



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

LABOR MARKET ASSESSMENT FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

HIAS MOLDOVA

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Disclaimer

Within the framework of this report, the term "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Republic of Moldova" is defined to include individuals who have entered from Ukraine during the ongoing conflict (started in February 2022), without regard to their legal status within Moldova. It is important to specify that this study does not extend its scope to cover refugees from other diverse backgrounds or origins.

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MOLDOVA 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
2. INTRODUCTION.....	9
2.1 GENERAL CONTEXT	9
2.2 OBJECTIVES.....	10
3. METHODOLOGY	11
3.1 OVERALL APPROACH	11
3.2 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION.....	11
3.4 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION.....	13
3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS	15
4. MOLDOVA LABOR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS	17
4.1 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT.....	17
4.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR REFUGEES IN MOLDOVA.....	22
4.3 DOMINANT SECTORS AND INDUSTRIES.....	23
4.4 LABOR MARKET PATTERNS IN CONTEXT OF UKRAINE RESPONSE – SURVEY RESULTS AMONG COMPANIES	31
4.5 SERVICES FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF REFUGEES	37
5. REFUGEES PROFILE IN MOLDOVA	43
5.1 PROFESSIONAL PROFILE AND EXPERIENCE OF REFUGEE POPULATION IN MOLDOVA	43
5.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF REFUGEE POPULATION IN MOLDOVA.....	43
5.1.2 OTHER CHARACTERISTICS ABOUT REFUGEES ON THE TERRITORY OF MOLDOVA	44
5.1.2 WORK EXPERIENCE IN UKRAINE.....	53
5.1.3 BUSINESS EXPERIENCE IN UKRAINE.....	58
5.1.4 WORK EXPERIENCE IN MOLDOVA	61
5.1.5 WORKING CONDITIONS.....	68
5.1.6 SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN MOLDOVA.....	74
5.2 MAIN BARRIERS TO REFUGEE POPULATION EMPLOYABILITY.....	78
5.2.1 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY REFUGEES IN THE PROCESS OF EMPLOYMENT	78
5.2.2 BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYERS IN THE HIRING PROCESS	82
5.2.3 ANALYSIS OF BARRIERS TO REFUGEE POPULATION EMPLOYABILITY	85

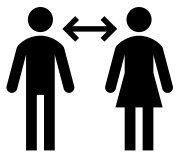
<u>6</u>	<u>SKILLS ANALYSIS AND REFUGEE MOTIVATIONS.....</u>	<u>89</u>
6.1	<i>SKILLS ANALYSIS</i>	89
6.1.1	SKILLS OF REFUGEES.....	89
6.1.2	SKILLS REQUIRED BY EMPLOYERS	91
6.1.3	SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS	93
6.2	<i>LABOR MARKET AND REFUGEES MOTIVATIONS</i>	100
6.3	<i>TRAINING AREAS FOR REFUGEES</i>	104
6.3.1	REFUGEE NEEDS FOR TRAININGS	104
6.3.2	EMPLOYERS' ABILITY TO PROVIDE TRAININGS	109
6.3.3	TRAININGS GAP ANALYSIS	111
<u>7</u>	<u>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</u>	<u>114</u>
7.1	<i>REFUGEE PROFILE</i>	114
7.2	<i>EXPECTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES GAP</i>	115
7.3	<i>RECOMMENDATIONS ON AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS</i>	117
7.4	<i>PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	119
	<u>ANNEX: RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF THE REFUGEES</u>	<u>129</u>
	STATE INSTITUTIONS	129
	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL NGOs	130
	<u>REVIEWED LITERATURE</u>	<u>132</u>
	<u>REFERENCES.....</u>	<u>133</u>

1. Executive Summary

Scope of the study

The overall scope of this study is to carry out a Labor Market Assessment for refugees located in the Republic of Moldova, to provide evidence-based information for quality program design. The study was conducted at the request of HIAS Moldova.

