

Temporary Protection Assessment ATU Gagauzia, Moldova

December, 2023

KEY MESSAGES

- In the Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia, about a half of respondents noted that Temporary Protection (TP) significantly or mostly eased access to healthcare, with fewer reporting barriers to access.
- About a half of respondents found that TP significantly or mostly facilitated access to education. However, few respondents encountered any barriers to education either before or after TP provision.
- About a half of respondents indicated that TP significantly or mostly eased access to employment, with a slightly higher reported rate of refugees employed full-time and holding official employment contracts.
- The level of awareness regarding TP was relatively low, as many respondents were not aware of all the obligations and rights to which they are entitled.

Guide to read the graphs in this factsheet:





- Bars in **grey** depict information concerning the situation before having received TP.
- Bars in **red** depict information concerning the situation after having received TP.

Unless the sample size is specified, percentages were calculated based on a sample of 40.

ASSESSMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents' demographics⁵








 Female (85%) **Age** Male (15%) 

78%  **18-59**  10%
8%  **60+**  5%

Average household size: 2.7





The majority of respondents in Gagauzia were women aged between 18-59 years old (78%). The average household was composed of about 3 individuals, including 1 school-aged child. Most respondents arrived to Moldova between February and December 2022 (76%).

Respondents' date of arrival in Moldova⁵

Feb-Mar 2022  20%
Apr-Jun 2022  28%
Jul-Sep 2022  5%
Oct-Dec 2022  23%
Jan-Mar 2023  10%
Apr-Jun 2023  10%
Jul-Aug 2023  5%

TP REGISTRATION

Date of having been granted TP (respondents)⁵

Mar-Apr  25%
May-Jun  35%
Jul-Aug  35%
Sep  5%

The distribution of TP applications among respondents from Gagauzia was nearly evenly spread between March and August 2023. Consequently, they were granted TP documents over the same period. All household members of interviewed refugees had received TP by the time of the interview. All of the respondents and all of their household members had received a TP proof.

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

As of December 3rd, 2023, 112,811 Ukrainian refugees remain in Moldova^{1,2}. In a swift response to the crisis in 2022, Moldova declared a state of emergency, granting those displaced from Ukraine special entry/exit rights, legal stay, and access to education, healthcare, and employment.

On March 1st, 2023, Moldova introduced Temporary Protection (TP) for Ukrainians and eligible Third-country Nationals. TP status offers employment rights, access to education, healthcare, social assistance, and temporary accommodation³. By December 18th, 2023, 26,382 individuals received TP, including 7,988 children⁴. As of December 2023 registration is ongoing.

While existing research focuses on TP enrolment, REACH conducted an assessment to get an initial understanding of TP's impact on refugees' conditions, access to basic services, and employment.

METHODOLOGY

This assessment relied on the mixed method approach. To capture the dynamics of the refugee situation, both quantitative and qualitative components included retrospective questions. All results are indicative.

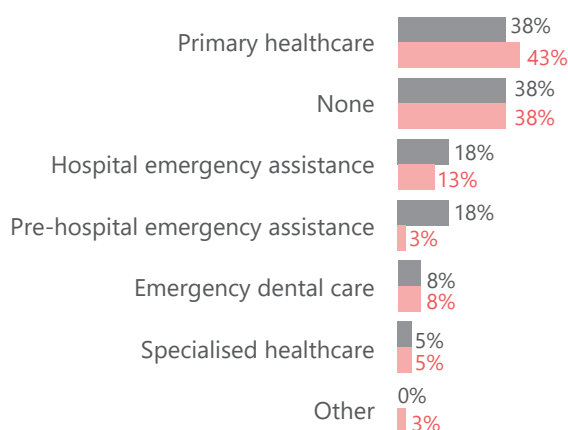
The quantitative component relied on a household survey with the refugees registered for TP, capturing their experiences regarding changes in access to healthcare, education, and employment, as well as their protection-related environment, movement intentions, and access to information.

The qualitative component consisted of key informant interviews (KIIs) with representatives of the public services, local authorities and NGOs.

Data was collected between September and October 2023. In ATU Gagauzia, 40 household surveys and 18 KIIs were conducted.

