

Temporary Protection Assessment

Preliminary findings: Qualitative data

Moldova, October 2023


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01

Context

Context

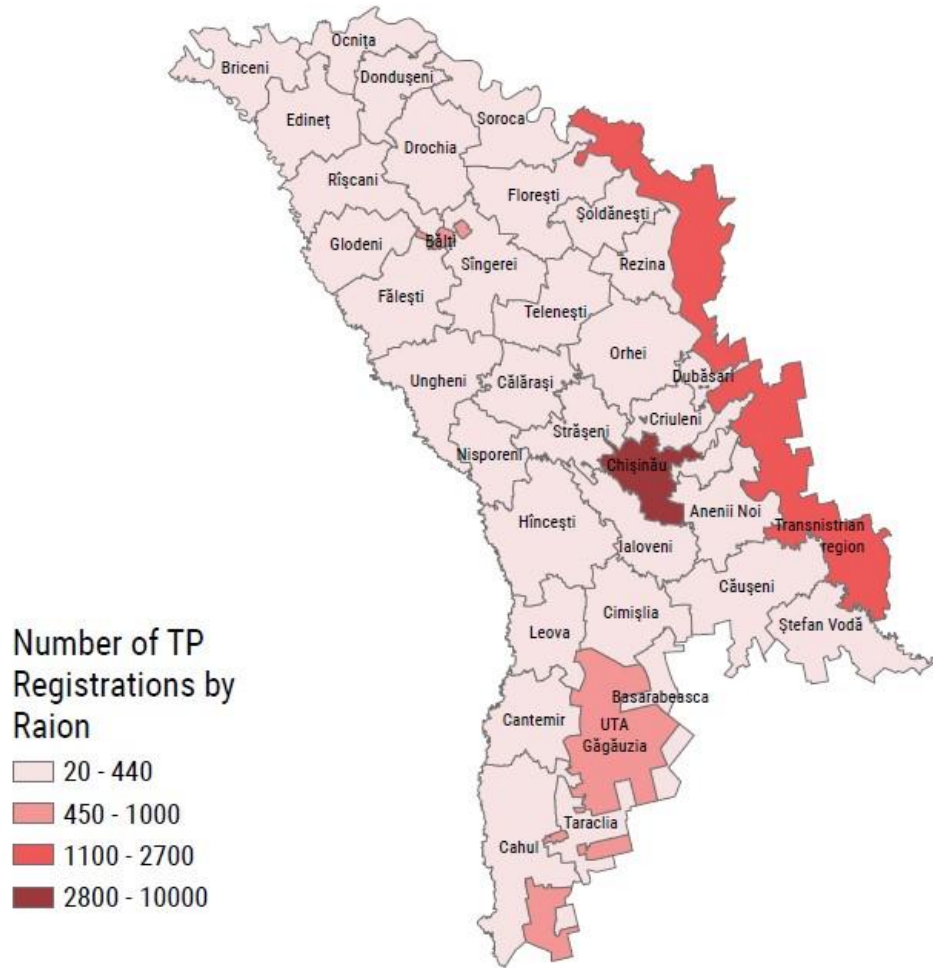
On May 15th, 2023, Moldova introduced the obligatory Temporary Protection (TP) status for displaced persons from Ukraine (accessible since March 2023 on a voluntary basis). Refugees had to register by August 13, 2023, but registration remained open at the time of data collection (i.e., October 2023) [1].

Temporary Protection status grants [2]:

- The right to remain in Moldova until 01.03.2024.
- The right to work and study in Moldova.
- Access to healthcare and social assistance services.
- Accommodation in the Temporary placement centres for persons in need.

As of October, registration figures remained relatively low – about 25,997 refugees applied (out of an estimated 100,000 residing in Moldova) as of October 16th, 2023, and 19,693 of them were granted TP, including 6,359 children [3].

The existing assessments have largely explored the barriers to TP enrolment. However, information regarding the impact of TP on refugee access to basic services remains scarce.




