBRAZNICI”! Ion Ceban: Ne putem trezi cu furturi, tâlhării, abuzuri și vandalism](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²³⁰ Media Forward. 2022. [The society wide battle against disinformation in Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²³¹ Government Communication Service. 2021. [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²³² International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; and Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. 2023. [Raport „Granice nienawiści”](#), page 91. Accessed 31 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

Journey stage	Misleading or Incendiary Discourses about Ukrainian Refugees
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians create burdens on the housing system. Refugees have unfair access to housing.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians create burdens on the school and kindergarten system; they take locals' places. Ukrainian students are not making efforts at school.
Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

²³³ Tyimińska, Ada. Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka. 2022. [Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej \(2021/2022\)](#).

- Historic tensions (Ukraine's role in the Transnistrian conflict in 1992). 'If Ukrainians didn't help us, why should we help now?'
- Refugees are 'not Moldova's responsibility'.
- Negative perceptions of refugees caused by political views related to Russia.
- Local men will be required to serve in the military if support to Ukraine and Ukrainians continues.
- Refugees are a crime risk and a security threat, prone to criminality, engage in anti-social behaviour, and organise criminal activity.

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.²³⁴ 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.²³⁵ Workshop participants also identified sites such as OK.Ru that are popular with first-language Russian speakers as modes of dissemination.²³⁶ The Chişinău 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.²³⁷
- **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 rhetoric²³⁸ and is often hostile to Ukraine.²³⁹ 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.²⁴⁰ The ban applies to analysis from countries that have not ratified the Convention on Transfrontier Television.²⁴¹ Since the early stages of the war, the Moldovan Audiovisual Council has monitored coverage of the conflict and the refugee situation in Moldova²⁴² and levied 55 fines on television stations for misleading, partisan, and incorrect coverage.²⁴³
- **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

²³⁴ Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. [From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

²³⁵ Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²³⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²³⁷ Institutul de politici publice. 2023. [Russian Propaganda on „ODNOKLASSNIKI”: The case of Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²³⁸ Necşuştu, Mădălin. 2022. [Between anti-Ukrainian propaganda and showbiz: how Russia and its local allies try to maintain their media domination in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²³⁹ Bond, Shannon. NPR. 2023. [From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda](#).

²⁴⁰ Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: The government in Chişinău bans Russian press at the behest of the West](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁴¹ Necşuştu, Mădălin. 2022. [NEWS: Moldova Bans Russian Media to Counter Propaganda Over Ukraine](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁴² Audiovisual Council of Moldova. 2022. [Decizii no.98](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁴³ Audiovisual Council of Moldova. 2023. [Raport de activitate CA](#). Accessed 31 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.²⁴⁴

- **Word of mouth:** One-on-one discussion emerged repeatedly in the workshop as a theme, whether with harmful intent or not.²⁴⁵

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.²⁴⁶ 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.²⁴⁷ 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.²⁴⁸ 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

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Cosoi, Petru. 2022. [Refugiați ucraineni „OBRAZNICI”! Ion Ceban: Ne putem trezi cu furturi, tâlhării, abuzuri și vandalism](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Stopfals.md. 2022. [Un moderator de petreceri din Chișinău publică video-uri cu mesaje false despre refugiații ucraineni](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁴⁵ Chișinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

²⁴⁶ Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁴⁷ Gagauzyeri.com. 2023. [Подрбно об умогах соцопроса в Гагаузуу](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁴⁸ Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

generate negative discourses about hospitality toward refugees. Highly politicised discourses are present on social media, often targeting government figures.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.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.

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.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.²⁵²

3.2 Top five discourses

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

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.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.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁵⁰ Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: The government in Chișinău bans Russian press at the behest of the West](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁵¹ Moonshot. 2019. [Redirect Method Canada Final Report](#). Accessed 5 April 2023.

²⁵² Pennycook, Gordon. McPhetres, J., Zhang, Y., Lu, J. G., and Rand, D. G. 2020. [Fighting COVID-19 misinformation on social media: Experimental evidence for a scalable accuracy-nudge intervention](#). *Psychological Science*, 31, 770–780.

²⁵³ Brown, Erin Clare. 2022. The National News. [Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁵⁴ Brown, Erin Clare. 2022. The National News. [Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

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.²⁵⁵ [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 Chişinău at the start of the conflict. Participants also claimed to have seen cars with Ukrainian license plates, spreading the narrative further.²⁵⁶ 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 Chişinău with little concern for the people, city, and community they have joined.²⁵⁷ 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.²⁵⁸

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*.²⁵⁹

Interpreter: Workshop participants reported that vulnerable groups in Moldova who need support are most susceptible to this type of narrative.²⁶⁰ 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.²⁶¹ 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](#).²⁶² This is especially effective at present, given that some macroeconomic indicators

²⁵⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁵⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁵⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁵⁸ Brown, Erin Clare. 2022. The National News. [Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁵⁹ Prima Sursa. 2022. [Prima Sursa Telegram Post](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁶⁰ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

²⁶¹ Brown, Erin Clare. 2022. The National News. [Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁶² Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

for Moldova are worse than for Ukraine—for example, year-on-year inflation in Moldova reached 30.24 percent in December 2023²⁶³ compared to Ukraine’s seven-year-peak in the same month at 26.6 percent.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.²⁶⁵ Structural barriers also prevent Ukrainians from taking employment, which may contribute to perceptions that they treat their displacement as a holiday.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

²⁶³ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁶⁴ Trading Economics. 2023. [Ukraine Inflation Rate](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁶⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation – Moldova: REACH – the impact of cost-of-living changes on Moldovans and refugee populations](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁶⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation – Moldova: REACH – the impact of cost-of-living changes on Moldovans and refugee populations](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

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 shared²⁶⁷ and to build on the target audience's values.²⁶⁸

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.²⁶⁹

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.²⁷⁰ 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.²⁷¹

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'.²⁷² Therefore, media

²⁶⁷ Brady, W. J., Gantman, A. P., and Van Bavel, J. J. 2020. *Attentional capture helps explain why moral and emotional content go viral*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 149, 746–756.

²⁶⁸ Feinberg, M., Willer, R. 2015. *From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?* *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(12), 1665–1681.

²⁶⁹ Fazio, L. K., Brashier, N. M., Payne, B. K., and Marsh, E. J. 2015. *Knowledge does not protect against illusory truth*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(5), 993–1002.