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Healthcare services accessed by the refugee households⁶



Both before and after obtaining TP, 62% of respondents in Gagauzia accessed healthcare services. After obtaining TP, primary healthcare remained the most frequently accessed service (43%). Slightly less respondents accessed hospital and pre-hospital emergency assistance after receiving TP. Almost all of those who attempted to access healthcare services after obtaining TP have succeeded, with an exception of 1 respondent. Only 4 respondents declared that their frequency of accessing healthcare services increased, 2 of whom were reportedly motivated, at least to some degree, by having obtained TP.

Reported barriers to healthcare access

Over half of the interviewed households (16 out of 26 who attempted to access healthcare in Gagauzia) reported that they encountered barriers in accessing healthcare services before TP. Many respondents reported that they faced long waiting time for appointments (9 out of 26) or were unable to register with a family doctor (6 out of 26), and struggled with the cost of consultation, treatment, or medicines (5 out of 26). Others indicated, e.g., unavailability of certain medicines and treatments (3 out of the 26), or insufficient staff at the facility (2 out of the 26).

Following TP provision more than a half of the households (16 out of 26) reported no barriers to accessing healthcare.

The introduction of TP has facilitated the registration process with a family doctor, which was frequently acknowledged by the respondents, as well as the key informants. Nonetheless, the costs associated with consultations, treatments, or medications persisted as a common barrier.

No. of households facing barriers to healthcare access after TP provision⁸

None	16
Cost of consultation, treatment, or medicines	4
Long waiting time for the service	3
No adequately trained or insufficient staff	3
Unavailable specific medicines and treatment	2
Unavailable specific healthcare service	1
Could not register with a family doctor	1
Could not take time off work or caring for children	1

Reported gaps in refugee healthcare access

75%

of Ukrainian refugees interviewed in Gagauzia declared that there were no gaps in refugee healthcare access.

Although most did not identify any gaps to healthcare access, 13% of Ukrainian refugees interviewed in Gagauzia highlighted that there was a lack of access to medicines, while 8% noted insufficient access to specialist doctors. Additionally, 1 respondent noted a lack of chronic disease treatment, and another reported a lack of access to psychological services.

Prior to TP, refugees from Ukraine had cost-free access to primary and emergency healthcare. Currently, beneficiaries of TP are entitled to free primary healthcare, emergency healthcare, and free medical examination for public health reasons. They can also register with a family doctor⁷.

Reported payment for primary healthcare services

15 respondents (out of 26 who attempted to access healthcare services), both before receiving TP and after, reported that they never had to pay for accessing healthcare services. 8 out of 26, both before and after receiving TP, reported that they sometimes had to pay. Additionally, 3 other respondents, both before and after receiving TP, noted that they always had to pay for healthcare access.

Reported documents required to access healthcare services

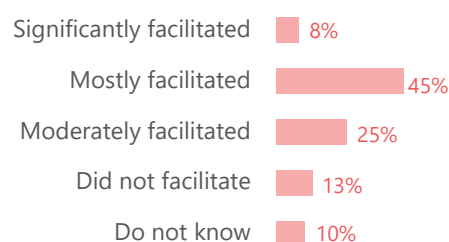
Documents required to access healthcare services after TP provision, per respondents' mentions⁸

TP proof	20
National passport/ID	15
State identification number (IDNP)	7

The national passport or ID were the most frequently required documents for accessing healthcare services prior to TP (reported by 22 out of 26 who attempted to access healthcare services). Additionally, 5 out of 26 respondents reported being asked to present a birth certificate, while 1 each were reportedly required to present a proof of residence and the IDNP as required documents before receiving TP. One respondent noted that no documents were required from them to access healthcare services before obtaining TP.

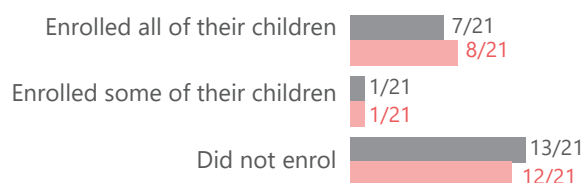
As TP beneficiaries, respondents stated that TP proof was the most commonly required document (20 out of 26), followed by national passport or ID (15 out of 26) and the IDNP (7 out of 26).