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Research Objectives

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Research Objectives

This assessment aims to understand the impact of Temporary Protection on refugees' living conditions and access to basic services, in particular healthcare and education, as well as employment.

Findings from this assessment are intended to support government and humanitarian actors' efforts and inform their programming regarding the implementation of the temporary protection measure in Moldova.

Research Questions

1. How, if at all, has refugees' **access to basic services** changed since the provision of Temporary Protection, including access to **education and healthcare**?
2. How, if at all, has refugees' **access to employment** changed since benefiting from Temporary Protection?
3. How has the **refugee response evolved** since the enforcement of Temporary Protection, if at all?
 1. What challenges are faced by assistance and service providers, if any?
4. What is the refugees' **level of access to information and awareness** of their rights and obligations pertaining to Temporary Protection?

**This presentation includes findings from the qualitative component only. Further research questions related to the refugee protection environment and movement intentions are explored via the quantitative component.*



03

Methodology

Research methodology



Geographical coverage

4 raions in Moldova with the most TP registrations (as of September 2023): Chisinau, Balti, Cahul, ATU Gagauzia



Population of interest

Adult refugees displaced from Ukraine to Moldova, who have obtained Temporary Protection status in Moldova



Qualitative Component

57 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with representatives of:

- **Public facilities** providing healthcare, education
- **Local authorities** departments responsible for healthcare, education and employment/social assistance
- **NGOs** (subject-matter experts for healthcare, education and employment)

Limitations

- This **presentation includes qualitative findings only**. The findings come from interviews conducted with the local authorities, service providers and NGOs, thus they do not allow to explore the refugees' perspective (which will be analysed via the quantitative component). Thus, the presentation does not offer a full overview of the situation.
- It needs to be noted that the **numbers of Key Informants** (provided in parenthesis) serve for an **indicative** comparison, however, this is not a quantitative component. Some KIs did not provide comprehensive answers to all of the questions.
- The assessment of change in access to services is **retrospective**. The respondents' assessment of the past situation could have shifted with time and can be **subjective**. Additionally, findings include only the **information that the KIs had or were willing to share**.
- As the assessment was conducted relatively soon after the mandatory registration timeframe for TP (May-August 2023), the **results provide a first understanding of how the TP status impacts** (if at all) refugees' living situation and access to the services, rather than offering a thorough overview of the TP measure's impact.

Qualitative data collection



Qualitative data collection was carried out between **September 27th and October 17th, 2023**, in the districts of **Balti, Cahul, Chisinau and ATU Gagauzia**.



Unless specified, the **findings do not provide a full comparison** between the situation before and after the introduction of Temporary Protection. Instead, they offer **a snapshot of conditions** during each period, as informants were asked about their retrospective perception of the situation before and after TP provision.

Breakdown of KIIs by location, by sector, and by KI profile									
	Healthcare			Education			Employment		Total
	Local authorities	Provider	NGO	Local authorities	Provider	NGO	Local authorities	NGO	
Cahul	1	3	3	1	3	3	1	3	18
Chisinau	1	3	1	1	3	2	1	2	14
Balti	1	3	2	1	3	1	1	1	13
ATU Gagauzia	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	1	12
Total	4	12	7	4	12	7	4	7	57

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Qualitative findings: Healthcare

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Refugee access to healthcare

Scope of healthcare access


The level of refugee access to healthcare was most commonly reported by healthcare providers and local authorities as **sufficient** before the Temporary Protection (TP) provision (reported by 11 out of 23 KIs).

Following the introduction of TP, opinions **diverged** - several informants declared that after TP introduction, access to healthcare **became easier** (12/23). Some informants claimed that access **did not change due to TP** (9/23).

Cases of access refusal

Before the TP provision, none of the providers reported cases of access refusal, while **some NGOs reported instances of refusals** in Balti, Cahul, and Gagauzia.

According to the informants, the situation seems to have **improved** after TP introduction, as instances of refusals were only reported by one NGO in Balti.