Key observation and trends



Language gap. The language barrier presents a significant challenge for both refugees and Moldovan employers. Refugees often find that proficiency in Romanian is a key prerequisite for employment, yet many struggle with limited proficiency in the language and face difficulties in finding affordable language courses. This lack of language skills not only hinders their job search but also restricts their access to vital information about employment opportunities and the legal aspects of job-seeking. Moldovan businesses that seek to employ refugees also encounter language-related challenges. These issues arise throughout the employment process, including during the specification of job requirements, conducting interviews, translating employment contracts, and during the onboarding process for new employees.



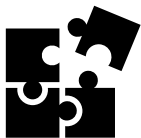
Employment intentions. Study findings suggest that Ukrainian refugees are prepared to remain in Moldova for the coming 6 to 12 months. Among the surveyed refugees, 25% are already employed in Moldova and 23% are actively looking for employment. Among the key employment preferences are recreation and leisure activities (20%), wholesale and retail trade; maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (19%) and information and communication (16%). There is a significant percentage of refugees that would prefer self-employment (around 10%), however they encounter difficulties in accessing funding, understanding legal and regulatory requirements, and not having the necessary training.

Overall, the job opportunities in Moldova are available in the retail and customer service (15%) with another 6.4% in the HORECA sector. It is followed by the office jobs in the information technologies and communication sector (10%), administration, business, and management (9.9%) and financial services (9.5%). The engineering and manufacturing jobs have a combined share of around 12% with openings in the telecommunication, construction, and factory work. Creative industries such as marketing, advertising, design and arts have a lower share of around 9%. Low-skill labor is also in high demand with more than 10% of job listing requiring various manual labor or assistance positions.

Most companies participating in the study are generally willing to hire Ukrainian refugees (64%). To a greater extent, companies located in Chisinau are willing to hire Ukrainian refugees (71%) compared to companies located in the rest of the country (53%). Most of the companies that are willing to hire refugees are from the wholesale and retail trade (27%), and these companies are willing to hire refugees, for the following positions: driver/courier (23%), auxiliary workers (19%), seller/Sales Agent (12%), warehouseman/Porter (11%), operator (10%).



Job expectations. Many refugees searching for employment in Moldova possess high levels of education and skills, typically seeking 'white collar' positions in professional, managerial, or administrative sectors. However, the Moldovan job market predominantly offers 'blue collar' roles, which are more oriented towards manual or unskilled labor. This situation results in a discrepancy between the advanced skills of the refugees and the predominantly unskilled job opportunities available in Moldova. Another mismatch is related to the working arrangements. The survey responses from refugees show a marked inclination for flexibility including part-time and remote jobs, or positions with flexible hours to manage their caregiving duties for children or the elderly. On the other side, Moldovan employers generally favor more traditional and rigid conditions such as full-time employment, viewing it as a sign of greater reliability and commitment. This preference stems from Moldova's remaining anchored in the traditional working conditions and slow pace to adopt new modalities like part-time employment and job-sharing, especially in comparison to Ukraine, where independent contracting and gig work are more common.



Skills and competencies matching. Matching skills and competencies is essential for productive employment relationships. The study reveals a good alignment in soft skills, with both refugees and employers appreciating qualities like communication, adaptability, creative thinking, and problem-solving. However, there is a mismatch in certain soft skills: employers prioritize responsibility, while refugees emphasize flexibility and independent thinking more. The study also identified that hard skills like accounting and digital competencies are also well-matched, but they require industry-specific knowledge to be properly applied.

Key recommendations

Legal status and rights. The temporary protection mechanism, implemented in 2023, is vital to ensure that Ukrainian refugees in Moldova obtain legal status enabling them to work, access healthcare, education, and other social services. Currently, only a quarter of refugees have this status. A significant barrier to wider adoption of this protection is the lack of information available to both refugees and potential employers. Interventions are needed to enhance the availability and accessibility of information for refugees. There's a need to also provide legal

advice for Moldovan employers regarding the application of temporary protection in the workplace. This advice should detail how it fits within Moldovan labor laws and regulations.

Access to labor markets. Facilitating access to employment for refugees involves legal work rights and practical support such as job training, skills matching, and addressing employer biases. It includes targeted training programs tailored for high-demand sectors like trades, hospitality, healthcare, and agriculture. It is also crucial to understand that these interventions have a pronounced gender dimension, as the majority of adults refugees seeking employment in Moldova are women. Another important target group are Ukrainian youth looking to enter the workforce. Facilitating internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs can offer valuable work experience and potential long-term employment opportunities in Moldova.