Healthcare access facilitation due to TP, according to the respondents⁹



ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Households that enrolled their children in Moldovan schools¹⁰

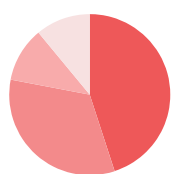


Before receiving TP, out of the 21 households with children, 7 attempted to enrol all of their children in Moldovan schools, and 1 household only tried to enrol some of their children.

After having obtained TP, the school enrolment ratio did not significantly change. Out of the 21 households (where all children had received TP), 8 attempted to enrol all of their children, while 1 household tried to enrol only some of them. All of those who attempted to enrol their children have succeeded, both before and after having obtained TP.

Before TP provision, on average 2 children per household were registered as a full-time student (average: 1.62), while in some cases, children were enrolled as auditors (average: 0.5). After receiving TP, on average 1 child per surveyed households in Gagauzia was registered as a full-time student (1.33), while some continued their education as auditors (average: 0.22).

Refugees who enrolled their children in schools because of obtaining TP¹¹



Following TP implementation, 7 out of 9 households who attempted to enrol their children into Moldovan schools were to some degree motivated in their enrolment decision by obtaining TP. Similarly, most key informants noticed increased demand for education services in Gagauzia following TP provision.

Reported barriers to education access

In Gagauzia, 6 out of 8 respondents who attempted to enrol their children in schools before receiving TP, stated that they did not encounter any barriers.

No. of households facing barriers to education after TP provision ¹¹	
None	8
Language barrier	1

Other respondents reported few issues, including children's lack of required documentation (reported by 2 out of 8), insufficient information about the enrolment procedure (1 out of 8), and language barrier (1 out of 8).

After TP implementation, respondents in Gagauzia faced almost no barriers to education access. 8 out of 9 respondents reported that they did not encounter any barriers, while only 1 respondent noted the language barrier.

Similarly, the language barrier (i.e., lack of knowledge of Romanian) was mentioned by some key informants in Gagauzia, along with the differences between Ukrainian and Moldovan school systems.

Overall, 13 respondents (out of 21 households with children) noticed some degree of enrolment facilitation due to TP provision. However, 7 households could not tell whether TP has facilitated education access, while 1 stated that it did not.

According to the regulations, before and after the introduction of TP, refugee children could access public education in Moldova free of charge, registering as a full-time student or an auditor (i.e., following courses on a voluntary basis, without receiving grades)¹².

Reported payment for school enrolment

Gagauzia appears to have a strong standing in terms of providing free education. None of the respondents reported paying for access to education, either before or after acquiring TP.

Reported documents required to enrol children in schools

Documents required for accessing education after TP provision, per respondents' mentions¹¹

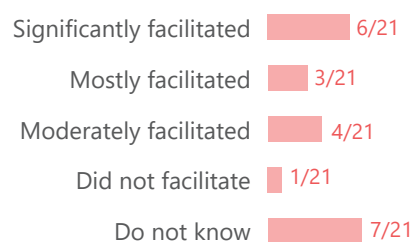
TP proof	9
Child's medical records	9
Proof of prior studies	6
Child's birth certificate	5
Parent's passport/ID	4
State identification number (IDNP)	2
Proof of residence	2
Child's passport/ID	2
Legal status (other than TP)	1

All respondents who enrolled their children in public schools in Gagauzia indicated that the child's medical records were required for school enrolment both before and after TP provision.

Before TP provision, other documents required for access to education reportedly included the child's birth certificate (reported by 6 out of 8), parent's passport or ID (5 out of 8), proof of prior studies of the child (4 out of 8), proof of residence (4 out of 8), child's passport or ID (2 out of 8), and proof of legal status (1 out of 8).

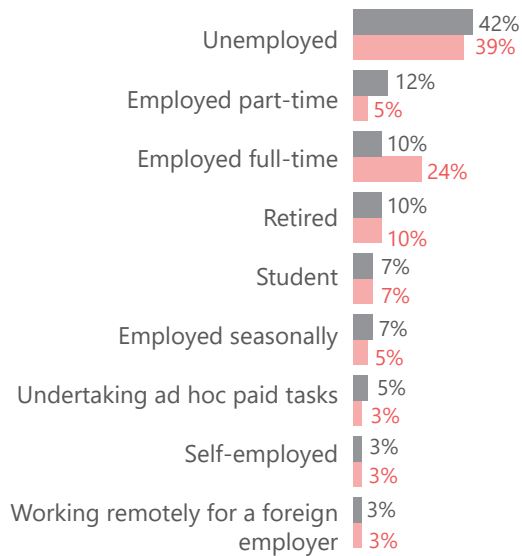
After TP provision all respondents were required to provide the TP proof. Other required documents did not significantly change.