²⁷⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁷¹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁷² STĚM. 2019. *Nová studie zkoumá vztah mediální gramotnosti, důvěry v media a náchylnosti k dezinformacím*. Accessed 20 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.²⁷³ 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).²⁷⁴ 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.²⁷⁵

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 unequitable 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.²⁷⁶ 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,²⁷⁷ 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.²⁷⁸

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

²⁷³ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁷⁴ REACH. 2023. *Moldova: Area-based assessment (ABA): Chişinău and Stefan Voda, January 2023*. Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁷⁵ REACH. 2023. *Moldova: Area-based assessment (ABA): Chişinău and Stefan Voda, January 2023*. Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁷⁶ World Bank. 2022. *The World Bank in Moldova*. Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁷⁷ Broadcasting Board of Governors. 2016. *Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova*. Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁷⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

Ukrainians are ungrateful or unwelcome guests²⁷⁹ 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:

Counternarratives 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

²⁷⁹ Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁸⁰ Stopfals.md. 2022. [Un moderator de petreceri din Chișinău publică video-uri cu mesaje false despre refugiații ucraineni](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁸¹ Chișinău research workshops 1–2 March 2023.

²⁸² Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁸³ Chișinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

²⁸⁴ Vasilache, Mariana. 2022. [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁸⁵ Media Forward. 2022. [The society wide battle against disinformation in Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cosoi, Petru. 2022. [Refugiați ucraineni „OBRAZNICI”! Ion Ceban: Ne putem trezi cu furturi, tâlhării, abuzuri și vandalism](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁸⁶ Barbăroșie, Liliana. 2022. [Igor Dodon, pentru repatrierea refugiaților care „se poartă urât” | Propunerea, considerată ilegală](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

Underlying challenges: This discourse may be based on or exacerbated by underlying challenges, such as disparity in services received by Moldovans²⁸⁷ 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.²⁸⁸ 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.²⁸⁹ 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.²⁹⁰ 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.²⁹¹

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.²⁹² 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,²⁹³ recognising that the relative value of accommodation was increasing. Veridica also

²⁸⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁸⁸ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; Trading Economics. 2023. [Ukraine Inflation Rate](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁸⁹ St. Leger, Alexander. 2022. Atlantic Council. [Russia’s Ukraine invasion is fueling an energy crisis in neighboring Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁹⁰ Gherman, Marin. 2023. [WAR PROPAGANDA: While Ukrainians are living in cold and darkness, Kyiv is selling electricity to the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁹¹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁹² TRM. 2022. [On the rental market in Chişinău, prices have exploded](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁹³ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

highlights war fatigue amongst Ukrainians, making the population more susceptible to disinformation related to price hikes and the economic crisis.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.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.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,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 2022.²⁹⁸ Simultaneously increasing prices

²⁹⁴ Gherman, Marin. 2023. [How Russian propaganda exploits Ukraine's war fatigue](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

²⁹⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁹⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

²⁹⁷ OECD. 2023. [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁹⁸ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

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.²⁹⁹ 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.³⁰⁰

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.

²⁹⁹ European Training Foundation. 2018. [Moldova: Education, Training and Employment Developments, 2021](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁰⁰ Chişinău 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

Journey stage	Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims that Ukrainian refugees abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get money). • 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 • Newly created infrastructure is parallel to state institutions • Differences in welcome and support to refugee or migrant groups not from Ukraine. • Ukrainian men are allegedly being smuggled across borders; they take low-paid positions and work illegally.
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pressures on a health system which already experiences challenges (including long waiting times). • Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare. • Pressures on social services.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pressures on housing and the rising cost of housing (also in the context of lack of social housing). • More support provided to Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups, such as better housing options. • Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories, creating pressures on surrounding communities. • Ukrainian refugees, and Roma in particular, are seen as undesirable tenants. • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova leads to lack of commitment to long-term contracts.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration issues in schools and lack of specialised programmes result in negative social experiences (such as Ukrainian children experiencing bullying, especially in Russian schools).

Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in host country leads to poor school attendance and high dropout rates. • High inflation places pressure on host and refugee communities. • Rising inequalities. • Ukrainians don't engage in the labour market or start businesses. • Tensions over distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged local populations and Ukrainians, including poverty amongst local populations. • Reductions in financial assistance to refugees could lead to more refugees experiencing poverty and the state (or other organisations) might need to step in to support the vulnerable. • High and rising unemployment strains the host community and Ukrainian refugees and could lead to scapegoating of refugees. • Funds received by NGOs is earmarked for Ukrainians but can't be used for local populations. • Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities; communication about the amount and sources of support is poor. • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in host country leads to low job retention amongst refugees. • Brain drain from the public sector to multilaterals and INGOs.
Community, social, and political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xenophobia and discrimination. • Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties. • Lack of integration of Ukrainian refugees into host society. • Language barriers; not learning local language (lack of opportunity or difficulty of language). • Tensions between Ukrainians from eastern and western regions and pre- and post-invasion arrivals. • Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences. • Protracted crisis in Transnistria. • Fear of insecurity and war; refugees seen as making the situation worse. • Tensions between Ukrainians and the host community about who started, is responsible for, or should de-escalate the war, and how, leading to tensions between host communities and refugees. • Perceived human rights and freedom of speech violations as a result of banning Russian media due to disinformation. • Moldovan territories of North Bucovina and South Basarabia transferred to Soviet Ukraine in 1940. • Locals' fatigue with supporting refugees. • Expectation of more gratitude from refugees.

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,

³⁰¹ IOM. 2023. [Surveys with Ukrainian and third-country nationals crossing to Ukraine: Observed trends in 2022](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁰² IOM. 2023. [Surveys with Ukrainian and third-country nationals crossing to Ukraine: Observed trends in 2022](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁰³ IOM. 2023. [Surveys with Ukrainian and third-country nationals crossing to Ukraine: Observed trends in 2022](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

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.³⁰⁴ 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,³⁰⁵ 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,³⁰⁶ 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.³⁰⁷

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.³⁰⁸

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.³⁰⁹ 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.³¹⁰ 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.³¹¹ 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.³¹² 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 Moldova³¹³—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.³¹⁴ The

³⁰⁴ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁰⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁰⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁰⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁰⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁰⁹ National Congress of Ukrainians in Moldova. 2023. [Quick assessment on the implementation of the temporary protection in Moldova: Key findings and recommendation](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³¹⁰ UNHCR. 2022. [Ukraine Situation – Moldova : Protection Working Group – The Implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive – Six Months On](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³¹¹ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³¹² Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³¹³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2023. [Financial Tracking Service Moldova](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

³¹⁴ World Bank. 2023. [World Bank Open Data Set](#). Accessed 31 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.³¹⁵ 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.³¹⁶ 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.³¹⁷ Moldova's Ombudsman stated that RACs' non-discrimination toward ethnic minorities was 'problematic from the outset'.³¹⁸ 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.³¹⁹ 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.³²⁰

Ukrainian men are being smuggled³²¹ 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.³²² In workshops in Chişinău, 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.³²³ 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.³²⁴ Ukrainian participants in the workshops also reported feeling that they were a burden to doctors.³²⁵ In the early stages of the war, Moldova's health

³¹⁵ Reliefweb. 2022. [WFP Moldova: Shock Responsive Social Protection – Cash Assistance to Vulnerable Moldovans](#).