Self-employment and business development. An opportunity to support socio-economic integration of the refugees in Moldova is assistance in starting businesses, including entrepreneurship training, microfinance, and mentorship programs. One of the key activities is facilitation and organization of workshops and training courses that cover basic business skills, including business planning, marketing, financial management, and legal aspects of starting a business in Moldova. Another activity can be centered on promoting mentorship and networking opportunities by pairing refugee entrepreneurs with experienced business mentors who can provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities. Finally, business incubation and co-working spaces for refugees, can provide more affordable opportunities for them to start and grow their businesses in Moldova.

Supporting Moldova employers. There are several incentives that can contribute to higher rates of hiring of refugees into Moldova small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs). Among them are financial or cost-sharing incentives to help SMEs cover the costs of training, language courses, and adaptation to the workplace. For better engagement it is also important to design and implement on-demand training and upskilling programs that will match the needs of employers across different sectors. Improving and adapting job matching services is also an important issue to ensure better employment experience and reduce work turnover. Support for remote and flexible working arrangements, considering the rapid development of gig economy, it is important to encourage and support SMBs to offer remote or flexible working arrangements, which can be particularly beneficial for refugees who have caregiving responsibilities or who are still adapting to their new environment.

Social integration and cultural orientation. Programs aimed at promoting social integration and cultural understanding are crucial in helping refugees adjust to their new surroundings. This encompasses language courses, cultural orientation sessions, and various community engagement initiatives. A vital intervention involves providing language courses and job-related information in the local language, particularly targeting the 32% of refugees who lack language

understanding. Beyond language training, partnering with companies to establish a referral program is beneficial. This would allow employers to suggest language courses for their employees, thereby reducing training and labor integration costs.

Finally, it is essential to support family-oriented programs to assist refugee families in collectively adapting to their new environment, while addressing the distinct challenges encountered by individual family members.

2. Introduction

2.1 General Context

HIAS is a global Jewish nonprofit organization working across the globe to ensure that refugees and displaced persons are protected. Guided by our values and history, we help refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and security and advocate to ensure that all displaced people are treated with dignity.

HIAS's office in Moldova has been established in 2022. Since then, its main activity is a support offered for ongoing programs. The Economic Inclusion Program proposed by HIAS, with a gender focus, encourages a rapid generation of income, reducing protection risks to which families would be exposed if they did not have alternatives to cover their basic needs. Through the implementation of shared value strategies, HIAS intends to promote collaboration with the private sector towards the inclusion of refugees and migrants in value chains.

Between 24 February and September 2022, over 600,000 refugees arrived in Moldova from Ukraine. While many move on to the European Union, over 113,000 refugees remain in the country as of 12 November 2023. 85% of those who stay are female, elderly persons and/or children. Moldova is struggling with a serious economic crisis and inflation, in addition to the humanitarian situation. This is deepening the poverty in the country with limited resources and existent more than 620,00 individuals in an absolute poverty (estimated that additional 250K-500K will be under poverty line in few months). Most refugees come from the southern and southwestern areas of Ukraine, although the situation is changing rapidly. Seventeen border crossings have been established on the border with Ukraine, of which Palanca is the most frequented.

Some 70 percent of refugees possess higher education qualifications, and two-thirds were previously working in Ukraine. Refugees are eager to reenter the labor market, which would lessen their reliance on welfare, but currently, less than one-third are employed or self-employed.

Refugees are seeking to play a more active role in their host countries, but they need additional support to do so. New needs have emerged as displacement has continued. Many mention that they need classes in local languages, support to ensure their skills are formally recognized, and importantly, help with childcare services which would enable them to work outside the home.