Education access facilitation due to TP, according to the respondents¹⁰



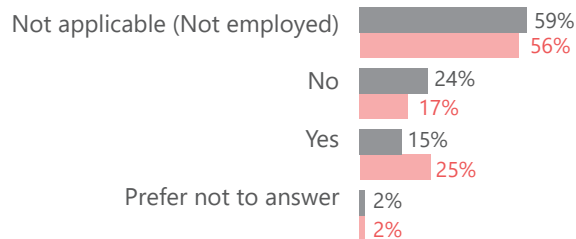
ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

Employment status of the household members (n=59)^{13,14}



The law on TP repealed the previous decisions on employment, which had granted Ukrainian refugees the right to work in Moldova without a residence permit. According to the TP legislation, refugees must obtain TP or another legal status to be employed in Moldova. Employment contracts in place as of May 15th, 2023, remained valid while refugees regularized their status¹⁵.

Household members holding an employment contract (n=59)^{13,14}



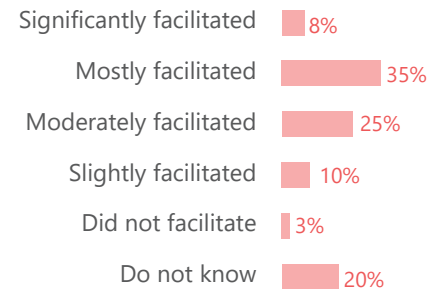
Before TP provision about 15% of Ukrainian refugees surveyed in Gagauzia (9 out of 24 of those employed) reportedly had an official employment contract. After obtaining TP, there was a reported increase in formal employment. A quarter of household members (15 out of 26 employed) reportedly had employment contracts.

Unemployment among members of the households surveyed in Gagauzia slightly decreased following TP provision, nonetheless remaining at a rather high level (39%). After TP implementation, more household members became employed full-time (rate increased from 10% to 24%), while less were working part-time (rate reduced from 12% to 5%).

According to the respondents, 17% of the household members changed their employment status after having received TP. Out of 10 individuals who changed their job, 8 were reportedly motivated in that decision by having obtained TP.

Additionally, 2 household members were reportedly planning to change their employment status due to having obtained TP. Out of those, 1 was looking for a full-time job, and 1 for a part-time job in Moldova.

Employment access facilitation due to TP, according to the respondents¹⁴



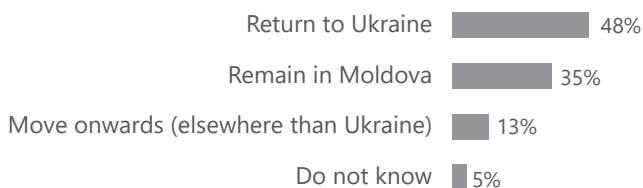
The majority of respondents (78%) reported that TP has facilitated refugee access to employment to some degree. They mentioned, e.g., that having the TP proof allows them to be officially employed.

A fifth of the respondents were not sure whether TP has indeed facilitated refugee access to employment, while 3% declared that it did not facilitate employment access at all.

MOVEMENT INTENTIONS

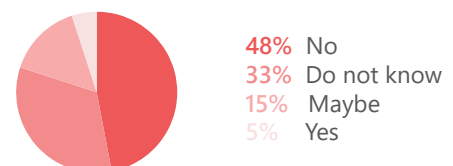
TP status grants the right to remain at the territory of Moldova until March 1st, 2024. However, the TP status expires if its beneficiary spends over 45 days abroad (in total). Refugees are then allowed to reapply for TP¹⁶.

Households' movement intentions before having obtained TP¹⁴



Before receiving TP, almost half of the households (48%) wished to return to Ukraine, while 35% planned to stay in Moldova. After TP provision, 33% of the households reportedly changed their movement plans, almost all being motivated in this decision by having obtained TP. All those who changed their movement intentions due to TP intended to remain in Moldova.