³¹⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³¹⁷ Womack, Helen. 2021. UNHCR. [Afghan refugee at the cutting edge in Chişinău with a job at a barber's](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³¹⁸ Avocatul Poporului, Ombudsman. 2022. [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#). Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor, pages 18–19. Accessed 28 March 2023.

³¹⁹ Popenko, Viola. 2022. [European Roma Rights Centre. Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³²⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³²¹ Please note that smuggling (facilitating undocumented passage through international borders) does not imply trafficking (which also entails the use of violence, coercion or deception—for both profit and exploitation). Please see the United Nations protocols for specific definitions: United Nations. 2000. ["Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime"](#); United Nations. 2000. ["Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime"](#); Triandafyllidou, A., and Thanos Maroukis. Springer. 2012. *Migrant Smuggling: Irregular Migration from Asia and Africa to Europe*, p. 22.

³²² Tonjdo, Lorenzo. 2022. The Guardian. [Ukraine urged to take 'humane' approach as men try to flee war](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³²³ Gettleman, Jeffrey, and Pronczuk, M. 2022. The New York Times. [Ukraine's Draft dodgers face quilt, shame, and reproach](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³²⁴ WHO. 2022. [Health Systems in Action: Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³²⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

minister stated that the refugee crisis had placed the country's health system under 'very big pressure',³²⁶ 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.³²⁷ Under the TP directive, full access to emergency and general healthcare has been extended to all Ukrainian refugees in Moldova³²⁸ (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.³²⁹ Female survivors of gender-based violence were particularly likely to face challenges in accessing healthcare, according to UNHCR.³³⁰ International aid in the health sector has generally focused on border points and new arrivals, with an assumption that the strong and inclusive TP system will support effective healthcare provision despite acknowledgement that the system is stretched.³³¹ 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.³³² Recent structural reforms, scarce resources, and high out-migration and family separation have all placed pressure on Moldova's social services.³³³ 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.³³⁴ The WHO has raised concerns about language barriers, social stigma, and a lack of provision for children in Moldova's mental health services.³³⁵

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.³³⁶

³²⁶ Reuters. 2022. [Refugee crisis strains Moldova's healthcare system, minister says](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³²⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³²⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³²⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³³⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Refugee Response Plan](#).

³³¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Refugee Response Plan](#).

³³² Moldovan, V. Rotari, E. Tarna, V. & Zagorodniuc, A. 2021. [Social Work in Moldova](#). In: Encyclopedia of Social Work. Accessed 28 March 2023.

³³³ Gheorghe, Camelia and Kosma, K. 2022. [D4I's work in Moldova: Using data-informed decisions to protect at-risk children](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³³⁴ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³³⁵ WHO. 2023. [Ukrainian refugees granted mental health and psychosocial support in Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³³⁶ Chişinău 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 misrepresented 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.³³⁷ 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.³³⁸ 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.³³⁹ Ukrainians have been eligible for support of up to MDL 2,200 per person per month to assist with housing and other needs,³⁴⁰ along with access to RACs and private apartments in the short term through a partnership between IOM and Airbnb.³⁴¹ 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.³⁴² 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.³⁴³ As of February 2023, all of Moldova's RACs were operating within capacity, with the exception of the centre in Besarabasca. By late February, 70 percent of all RAC spaces were occupied.³⁴⁴ Notably, the Besarabasca RAC was operating at 70 percent capacity in December 2022, and the Drochia RAC was the only one operating over capacity.³⁴⁵ This suggests that fluctuations in occupancy occur in the short term but that the system's capacity was sufficient

³³⁷ Strajescu, Carolina. 2022. [On the rental market in Chişinău, prices have exploded](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³³⁸ Infotag. 2022. [Ministry of infrastructure invites local authorities to report about social housing construction opportunities](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³³⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁴⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Cash assistance for refugees in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁴¹ IOM. 2022. [IOM and Airbnb: Partnership in Action in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁴² Popenko, Viola. 2022. European Roma Rights Centre. [Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁴³ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³⁴⁴ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Monthly Update as of 27.02.2023](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁴⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Monthly Update as of 27.12.2022](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

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.³⁴⁶ 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.³⁴⁷ Ukrainians recounted difficulties renting with young children or pets due to higher perceived risks of property damage³⁴⁸ 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.³⁴⁹

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.³⁵⁰ 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.³⁵¹

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.³⁵² This uncertainty also contributed to Ukrainians’ reluctance to sign contracts.³⁵³

‘No one thought the war would last this long’ was repeated during the workshops in Chişinău³⁵⁴ 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.³⁵⁵

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

³⁴⁶ Oxfam. 2022. [Seeking Safety: Roma Refugees in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁴⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁴⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁴⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023

³⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch. 2022. [Moldova: Romani refugees from Ukraine face segregation](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; Popenko, Viola. 2022. European Roma Rights Centre. [Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; [Roma Support Group](#). Accessed 4 April 2023; [European Roma Rights Centre](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁵¹ Oxfam. 2022. [Seeking Safety: Roma Refugees in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁵² Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁵³ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁵⁴ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁵⁵ Chişinău 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 2023.³⁵⁶ In workshops in Chişinău, participants raised concerns that Ukrainian children integrated into the Russian-language stream of Moldovan education were subject to bullying and intimidation by classmates.³⁵⁷

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.³⁵⁸

UNHCR have reported similar concerns around bullying and urged the government to support the sensitisation of teachers to bullying concerns arising from refugees' experiences.³⁵⁹ 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.³⁶⁰ Participants in the project's research workshops raised concerns that in the long term, the Ukrainian state might not recognise certifications from Moldovan schools.³⁶¹ 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 2023.³⁶² The National Bureau of Statistics expects inflation to fall in 2023 to an annual average at 13.7 percent.³⁶³ Concurrently, a reduction in Russian gas exports catalysed a spike in energy prices, and consumers faced increases of up to 200 percent in 2022.³⁶⁴ 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.³⁶⁵ 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.³⁶⁶ 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.