Challenges faced by the healthcare providers

Informants across all locations recalled some **additional challenges** faced by Moldovan healthcare providers before TP provision (as reported by 17/23 informants).

The influx of refugees and related increased demand for healthcare services led to **increased workload** for the medical personnel, and consequently **longer waiting time for appointments** for all patients, which could hinder the provision of timely medical services.

Additionally, communication between staff of the medical facilities and refugee patients was jeopardized by the **refugees' insufficient understanding of the Moldovan healthcare system regulation**.

Changes to healthcare access after TP provision

Changes to access reported by the informants

Informants noted that TP introduced changes to the registration process, including the possibility to register with a family doctor, and reported access to a wider range of services. However, a few informants did not notice any change.

Remaining gaps in refugee healthcare provision

After TP provision, the remaining gaps in refugee healthcare provision included mainly insufficient availability of specialized and chronic disease treatment, as well as unaffordability of certain medicines.

According to the law on TP

Refugees who obtained Temporary Protection can access pre-hospital emergency care, primary healthcare, emergency hospital care, outpatient dialysis, and emergency dental care. They are also eligible to register with a family doctor (general practitioner). The state insurance company (CNAM) covers these services.

Those who did not register for TP cannot access healthcare services. Those who prove a willingness to obtain TP can access the aforementioned services, but implementation of this measure remains unclear [4].

Barriers faced by refugees to access healthcare

Informants reported **some barriers** to refugee access to healthcare services **before the TP** introduction, across all locations (overall 12/23 informants noted barriers before TP provision). However, the healthcare providers noted barriers only in Chisinau and Gagauzia.

Some **barriers** seemed to have been **lifted following the TP** provision, or their **recurrence has declined** (overall, remaining barriers were mentioned by 7/23).

Barriers	Before TP provision*	After TP provision*
Lack of clarity on rules/registration process	4	3
Limited services available for free	4	2
Long waiting time for an appointment	4	1
Lack of specialized treatment available locally	1	2
Bureaucracy	1	1
Need to recreate medical files	1	1
Shortage of medicines	1	0
Lack of relevant documents	1	0
Refugees sent to remote clinics	1	0
Insufficient access to information	1	0
Insufficient awareness	0	1
Unaffordable medicines	0	1
Shortage of medical staff	0	1

**By number of mentions, as recalled by the informants.*



Demand patterns

After the introduction of TP, **perceptions of changes in demand varied**. Some informants (most notably in Cahul and Chisinau) claimed that the **demand for healthcare services did not change** (8/23).

Others (7/23) declared the **demand increased** (particularly in Balti and Gagauzia), due to, e.g., the reported broader range of services accessible for free or rising awareness of available services among the refugees. On the other hand, some informants declared that they observed a **decrease in demand** (5/23).

As commonly reported across all locations, the **healthcare providers would be able to accommodate higher demand** if the refugee influx increased (reported by 11/16 healthcare provisers), although they **would require some support**.

Support to the healthcare providers

Support provided after TP provision

Following the introduction of TP, healthcare providers declared having received limited support to accommodate refugees since TP provision – this was only confirmed by some in Chisinau and Balti (2/12), where e.g., a facility was provided with medicines.

NGOs across all locations have been providing additional services, including MHPSS, treatment funding, legal aid, and sharing information.

Support required in case of increased demand

In case of an increased demand for healthcare services, e.g., due to the new influx of refugees, almost all informants emphasized the need for additional support, (22/23) to meet the needs of the patients.

The support was mostly expected from the government.

Support needed to meet higher demand	N° of mentions
Additional staff	13
Medicines provision	11
New equipment	10
Financial aid	9
Renovations of facilities	3
Additional space	2

Information environment

Access to information

Information campaigns on TP and related healthcare access for the refugees were reportedly conducted across all locations. They were conducted by the authorities, as well as medical and refugee-oriented organizations, most commonly in the form of **mass meetings** and **online** dissemination.