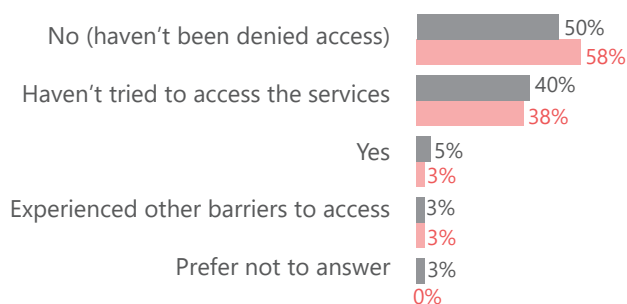
Households anticipating leaving Moldova for over 45 days¹⁴



Almost half of respondents (48%) did not anticipate leaving Moldova for more than 45 days in total in the upcoming 6 months, while 33% did not know. Another 15% hesitated, and 5% planned leaving. All of those who considered leaving for 45 days declared that they did not know if they would reapply for TP upon their return.

PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT

Household who were denied access to basic services on potentially discriminatory grounds^{17,18}

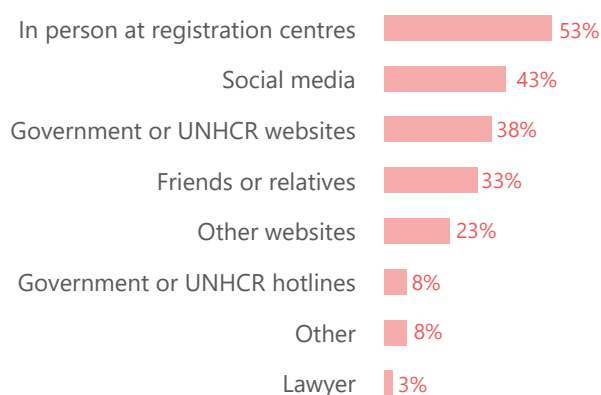


Before having received TP, only 2 households mentioned being denied access to services in Moldova on reportedly discriminatory grounds. 1 of them was denied access to employment, and 1 to banking services.

After receiving TP, only 1 household was reportedly denied access to banking services on discriminatory grounds.

INFORMATION ACCESS

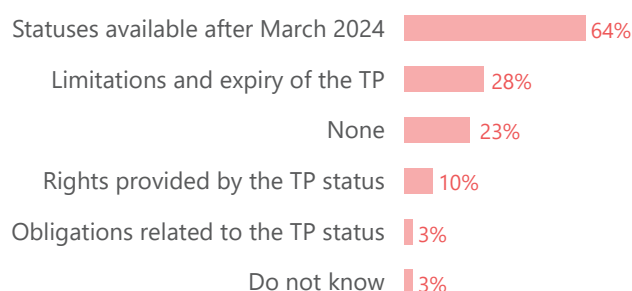
Sources used by the households to access information about TP¹⁹



Approximately half of household members (53%) obtained information in person when visiting registration centres.

Most respondents in Gagauzia were fully satisfied with access to information concerning TP (68%), while the others were either mostly (18%) or slightly (15%) satisfied. Respondents who were not fully satisfied with information access, most frequently highlighted the lack of complete or clear information on TP, difficulty to access information, and the lack of relevant information on eligibility criteria.

Additional information needed by the households¹⁹



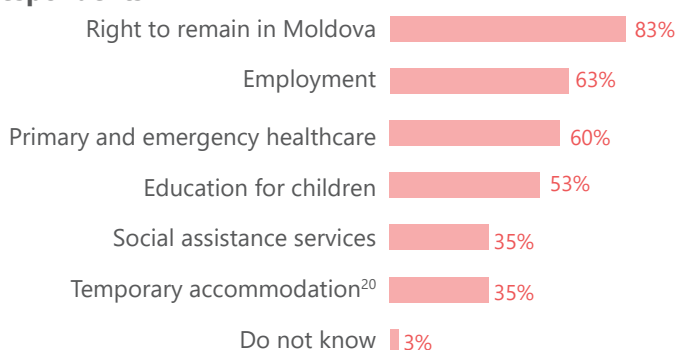
Sources preferred by the households to access additional information about TP¹⁹

77% of respondents needed additional information, mostly regarding legal statuses available after March 2024, when TP is set to expire.