³⁵⁶ Moldpres. 2023. [Over 1,600 Ukrainian children study in schools in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁵⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁵⁸ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³⁵⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁶⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁶¹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁶² Reuters. 2023. [Moldova's y/y consumer price inflation slows to 27.31% in January](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁶³ Reuters. 2023. [Moldova's y/y consumer price inflation slows to 27.31% in January](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁶⁴ St. Leger, Alexander. 2022. Atlantic Council. [Russia's Ukraine invasion is fueling an energy crisis in neighboring Moldova](#).

Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁶⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁶⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

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.³⁶⁷ 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.³⁶⁸ 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.³⁶⁹ 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,³⁷⁰ and economic challenges existed before the refugee crisis, especially in rural and agricultural regions.³⁷¹

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.³⁷² 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.³⁷³ 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.³⁷⁴ 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.

³⁶⁸ OECD. 2023. [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁶⁹ European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. 2023. [EBRD Business Guide](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁷⁰ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁷¹ World Bank. 2020. [Local roads bring greater connectivity and support to rural communities in Moldova](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

³⁷² Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³⁷³ UNHCR. 2023. [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 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 Chişinău 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 Chişinău 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

³⁷⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁷⁶ Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova. 2023. [One year of war in Ukraine. How did the Republic of Moldova deal with the challenges generated by Russia's invasion of the neighboring country?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁷⁷ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁷⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁷⁹ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³⁸⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁸¹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁸² Chişinău 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.³⁸³ 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.³⁸⁴ 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.³⁸⁵ 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.³⁸⁶

Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties: Potential tensions arising via political discourses featured heavily in the workshops in Chişinău. Participants saw protests against the western-leaning government as inherently pro-Russian,³⁸⁷ and some Ukrainian participants shared that the protests frightened them or their children.³⁸⁸ Ukrainian and Moldovan participants alike repeated claims that people were paid to attend the events.³⁸⁹ 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.³⁹⁰ They also commented that this activity could continue or worsen if the Moldovan economy continues to struggle.³⁹¹ 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.³⁹² Initiatives supported by multilaterals that address cultural enrichment include a UNICEF-sponsored children’s

³⁸³ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁸⁴ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁸⁵ Refugees International. 2022. [Preparing for the Unpredictable: Ensuring the protection of refugees from Ukraine in Romania and Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁸⁶ Avocatul Populului, Ombudsman. 2022. [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#). Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor, pp. 18–19. Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁸⁷ Erizanu, Paula. 2023. The Guardian. [Moldova police arrest members of Russian-backed network over unrest plot](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁸⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁸⁹ Chişinău research workshops, 1–2 March 2023.

³⁹⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁹¹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

³⁹² Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

choir in Chişinău³⁹³ 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,⁴⁰⁰ 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 Ukraine⁴⁰³ and Moldova.⁴⁰⁴ Mental health was not a prominent topic in the Chişinău 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

³⁹³ UNICEF. 2022. [Two new friends – one from Ukraine, the other from Moldova – are united by music](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹⁴ World Vision. 2022. [Ukrainian mothers find strength from fellow women in Moldova's refugee center](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁹⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁹⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

³⁹⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

³⁹⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁰ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

⁴⁰¹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

⁴⁰² World Vision. 2022. [No Peace of Mind](#). Accessed 27 July 2023.

⁴⁰³ Romaniuk Piotr, and Semigina T. 2018. [Ukrainian health care system and its chances for successful transition from Soviet legacies](#). *Global Health*. 23;14(1):116. Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁴ de Vetten-McMahon, Marjonneke, Shields-Zeeman, L. S., Petrea, I., and N. S. Klazinga. 2019. [Assessing the need for a mental health services reform in Moldova: a situation analysis](#). *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, pp. 13, 45. Accessed 28 March 2023.

Moldova and links unaddressed mental health issues with increased risks of gender-based violence within communities.⁴⁰⁵ 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.⁴⁰⁶ 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.⁴⁰⁷ These fears have intensified since the revelation of a plot supposedly sponsored by Russia to remove Moldova's government.⁴⁰⁸ Participants in the workshops raised concerns that, if war spreads to Moldova, refugees might be victims of collateral damage.⁴⁰⁹ 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.⁴¹⁰

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.⁴¹¹ 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.⁴¹²

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.

⁴⁰⁵ Refugees International. 2022. [Preparing for the Unpredictable: Ensuring the protection of refugees from Ukraine in Romania and Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁶ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁷ Mirovalev, Mansur. 2023. Al Jazeera. [As war rages in Ukraine, is Moldova on the brink of conflict?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁸ Erizanu, Piotr. 2023. The Guardian. [Moldova police arrest members of Russian-backed network over unrest plot](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁹ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

⁴¹⁰ Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: Ukraine is preparing to attack Transnistria, and an army of NATO tanks stationed on Romanian soil will head for Crimea](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴¹¹ Broadcasting Board of Governors. 2016. [Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴¹² Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

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.⁴¹³ Russia denounced the ban as political censorship.⁴¹⁴ 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.⁴¹⁵ 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.⁴¹⁶ Workshop participants raised the issue as a potential area of tension between Moldovans and refugees. Although it did not emerge as a pervasive point,⁴¹⁷ 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 Chişinău workshop reported that they had not expected it to last so long.⁴¹⁸ 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.⁴¹⁹ 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.⁴²⁰ 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.

⁴¹³ Reuters. 2022. [Russia denounced Moldova's ban of TV channels as 'Political Censorship'](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴¹⁴ Reuters. 2022. [Russia denounced Moldova's ban of TV channels as 'Political Censorship'](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴¹⁵ Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: The government in Chişinău bans Russian press at the behest of the West](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴¹⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2011. [Bukovina](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴¹⁷ Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

⁴¹⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

⁴¹⁹ Chişinău research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁴²⁰ Chişinău 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;

⁴²¹ Saferworld n.d. [Conflict Analysis, Chapter 2](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; United Nations. 2016. [UN Conflict Analysis Practice Note](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; World Bank n.d. [Conflict Analysis](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴²² United Nations. 2016. [UN Conflict Analysis Practice Note](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

- (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).⁴²³ This use of social media corresponds with wider literature showing that it can be an effective conduit for misinformation and disinformation.⁴²⁴ 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.⁴²⁵ 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;⁴²⁶ there is also evidence that social cohesion, or 'glue,' can be formed around social media messages and stories.⁴²⁷ 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 be 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.⁴²⁸ Reactive debunking efforts could include counter-narratives, crisis communications, and policy responses.⁴²⁹ 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.⁴³⁰ 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.⁴³¹ 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;⁴³² (2) appealing to emotions, which are strong drivers of decisions and behaviours and which make content more likely to be accessed and

⁴²³ See also, as an example, Walter, Jan D, and Klug, T. DW. 2023. [Fact Check: How propaganda denigrates Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴²⁴ Bunse, Simone. 2021. [Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴²⁵ Bunse, Simone. 2021. [Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴²⁶ Cecchi-Dimeglio, Paola. MIT Sloan Management Review. 2020. [Why sharing good news matters](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴²⁷ Duffy, Andrew, and Ling, R. Journalism Studies. 2020. [The Gift of News: Phatic News Sharing on Social Media for Social Cohesion](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴²⁸ Government Communication Service. 2021. [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴²⁹ Government Communication Service. 2021. [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁰ Dempster, H. and Hargrave, K. Overseas Development Institute. 2017. [Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants](#).