Opinions **diverged** on whether **additional information campaigns** were needed. Some reported that further information on where and how to access medical services should be disseminated (11/23), either via online platforms or through in-person meetings. Others believed that information access and coverage were already extensive (11/23).

Level of awareness

Refugees' **level of awareness** of TP and related healthcare access was mostly assessed as **sufficient** (9/23) by the representatives of the local authorities, NGOs, and healthcare providers. Only one NGO informant in Chisinau declared that the level of awareness was insufficient among the refugees and medical facilities' staff.

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Qualitative findings: Education

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Refugee access to education

Scope of education access


Overall, the **level of refugee access to education** was reported as **sufficient** before the Temporary Protection (TP) provision (13/23). Nonetheless, **some issues with enrolment and obtaining fully-enrolled student status** (non-auditor student status) were reported in every location.

It was most commonly reported across all locations that following the introduction of TP, **access to education became easier** (overall reported by 14/23 informants). One informant declared that TP **did not change the access** to education.

Cases of access refusal

Before the TP provision, only two informants (in Gagauzia and Chisinau) reported **cases of access refusal**, as some schools had a limited number of free places. Some reported that children who did not have all the required documents for enrolment were **accepted as auditors**.

The situation was reported to have **improved after TP introduction**, as instances of refusals were only reported by one provider in Gagauzia.



Challenges faced by the education providers

It was most commonly reported that Moldovan public **schools did not encounter additional challenges** in accommodating refugees before TP provision (13/23).

To some extent, the challenges were eased by the availability of **alternative forms of education**, in particular online schooling. Many refugee parents reportedly chose to have their children continuing to attend Ukrainian online education instead of fully enrolling them into Moldovan schools.

Nonetheless, some facilities (in Chisinau and Cahul) reportedly struggled with the **increased workload**, due to the increase in the number of students. Other facilities encountered **financial and bureaucratic** issues (in Gagauzia) when attempting to accommodate refugee students.

Changes to education access after TP provision

Changes to access reported by the informants

As frequently reported, TP provision introduced changes to the registration process, including a simplified application process and facilitated access to the fully-enrolled student status. However, some informants (of NGOs and local authorities) did not notice any changes.

Remaining gaps in refugee education provision

The remaining gaps in refugee education provision included the differences between Moldovan and Ukrainian school curricula – due to this, refugee students did not have the same knowledge as their peers in Moldovan schools and had to learn additional material. Informants emphasized Ukrainian refugees' limited ability to take exams (due to the language barrier and novelty of the Moldovan school curriculum), and the need to provide them with additional courses (e.g. Romanian language courses).

According to the law on TP

Initially, the Ministry of Education and Research announced that children who have obtained the TP status or have arrived in Moldova within the previous 90 days can enrol in Moldovan schools. Those without the TP status were to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Alternatively, refugee children can continue following Ukrainian education online [5].

School enrolment of Ukrainian refugee children in Moldova remains low, with only about 4% of them following Moldovan education in the end of the 2022/2023 academic year [6].

Barriers faced by refugees to access education

Informants most frequently reported that **before the TP** introduction, the refugees faced **barriers** to education in all locations (overall reported by 14/23 informants). Some education providers reported making **additional effort to overcome the barriers** (4/12), e.g., by introducing additional courses for the refugees.

Following the TP provision, the recurrence of some barriers has reportedly **declined**. Nonetheless, most barriers to education were indicated to have **remained** (13/24 informants reported remaining barriers).

Barriers	Before TP provision*	After TP provision*
Language barrier	9	10
Differences between Moldovan and Ukrainian curricula	6	3
Lack of documents for enrolment	5	3
Insufficient access to clear information	1	1
Bureaucracy	1	1
Lack of clarity on refugees' plans	1	1
Lack of places in schools	1	0

**By number of mentions, as recalled by the informants.*



Demand patterns

Most informants declared that after TP's introduction, the **demand for education services increased** across all locations (overall reported by 13/23 informants). This included an **increase in fully-enrolled students**.