2.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- Identifying enablers and barriers to refugee population' employability and self-employment and, opportunities to mitigate prioritized barriers and maximize impactful opportunities.
- Identifying main market niches where refugees might have an opportunity to be employed by the private sector or sectors in which refugees already work but have opportunities to advance or better integrate.
- Providing insights on resources, training, start-up capital and other support that may be provided to extremely poor refugee population to engage in selected/identified livelihood opportunities.
- Identifying the organizations currently engaged in economic inclusion activities and map institutions that are relevant for the economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the country, as well as their level of influence and willingness to work towards this objective.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overall Approach

In line with the objectives of the study, the proposed methodology involved the use of a mixed methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative data collection. The study included the following components:

- Review of secondary sources, research, reports, assessments etc.
- Survey with Ukrainian refugees.
- Focus Group Discussions with asylum seekers and refugee communities in Moldova.
- Key informant interviews with major employers, practitioners of the major business sectors, workers union, vocational training centers etc.
- Data analysis
- Development and implementation of supplementary tools.
- Producing a report including data analysis, findings and recommendations for further programming and areas of research.

The methodology, questionnaire, and moderation guides were coordinated and approved by HIAS Moldova.

3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative research consisted of 4 Focus Groups Discussions and 20 Key Informant Interviews.

a. FOCUS GROUPS

4 Focus Groups were conducted.

Sample: 4 focus Groups (6-8 participants each).

Participants: asylum seekers and refugee communities in Moldova.

Language: Ukrainian/ Russian.

Geography: national

The table below includes the distribution of Focus Groups and the criteria for selecting participants.

Table 1. Distribution of Focus-Groups Discussions

No	Region	Gender	Age	Language	Employment status	Level of completed studies
1	Chisinau	Male/ Female	18-35	Russian/ Ukrainian	Tried to get the job and managed to find the job	minimum one person with higher education
2			35-60		Tried to get a job and couldn't find a job	
3	Nord, Centre, Sud		18-35		Tried to get the job and managed to find the job	
4			35-60		Tried to get a job and couldn't find a job	

At the recruitment stage, attention was drawn to the following criteria :

- Gender;
- Age;
- Region;
- Area of residence;
- Level of completed studies;
- Family background in Moldova (presence of children/husband);
- Plans for the near future (stay in Moldova or leave the country);
- Success achieved in applying to work in Moldova (if they tried to get a job in Moldova and failed; if they got a job in Moldova; if they did not try to get a job in Moldova).

The moderation guide was developed to direct the discussion and ensure that all the important topics are covered. **All FGDs were carried out through the Google Meet platform.**

The data collected from the focus groups was analyzed in a qualitative manner to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of the participants.

b. Key Informant Interviews

Sample: 20 interviews.

Participants: major employers, practitioners of the major business sectors, workers union, vocational training centers etc.

Language: Russian/ Romanian.

Geography: national

The table below includes the distribution of participants for Key Informant Interview.

Table 2. Distribution of Key Informant Interviews

No.	Category of participants	Nr. of KII per category
1.	Major employers, practitioners of the major business sectors	6
2.	Workers union	14
3.	Vocational training centers	
4.	Public authorities in the field of employment	
Total		20

The following categories of respondents participated in interviews with institutions that provide support to refugees in the process of employment:

- Civil servants in the field of employment;
- Representatives of organizations offering professional training courses;
- Teachers (university);
- Refugees working in institutions that provide support to refugees;
- President of trade unions;
- Public organizations providing psycho-emotional assistance.

The methodology for Key Informant Interviews involved the recruitment of participants who were knowledgeable about the topic of the research. The recruitment process ensured a diverse range of perspectives.

All interviews were conducted through the Google Meet platform or over the phone.

3.4 Quantitative Data Collection

The survey was conducted with the following groups of respondents - refugees and asylum seekers from Ukraine, and legal entities (enterprises from areas of interest).

a. Survey among refugees and asylum seekers

Data collection method: CAPI – Computer Assisted Personal Interview.

Sample size: 456 Ukrainian migrants in Moldova, aged 18-65 years (that represent active workforce)

Language: Russian

Geography: national (right bank of the Nistru river).