⁴³¹ Dempster, H. and Hargrave, K. Overseas Development Institute. 2017. [Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants](#).

⁴³² Feinberg, M., and Willer, R. 2015. [From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?](#) Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41(12), 1665–1681.

remembered;⁴³³ and (3) shifting social norms or using normative messaging to promote a behaviour, or its frequency.⁴³⁴

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.⁴³⁵ 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.⁴³⁶ This is an important consideration in Moldova, where public trust in Russian news sources is higher than in comparable post-Soviet countries⁴³⁷ and there is demonstrable use of disinformation through Russian sources to build tensions against Ukrainian refugees.⁴³⁸ 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.⁴³⁹ 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.⁴⁴⁰

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 Chişinău shared that they had not found the right channels to meet Moldovans and were concerned about their children’s ability to integrate.⁴⁴¹ 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.⁴⁴² 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,⁴⁴³ and UN Women supports local civil society efforts to connect female refugees with Moldovans through cultural activities.⁴⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁴⁶

⁴³³ Brady, W. J., Gantman, A. P., and Van Bavel, J. J. 2020. *Attentional capture helps explain why moral and emotional content go viral*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 149, 746-756. 3.

⁴³⁴ Petit, Vincent, and Zalk, T.N. UNICEF and PENN SoNG. 2019. *Everybody Wants to Belong: A Practical Guide to Tackling and Leveraging Social Norms in Behaviour Change Programming*.

⁴³⁵ Fazio, L. K., Brashier, N. M., Payne, B. K., and Marsh, E. J. 2015. *Knowledge does not protect against illusory truth*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 144(5), 993–1002.

⁴³⁶ Citizens’ Association Why Not. 2019. *Disinformation in the online sphere: The case of BiH*. Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴³⁷ Broadcasting Board of Governors. 2016. *Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova*. Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁸ Veridica. 2022. *DISINFORMATION: Ukrainian refugees take advantage of Moldovans’ hospitality*. Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁹ Ipsos (2018) *Fake news, filter bubbles, post-truth and trust*. Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁰ RAN C&N Academy. 19 December 2019. *Effective Narratives: Updating the GAMMMA+ model*.

⁴⁴¹ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁴⁴² Pettigrew Thomas F., and Tropp, L. R. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 2006. *A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory*. Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴³ UNICEF. 2022. *Two new friends – one from Ukraine, the other from Moldova – are united by music*. Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁴ UN Women. 2022. *Promoting social cohesion between Ukrainian women refugees and Moldovan communities*. Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁵ Prague research workshop, 1–2 February 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.⁴⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁴⁹ 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’.⁴⁵⁰ 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.⁴⁵¹

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.

⁴⁴⁷ Nabors et al. 2022. [A University and Community-Based Partnership: After-School Mentoring Activities to Support Positive Mental Health for Children Who Are Refugees](#). Accessed 1 August 2023.

⁴⁴⁸ OECD. 2022. [Disinformation and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine: Threats and governance responses](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁹ Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, D., and Aral, S. Science. 2018. [The spread of true and false news online](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

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 misperceptions.

‘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’.

⁴⁵¹ Moonshot. 2019. [Redirect Method Canada Final Report](#). Accessed 5 April 2023.

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.

⁴⁵³ CALP Network. 2020. *State of the World’s Cash 2020*. Accessed 17 April 2023.

⁴⁵⁴ SPACE. 2020. *Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Food Responses to COVID-19: Needs, Coverage, and Gaps*. Accessed 17 April 2023.

⁴⁵⁵ SPACE. 2020. *Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Food Responses to COVID-19: Needs, Coverage, and Gaps*. Accessed 17 April 2023.

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

⁴⁵⁶ International Alert. 2020. [Donbas: Taking stock of Peacebuilding](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

Safer World (2019). [Dip Beyond Box Ticking](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁵⁷ Discussed in Section 4.3.

⁴⁵⁸ 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.

⁴⁵⁹ UNICEF. 2023. [UNICEF Refugee Response in the Czech Republic: Initial Results and Priorities](#). Accessed 10 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁰ Moldpres. 2021. [Moldova, Ukraine to sign agreement on mutual recognition of education documents](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴⁶¹ Infotag. 2022. [Ministry of infrastructure invites local authorities to report about social housing construction opportunities](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁶² The OECD has elaborated on the gamut of challenges associated with a lack of affordable social housing—OECD. Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs Policy Briefs. 2020. [Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy](#). Accessed 26 March 2023.

interventions limits their potential impact. To the degree possible, housing aid to Ukrainians should be harmonised with these efforts.⁴⁶³ 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.⁴⁶⁴ 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.⁴⁶⁵ 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.⁴⁶⁶ 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.⁴⁶⁷ 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

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](#).

⁴⁶⁴ Warsaw research workshop, 9 February 2023.

⁴⁶⁵ PepsiCo. 2022. [The story behind PepsiCo's school for displaced Ukrainian children](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁶ Habitat for Humanity. n.d. [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁷ Habitat for Humanity. n.d. [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

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

⁴⁶⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁹ Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group. 2022. [Education Rapid Needs Assessment](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁰ Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group. 2022. [Education Rapid Needs Assessment](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁷¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group. 2022. [Education Rapid Needs Assessment](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁷² International Alert. 2020. [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷³ International Alert. 2020. [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁴ International Alert. 2020. [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

for many refugee children,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.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.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 2022,⁴⁷⁸ alongside sharply growing unemployment in early to mid-2023,⁴⁷⁹ 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,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.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.⁴⁸² Tailoring the platform and outreach to different segments (e.g., employers) could support the effectiveness of job advertisement programmes. Counselling and coaching support

⁴⁷⁵ As discussed in Section 2.5.

⁴⁷⁶ UNICEF and the Government of Moldova. 2022. Education Rapid Needs Assessment: Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group.