Nonetheless, some (mostly in Cahul) reported that the **demand did not change** (8/23). One informant in Chisinau observed a **decreased demand** for local education services, as some students have been moving to other locations.

Across all locations, it was commonly reported that the **education providers would be able to accommodate higher demand** if refugee influx increased, although some **would need support**.

Support to the education providers

Support provided after TP provision

Most education providers reported having received support to accommodate refugees since TP provision (10/12).

Additionally, the NGOs across all locations have been providing services for refugee children, including offering activities, child-friendly spaces, and sharing information on TP and education opportunities.

Support required in case of increased demand

In case of increased demand for education services, most informants emphasized the need for additional support to education providers (15/23).

The support was most commonly expected from the government, local authorities and NGOs.

Support needed to meet higher demand	N° of mentions
School/classroom equipment	6
Renovation of the facilities	3
Financial aid	2
Additional tutoring for refugee students	1
Provision of free meals to students	1

Information environment

Access to information

Information campaigns regarding TP and education access for refugees were reportedly carried out in all locations, e.g., by the authorities or refugee-oriented organizations. Some campaigns were conducted by schools or humanitarian actors (including NGOs).

Informants' opinions **diverged** on whether **additional information campaigns** should be conducted. Some, particularly in Chisinau and Gagauzia, reported that further information on the rights provided by TP and school enrolment should be disseminated (10/23), while others, mostly those in Balti and Cahul, indicated that extensive information was already accessible (12/23).

Level of awareness

According to the representatives of local authorities, education providers and NGOs, refugees' **level of awareness** of TP and related access to education was largely assessed as **sufficient** (11/23), while some reported that it was high (5/23).

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06

Qualitative findings: Employment

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Refugee access to employment

Scope of employment access


The level of refugee access to employment was reported by some as sufficient before the Temporary Protection (TP) provision (5/11).

Most informants reported that after the introduction of TP, job access became easier (8/11). For example, TP served as proof of the refugees' long-term plans to stay in Moldova, which was appreciated by employers. Some in asserted it became easier to obtain an official employment contract. A few informants declared that refugee access to employment had not changed (3/11).

Cases of access refusal

Some NGOs reported cases of refusal to employment access (on potentially discriminatory grounds) in Cahul and Chisinau before TP provision. These refusals were also reportedly encountered among vulnerable groups, in particular Roma.

Based on the informants' accounts, TP has not brought significant changes, as refusals were also noted after its introduction, including among vulnerable groups.



Challenges faced by the employers

Some challenges in employing refugees before TP provision were noted across all locations (overall reported by 9/11 informants).

Namely, **refugees' movement plans were often unclear**, which discouraged employers from offering them jobs, due to the fear that they would shortly quit and leave. Moreover, some documentation issues were noted, as some refugees **lacked the required documents** to be formally employed.

Lastly, the **availability of vacancies** was indicated to be **limited** and the **offered jobs** were often reported to **not match refugees' skills and abilities**.

Changes to employment access after TP provision

Changes to access reported by the informants

The only reported change to the employment process following TP introduction was the new requirement to provide TP proof to be formally employed. Some informants did not notice any changes. Overall it was reported that TP did not introduce substantial legal changes to refugee employment.

Remaining gaps in refugee employment

The remaining gaps in refugee employment included insufficient access to childcare, hindering parents' ability to take up employment, and a lack of Romanian language skills among the refugees.

According to the law on TP

The law on TP repealed the previous decisions on employment, which granted Ukrainian refugees the right to work in Moldova without a residence permit.

According to the TP measures introduced in May, refugees must obtain TP or another legal status to be employed in Moldova.

The law was not retroactive and contracts in place as of May 15th, 2023, remained valid while refugees regularized their status [7].

Barriers faced by refugees to access employment

All NGO representatives declared that **before the TP** introduction, refugees faced **barriers** to employment across all locations (7 out of 11 employment sector informants).