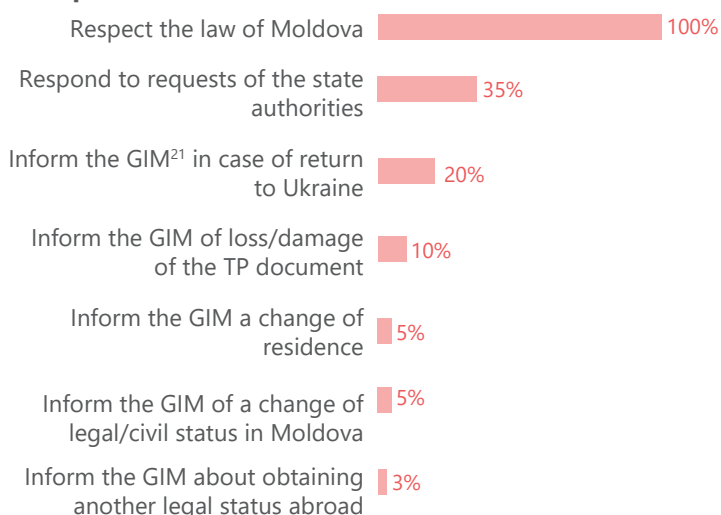
Out of 31 respondents who needed additional information, 61% indicated websites/Internet as their preferred source, while 58% mentioned SMS. Others preferred to receive information via social media (45%), in-person information (16%), leaflets or booklets (16%), hotline or phone call (10%), and TV or radio (10%).

To assess the respondents' level of awareness of the TP, they were asked to enlist TP-related rights and obligations. Almost all respondents in Gagauzia were able to identify at least one right determined by TP, and all noted at least one obligation. Most key informants claimed that the level of awareness concerning TP was sufficient among the refugees in Gagauzia.

Rights guaranteed by TP, as recognized by the respondents¹⁹



Responsibilities of TP beneficiaries according to the respondents¹⁹



LIMITATIONS

- The assessment of change in access to services is retrospective and lacks baseline data to compare the results with – respondents and informants were asked to assess the situation before and after TP provision. Their assessment of past experiences could be subjective or have shifted with time.
- 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.
- The household survey originally included the Area of Knowledge (AOK) method. AOK consists of asking the respondent questions concerning their close community, in this case, other Ukrainian refugees that they have been interacting with in their location in Moldova. However, due to the low number of responses received within the AOK questions, these findings were not included in the report.

ENDNOTES

PAGE 1

1. UNHCR, [Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation](#), updated on December 3rd, 2023.
2. The term "refugee" is used here to refer to persons displaced from Ukraine after the escalation of the conflict on February 24th, 2022 (i.e., not to be confused with the legal status of a refugee).
3. UNHCR, [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#), accessed on November 7th, 2023.
4. General Inspectorate of Migration, [Weekly statistics](#), December 18th, 2023.
5. Because of rounding up, the percentages might not add up to 100%.

PAGE 2

6. This is a multiple choice question, therefore results may add up to more than 100%.
7. UNHCR, [Temporary Protection Update, Republic of Moldova](#), August, 7th, 2023.
8. Out of 26 households who attempted to access healthcare services after having obtained TP.
9. Because of rounding up, the percentages might not add up to 100%.

PAGE 3

10. Out of 21 households with children.
11. Out of 9 households that attempted to enrol their children into Moldovan public schools after having obtained TP.
12. Ministry of Education and Research of Moldova, [Admission of Ukrainian citizens to general education institutions of the Republic of Moldova in the 2023-2024 academic year](#), accessed on November 10th, 2023.

PAGE 4

13. This question was asked about to respondents about each of their adult household member individually, hence the sample size exceeds the number of respondents.
14. Because of rounding up, the percentages might not add up to 100%.
15. UNHCR, [Temporary Protection Update, Republic of Moldova](#), August, 7th, 2023.
16. Ibid.

PAGE 5

17. The potentially discriminatory grounds include grounds perceived as discriminatory by the respondents, excluding, e.g., provider's lack of capacity.
18. Because of rounding up, the percentages might not add up to 100%.
19. This is a multiple choice question, therefore results may add up to more than 100%.
20. Accommodation in the temporary placement centres for persons in need.
21. The General Inspectorate of Migration

ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).