⁴⁷⁷ Peace Winds. 2022. [\[Ukraine\] Launched "Smart Class," an online learning support program for Ukrainian refugee children.](#) Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁸ Statistica Moldovei. 2023. [Evolution of consumer prices in the Republic of Moldova in December 2022 and in 2022.](#) Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁹ Trading Economics. 2023. [Moldova Unemployment Rate.](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

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.

⁴⁸¹ International Monetary Fund. 2023. [IMF Executive Board Concludes Second Reviews Under the Extended Credit Facility and Extended Fund Facility Arrangements for the Republic of Moldova.](#) Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁸² Chişinău research workshop, 1–2 March 2023.

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.

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.

⁴⁸⁴ [Romania: Multi-sector Needs Assessment \(December 2022\)](#).

⁴⁸⁴ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁵ International Alert. 2019. [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert. n.d. [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁶ Meraki Labs. 2022. [Gender Analysis of Programming in Jordan for Caritas](#).

⁴⁸⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁸ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁹ IOM. 2023. [The Story of Larisa, a Russian Roma Who Fled Ukraine While Pregnant and Who Entered Moldova With Her Family](#). Accessed 31 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.⁴⁹¹ 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 Nepal⁴⁹² point out the importance of fair recruitment practices and appropriate use of outcome-based contracts⁴⁹³ 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.⁴⁹⁴ 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.⁴⁹⁵ 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.⁴⁹⁶ Business start-up programmes could also consider conflict sensitivity training for entrepreneurs and encouraging joint Moldovan-Ukrainian initiatives.⁴⁹⁷

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

⁴⁹¹ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Moldova: Multi-Sector Needs Assessment \(September 2022\)](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁹² International Alert. 2020. [Business and peace Dossier: It takes two to tango](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; International Alert. 2019. [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert. 2022. [Mobilising the Private Sector for Peace: The role of private sector actors in peace and conflict dynamics in Kenya and Somalia A peace and conflict analysis](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; and International Alert. n.d. [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

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

⁴⁹⁵ For example, Newman, Arielle Badger, and Christensen, L. J. 2021. [Doing it Right, but Getting it Wrong](#); Bizri, Rima M. 2017. [Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Social Capital Perspective](#); Meister, Alexander Dominik, and Mauer, R. 2019. [Understanding refugee entrepreneurship incubation – an embeddedness perspective](#); and Fong, Rowena, et al. 2007. [Pathways to self-sufficiency: Successful entrepreneurship for refugees](#).

⁴⁹⁶ European Commission. 2018. [Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees](#). Accessed 2 April 2023.

⁴⁹⁷ International Alert. 2020. [Business and Peace: It Takes Two to Tango](#); International Alert. 2019. [Economic Development and Peace Practice Note Series](#).

and reduce prejudice.⁴⁹⁸ These benefits can boost the economy.⁴⁹⁹ 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 fashion⁵⁰⁰ 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.⁵⁰¹ Such structures may be particularly pertinent to Moldova, where geopolitics and questions of autonomy for ethnic minority groups have driven polarisation,⁵⁰² especially around the issue of Moldova's relationship to Russia.⁵⁰³ Participants in workshops also highlighted a lack of opportunities for Ukrainian refugees to participate in local decision-making processes.⁵⁰⁴ 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.⁵⁰⁵

⁴⁹⁸ For example, Brodock, Kate, and Massam, G. 2016. *How and Why to Hire a Diverse Workforce: What You Need to Know*; Rosenzweig, Philip. 1998. *Managing the New Global Workforce: Fostering Diversity, Forging Consistency*; Ely, Robin J., and Thomas, D. A. 2020. *Getting Serious About Diversity: Enough Already with the Business Case*; and Moon, Kuk-Kyong, and Christensen, R. K. 2020. *Realizing the performance benefits of workforce diversity in the US federal government: The moderating role of diversity climate*.

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.

⁵⁰¹ Cramer, Christopher. Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. UK Department for International Development. 2016. *Evidence Synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?* Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁰² Wolfschwenger, Johann, and Saxinger, K. 2020. *Federalism, National Identity and Overcoming Frozen Conflicts: Moldova's Experience*. *Ethnopolitics* 19:4, pp. 356–368.

⁵⁰³ Szeles, Monica Răileanu. *PLoS One*. 2021. *Examining the foreign policy attitudes in Moldova*.

⁵⁰⁴ Chişinău research workshop, 2 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁵ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. *Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention*. Accessed 28 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.⁵⁰⁶ 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.⁵⁰⁷ The literature indicates a slight but positive relationship between the presence of community dialogues and mitigation of local tensions.⁵⁰⁸ 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,⁵⁰⁹ 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.⁵¹⁰ 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.⁵¹¹ 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

⁵⁰⁶ Bolton, Laura. 2020. [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cramer, Christopher. Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁷ Bolton, Laura. 2020. [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cramer, Christopher. Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁸ Bolton, Laura. 2020. [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cramer, Christopher. Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁹ Cramer, Christopher Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵¹⁰ Cramer, Christopher Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵¹¹ Pennycook, G. Cannon, T.D., and Rand, D.G. Journal of Experimental Psychology. 2018. [Prior exposure increases perceived accuracy of fake news](#).

and some Moldovan stations in December 2022 provoked protests against regulations that were intended to curb disinformation⁵¹² and accusations of political bias and censorship.⁵¹³ 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.⁵¹⁴ 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.⁵¹⁵ 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.⁵¹⁶ 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.⁵¹⁷ However, the European Commission has recognised the role of education, particularly in source literacy, in combatting misinformation.⁵¹⁸

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.

⁵¹² Veridica. 2023. [FAKE NEWS: The government in Chişinău bans Russian press at the behest of the West](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵¹³ Reuters. 2022. [Russia denounced Moldova’s ban of TV channels as ‘Political Censorship’](#). Accessed 28 March 2023

⁵¹⁴ UNESCO. 2020. [A future we can all live with: How education can address and eradicate racism](#); Brookings Institute. 2022. [Learning to live together: How education can help fight systemic racism](#).

⁵¹⁵ Chişinău research workshop, 1 March 2023.

⁵¹⁶ Warsaw research workshop, 9 February 2023.

⁵¹⁷ OECD. 2021. [21st Century Readers: Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World](#).