It was reported that **some barriers** have been **lifted**, or their **recurrence has declined** following the TP introduction (remaining barriers were noted by 7/11 informants).

Barriers	Before TP provision*	After TP provision*
Language barrier	5	4
Lack of adequate jobs	3	1
Limited access to childcare	2	2
Lack of required documents	1	1
Limited access to formal employment	2	0
Difficulties in opening a bank account	2	0
Lack of mobile phones	0	1

**By number of mentions, as recalled by the informants.*



Demand patterns

Perceptions of **changes in demand** after the introduction of TP **varied**. Some reported that **demand for employment decreased** (4/11) or **did not change** (4/11), which was mostly observed in Chisinau, Balti and Cahul. One informant (in Gagauzia) reported that refugee demand for employment **increased** following the TP provision.

Overall, a few informants believed that there was a **low motivation amongst some refugees to work**, caused by unclear movement plans of the refugees and salaries not meeting their expectations. One informant noted that obtaining TP encouraged some refugees to plan for a longer stay in Moldova (in turn motivating them to seek employment).

Most informants across all locations asserted that the **job market would be able to accommodate higher demand** for employment if the refugee influx increased.

Support to employers

Support provided after TP provision

NGOs, authorities, and international organisations reportedly strived to **support refugee inclusion** into the job market. They organised **job fairs** and **counseling**, **information campaigns**, **legal advice**, and **professional trainings**. The authorities were reportedly less active on that topic in Cahul.

Support required in case of increased demand

According to some informants, in case of increased demand for jobs, **employers would need additional support** to be able to employ the refugees (5/11).

The need for support was reported in Balti, Chisinau, and Gagauzi.

Support needed to meet higher demand	N° of mentions
Financial aid (e.g., subsidies enabling to hire more staff)	3
Partnerships (e.g., private-public initiatives to increase hiring)	1

Information environment

Access to information

Information campaigns regarding TP and refugees' access to employment were reportedly implemented in all locations mostly by the authorities and NGOs. These campaigns were predominantly organized through **mass meetings** and the distribution of **written materials**.

Opinions diverged on whether **additional information campaigns** were needed. All representatives of the local authorities asserted that no further information campaigns were required. Nonetheless, NGO representatives commonly declared that **further campaigns on TP and access to employment** were needed across all locations (overall reported by 5/11 informants).

Level of awareness

Refugees' **level of awareness** of TP and related employment access was mostly assessed as **sufficient** (4/11) or **high** (4/11) by the local authorities and NGO representatives. Only one NGO informant in Chisinau declared that the level of awareness varied on a case-by-case basis among the refugees.



06

Conclusion



Conclusion

- Before TP provision, refugee access to healthcare, education, and employment was reported as sufficient by nearly half of the informants. However, most informants reported that refugees faced barriers to accessing basic services and employment. Service providers in healthcare and education faced challenges related mostly to increased workload and issues with documentation. Employers struggled to offer jobs to the refugees due to issues with documentation or uncertainty over their movement plans.
- According to most informants, access to healthcare, education, and employment became facilitated following TP provision. Those who obtained TP could access a wider range of healthcare services, enrol their children as full-time students more easily, and were perceived by employers as more reliable, with TP serving as an indication of long-term plans to stay in Moldova.
- Informants reported that barriers to refugee healthcare access were largely lifted following TP introduction. However, barriers to education and employment largely remained, as they were not directly linked to the legal status of the refugees (e.g., the language barrier).
- Perceptions of changes in demand for services, following TP provision, were divergent within all sectors. Informants most commonly observed either an increase in demand or no significant change.
- It was reported that in the event of another refugee influx, most providers would be able to accommodate the heightened demand, but they would require additional support (particularly the healthcare providers). Some stated that employers would need additional financial support.
- Information campaigns concerning TP and access to basic services were reported across all sectors and locations. Most KIs reported that the level of awareness was sufficient, although some mentioned that additional information campaigns could be useful.

References

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Thank you for your attention



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