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

Journey stage	Discourses about Ukrainian refugees	Underlying challenges	Characteristics that can make Ukrainian refugees vulnerable at the stage of the journey	Potential tensions
Entry, legal status, and registration for services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians create a burden on the healthcare system. Ukrainians misuse services, for example with unnecessary ambulance calls and emergency room visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moldova's healthcare system was strained before the war. Language barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional pressures on the health system. Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles, in receiving healthcare. Pressures on social services.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians are creating a burden on the housing system. Refugees have unfair access to more housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

<p>Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainians create burdens on the school and kindergarten system; take locals' places. • Ukrainian students are not making an effort at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moldova has a two-language school stream (Romanian and Russian). • The kindergarten system has been under significant pressure since before the war. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People staying in rural areas, where facilities are not sufficient facilities to host Ukrainians. • People with informal rent contracts. • Families with pre-school-aged children. • Roma people with limited education. • Families without legal status. • Children who are placed in the wrong grade when transferring to Moldovan school systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in host country. • 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.
<p>Employment and income</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with specialist occupations who cannot find suitable roles. • People with childcare responsibilities who need flexible working hours. • People based outside of Chişinău, especially in the southern regions. • People with no informal networks in Moldova who cannot find opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

<p>Community, social, and political life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees are ungrateful and have high expectations. • Refugees are selective about the type of support they receive. • They should be in Ukraine defending their country, not in Moldova. • Refugees will nazify local society. • Refugees create diplomatic tensions with Russia. They endanger Moldova. • Historic tensions (Transnistria). • Refugees are 'not Moldova's responsibility'. • Negative perceptions of refugees caused by political views. • Local men will have to enlist in the military if support to refugees persists. • Refugees are a crime risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers contribute significantly to lack of integration. • Moldova has more sympathy for Russia than other refugee-hosting countries, and this is a politically fraught issue. • Psychosocial support is limited; there is stigma around seeking help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People requiring psychological support. • People in communities without inclusive decision-making processes that account for Ukrainians. • People in majority Russian-speaking or pro-Russian areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xenophobia and discrimination. • Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties. • Lack of integration into host society. • Language barriers. • Lack of understanding of trauma. • Protracted crisis in Transnistria. • Fear of insecurity and war. • Tensions between Ukrainians and host community about who started or is responsible for the war. • Perceived freedom of speech violations as a result of the ban on Russian media. • Historic tensions over Bucovina (1940). • Locals' fatigue in supporting refugees. • Expectation of more gratitude.
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Annex 1. Acronyms and Abbreviations

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

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.

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

⁵¹⁹ The World Bank. 2021. [GDP per capita, PPP \(current international \\$\)](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵²⁰ Statistica Moldovei. 2023. [Evolution of consumer prices in the Republic of Moldova in December 2022 and in 2022](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁵²¹ OECD. [DAC List of Official Development Assistance Recipients | Effective for reporting on 2022 and 2023 flows](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵²³ UNHCR. 2022. [Ukraine Situation: Recalibration – Regional Refugee Response Plan \(March – December 2022\)](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵²⁴ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(January-December 2023\)](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵²⁴ Pieńkowski, Jakub. PISM. 2021. [Party of Action and Solidarity Gains Full Power: The Opening Record of the Pro-European Government in Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵²⁵ Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova. [Elections and Referendums](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵²⁷ Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova. [Elections and Referendums](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵²⁷ Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova. [Elections and Referendums](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵²⁸ Statistica Moldovei. 2023. [Population](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵²⁹ The World Bank. 2020. [Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines \(% of population\) – Moldova. 2020](#).

Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵³⁰ Statistica Moldovei. 2023. [Labour Force in the Republic of Moldova: Employment and unemployment in the fourth quarter 2022](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵³¹ Statistica Moldovei. 2022. [Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, May 12-25, 2014. 2022](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵³¹ Statistica Moldovei. 2022. [Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, May 12-25, 2014. 2022](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

	Size of Ukrainian minority or Ukrainians living in country before 2022	181,035 (2014); does not include Transnistria ⁵³²
Number of refugees hosted ⁵³³	Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of March 2023	106,634 ⁵³⁴
	Ukrainian refugees in Moldova as a % of total population	4.1% ⁵³⁵
	Total refugees hosted in 2022	79 477 ⁵³⁶
	Total refugees hosted in 2021	349 ⁵³⁷
	Total refugees hosted in 2020	405 ⁵³⁸
	Total refugees hosted in 2019	417 ⁵³⁹
	% women and children	83% (March 2023) ⁵⁴⁰
Ukrainian refugee demographics	% refugee households with at least 1 member with disability	21% ⁵⁴¹
	% refugee households with at least 1 elderly member	18.52% ⁵⁴²
Support received by Ukrainian refugees	Funds received upon arrival/registration	On arrival (after registration) each person is supported with MDL 2,200 (£96.96, \$120.88 USD) on a personal card. ⁵⁴³
	Total funds received per adult/month	MDL 2,200 per month (£96.96, \$120.88 USD) from November to March 2023 per family for communal services. ⁵⁴⁴
	Total funds received per child/month	MDL 2,200 per child (£96.96, 120.88 USD) ⁵⁴⁵
	Total funds received by hosts	MDL 3,500 (£154.26, \$192.31 USD) per host family (monthly cap). ⁵⁴⁶ During winter (November 2022–March 2023), additional funding of MDL 700 (£30.85, \$38.46 USD) per month for household. ⁵⁴⁷

⁵³² Statistica Moldovei. 2022. [Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, May 12-25, 2014, 2022](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵³³ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 17 March 2023.

⁵³⁴ UNHCR. 2023. [Individual refugees from Ukraine recorded in Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

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.

⁵³⁶ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵³⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵³⁸ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵³⁹ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring, 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring, 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴² UNHCR. 2023. [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring, 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴³ UNHCR. 2022. [Cash Assistance for Refugees And Host Communities in Moldova](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁴ Ministerul Muncii Şi Protecţiei Sociale. [Informații utile refugiați Ucraina](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁵ UNHCR. [Денежная помощь](#) for Moldova. Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁶ Ministerul Muncii Şi Protecţiei Sociale. [Informații utile refugiați Ucraina](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁷ Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation. 2022. [Moldova: Inter-agency Winterization plan: November 2022- March 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

Access to services	Employment rate	800 to 850 individuals (September–November 2022) ⁵⁴⁸
	Total number of Ukrainian children in country enrolled in school	1,665 ⁵⁴⁹
	% hosted by local family (May 2022)	13% ⁵⁵⁰
	% rental (paid) accommodation (May 2022)	30% ⁵⁵¹
Host population attitude polling	% hosted in refugee centres (November 2022)	3% ⁵⁵²
	% of host population believing that Russia is not responsible for starting the war (it's NATO/Ukraine)	22% ⁵⁵³
	% of host population positive toward Ukrainian refugees (spring 2022)	51.4% ⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁴⁸ trm.md. 2022. [About 850 Ukrainian refugees have started working in the Republic of Moldova](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁹ Moldpres. 2023. [Over 1,600 Ukrainian children study in schools in Moldova](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁵⁰ UNICEF. 2022. [Moldova I Multi-Sector Needs Assessment](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁵¹ UNICEF. 2022. [Moldova I Multi-Sector Needs Assessment](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁵² Government of Moldova, REACH UNHCR. 2022. [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring, Update as of 14.11.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁵³ Republic of Moldova Public Opinion Barometer. [Situation on Ukraine. 2022. question: Who do you think is right in the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict?](#) Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁵⁴ diez.md. 2022. (sondaj) Care este atitudinea moldovenilor față de persoanele refugiate din Ucraina. Accessed 30 March 2023, quoting [iData](#) research. Accessed 30 March 2023.

Annex 3. Statistics, surveys, and research reports

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

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵⁵⁵	Language	Notes
Statistics				
Number of Ukrainian refugees	UNHCR. 2023. Operational Data Portal	MLR	ENG	
Demographics of Ukrainians under TP	UNHCR. 2022. Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, Regional protection analysis	MLR	ENG	Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Data as of 30 September 2022.
	IOM. 2022. Ukraine Returns Report October 2022	MLR	ENG	
Support for Ukrainians under TP	UNHCR. 2023. Quick Assessment on the Implementation of Temporary Protection in Moldova: Key Findings and Recommendations	MLR	ENG	
Access to social services	WHO. 2023. Ukrainian refugees granted mental health and psychosocial support in Republic of Moldova	MLR	ENG	
Accommodation for Ukrainians under TP	UNHCR. 2023. Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre Monthly Update as of 27 February 2023	MLR	ENG	
Public attitude polling	Bne.Intellinews. 2022. Poll shows Moldovans' pro-EU sentiment remains fragile	MR	ENG	Article based on a poll conducted by IDIS Viitorul (The Future) think tank.
Donor support	UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Regional Response Plan for the Ukraine situation. 2023. Republic of Moldova	MLR	ENG	

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.

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵⁵⁵	Language	Notes
	UNHCR. 2023. Ukraine Situation: Moldova – Cash Assistance for Refugees (March 2023).	MLR	ENG	
Deeper dives				
Ukrainian refugees' needs; analyses of vulnerabilities	UNHCR. 2022. Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, Regional protection analysis	MLR	ENG	Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Data as of 30 September 2022.
	UNHCR. 2023. Regional Protection and Monitoring, Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine	MLR	ENG	
	UNHCR. 2022. The 2022 Participatory Assessment Report for refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons in the Republic of Moldova	MLR	ENG	
	REACH, UNICEF. 2022. Ukraine Situation—Moldova: REACH and UNICEF – Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Preliminary Findings Dataset	MLR	ENG	
	UNDP. 2022. How Is Life: Micro-Narratives on the Impact of the Ukraine Crisis in the Republic of Moldova	MLR	ENG	
	Avocat Popului: ombudsman. 2022. Raport sinteza privind situatia persoanelor refugiate	NG	RO	Summary of Ombudsman's report on the situation of refugees in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine.
Examples of discrimination	Brown, Erin Clare. 2022. The National News. Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova	MLR		ENG
	Gutuui, Olga. 2022. Narativele antirefugiati – elemente de dezinformare și	MR	RO	Media report on anti-refugee narratives and misinformation in Moldova.

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵⁵⁵	Language	Notes
	promovare a falselor pericole			
	Human Rights Watch. 2022. Moldova: Romani refugees from Ukraine face segregation	NGO	ENG	
	Popenko, Viola. 2022. European Roma Rights Centre. Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova.	NGO	ENG	
Pressures on social services	Reuters. 2022. Refugee crisis strains Moldova's healthcare system, minister says.	MR	ENG	
	UNHCR. 2023. Ukraine Situation – Moldova : REACH – The impact of cost-of-living changes on Moldovan and refugee populations.	MLR	ENG	
Profile of host communities	UNDP Moldova. 2022. Profiling poverty beyond income shows where to have the biggest impact in a world in crisis.	MLR	ENG	
	Civicus Lens. 2023. Moldova: A Crisis of Russia's Making Energy crunch and pro-Russia protests pose biggest post-independence test for democracy.	NGO	ENG	
	EN. 2022. EN ANNEX 1 of the Commission Implementing Decision on the on the Annual Action Programme in favour of the Republic of Moldova for 2020 Action Document for EU4Moldova: Local Communities.	MLR	ENG	
	Center of Insights. 2022. Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova	PD	ENG	

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵⁵⁵	Language	Notes
	February 9, 2022 – March 30, 2022 Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova February 9, 2022 – March 30, 2022.			
Public attitudes	Hargrave, Karen, Homel, K., and Dražanová, L. Overseas Development Institute. 2023. Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile.	NGO/A R	ENG	
	Moldova1. 2023. Sondaj: Ce cred moldovenii despre persoanele refugiate din Ucraina în Republica Moldova, 04.04.2023.	MR	RO	Report on the findings of a poll: What do Moldovans think about refugees from Ukraine in the Republic of Moldova?
	International Republican Institute. 2022. Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova.	NGO	ENG	
	Government of Gaguzia. 2023. Бургуджи И. Подробно об итогах соцопроса в Гагаузии.	PD	RU	Sociological survey of residents of Gaguzia.
Tensions between host and refugee communities	World Vision. 2022. warm Welcomes, Lurking Tensions, Vital lessons from the global south for countries hosting refugees from Ukraine.	NGO	ENG	
Disinformation discourses	Media Forward. 2022. The society wide battle against disinformation in Moldova.	NGO/A R	ENG	
	IFES. 2019. Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions.	NGO	ENG	
	Freedom House. 2022. Contracararea dezinformării în Republica Moldova	NGO	RO	NGO report on countering disinformation in Moldova.

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵⁵⁵	Language	Notes
	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	European Commission report on Russian disinformation in Moldova.
	Mediacritica. 2022. Studiu CJI // O bună parte a membrilor unor grupuri vulnerabile, precum bătrânii, romii sau refugiații, sunt expuși la un volum mare de dezinformare.	MR	RO	Report on exposure to misinformation amongst vulnerable groups, including Roma, the elderly, and refugees.
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	Focuses on conflict analysis to better understand the contexts, dynamics, and tensions in conflicts.
	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	



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