The table below shows the distribution of the sample by region:

Table 3. Distribution of the sample for the survey among refugees, N

No	Region	Nr. of respondents
1	Chisinau	201
2	North	130
3	Centre	83
4	South	42
Total		456

Based on the data on the distribution of refugee from Ukraine from "Displacement Surveys Republic Of Moldova: Evolution Of Displacement Patterns, Needs And Intentions Of Refugees And Third-country Nationals From Ukraine",ⁱ the sample distribution of refugee from Ukraine was structured as follows:

Table 4. Age distribution of respondents for the survey among refugees

18-29 y.o.	14%
30-39 y.o.	35%
40-49 y.o.	25%
50-59 y.o.	14%
60+ y.o.	11%

Table 5. Gender distribution of respondents for the survey among refugees

Male	28%
Female	72%

Respondent selection

HIAS provided contacts of their partners from the areas of interest who interacted directly with refugees from Ukraine and through which it was possible to get to the refugees to conduct interviews. In this regard, Magenta contacted HIAS partners in the regions of interest to find out the contacts of refugees or to find out the days, the time of day when refugees were in place. Interviews were conducted near different locations, such as refugee placement centers, registration centers for financial assistance, community centers that provide services to refugees, child - friendly spaces, training centers, NGO offices that provided support to refugees. Interviews were conducted in the language preferred by the interviewee.

Centers providing support to refugees were informed by the study beneficiary about the study.

b. Survey among legal entities

Data collection method: CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interview

Sample size: 86 companies, of which 54 are open to hiring refugees and 32 are not open to hiring refugees.

Language: Romanian/ Russian

Geography: North (Balti, Edinet, Falesti), Centre (Criuleni, Dubasari), Chisinau, South (Cahul, Gagauzia).

The table below shows the distribution of sample by region.

Table 6. Distribution of the sample for the survey among legal entities, N

No	Region	Nr. of respondents
1	Chisinau	50
2	North (Balti, Falesti, Edinet)	36
3	Centre (Criuleni, Dubasari)	
4	South (Cahul, Gagauzia)	
Total		86

The survey questionnaire was developed to capture information on the enablers and barriers to employability and self-employment, market niches, resources and support, and organizations engaged in economic inclusion activities.

Respondent selection

The company contacts of companies that correspond to the selection criteria (the district in which they operate, the size of the enterprise, the field of activity) were selected randomly from the database of registered legal entities.

3.5 Data collection process

The data collection process for the quantitative research included multiple stages.

Pre-testing of questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by Magenta Consulting in close partnership with the contractor and all comments and requirements were implemented. The questionnaire was translated to Russian. Our experience has proven the necessity of pre-testing questionnaires and it is a mandatory step. This approach was helpful for identifying questions that could be misunderstood or misinterpreted by respondents. The testing involved a small sample of the target population to ensure that the questions were clear, and that the responses accurately reflected the intended meaning. The questionnaire was tested on 10 respondents.

Interviewers' selection and training

A team of 30 interviewers with considerable experience in face-to-face surveys was selected and trained. It was necessary to ensure that the interviewers understood the goal of the project, the type of answers to expect from the respondents, how to mark them in the questionnaire, how to follow the instructions from the questionnaire, etc.

Data collection quality control

The manager responsible for the logistics of the project kept track of all the questionnaires arriving from the field, verified the quality of the work being done and monitored the quotas. Up to 50% of the respondents were called to check how long the interview lasted, verify the data in the collected questionnaire for some key questions, and check the demographical data.

Data input

Surveys conducted with the help of tablets have an important advantage – the questionnaires are fed into the database at once. As soon as the interviewer filled in the responses, the data were transferred into the database via Wi-Fi, which eliminated the costs for double-entry and contributed to error-reduction.

Data analysis

For survey data analysis, Magenta Consulting used the statistical software SPSS and produced both general results for each question of interest, and cross-tabs with the demography or any other questions, demonstrating correlations/ associations with the question of interest. Each result was graphically presented and commented.

4. Moldova Labor Market Characteristics

The following chapter includes a comprehensive high-level analysis of the Republic of Moldova, delving into its macroeconomic driving forces and market dynamics. It focuses on three pivotal dimensions that shape the employment landscape within the country: the prominence of key sectors and industries, labor market models in response to the Ukrainian situation, and prevailing working conditions.

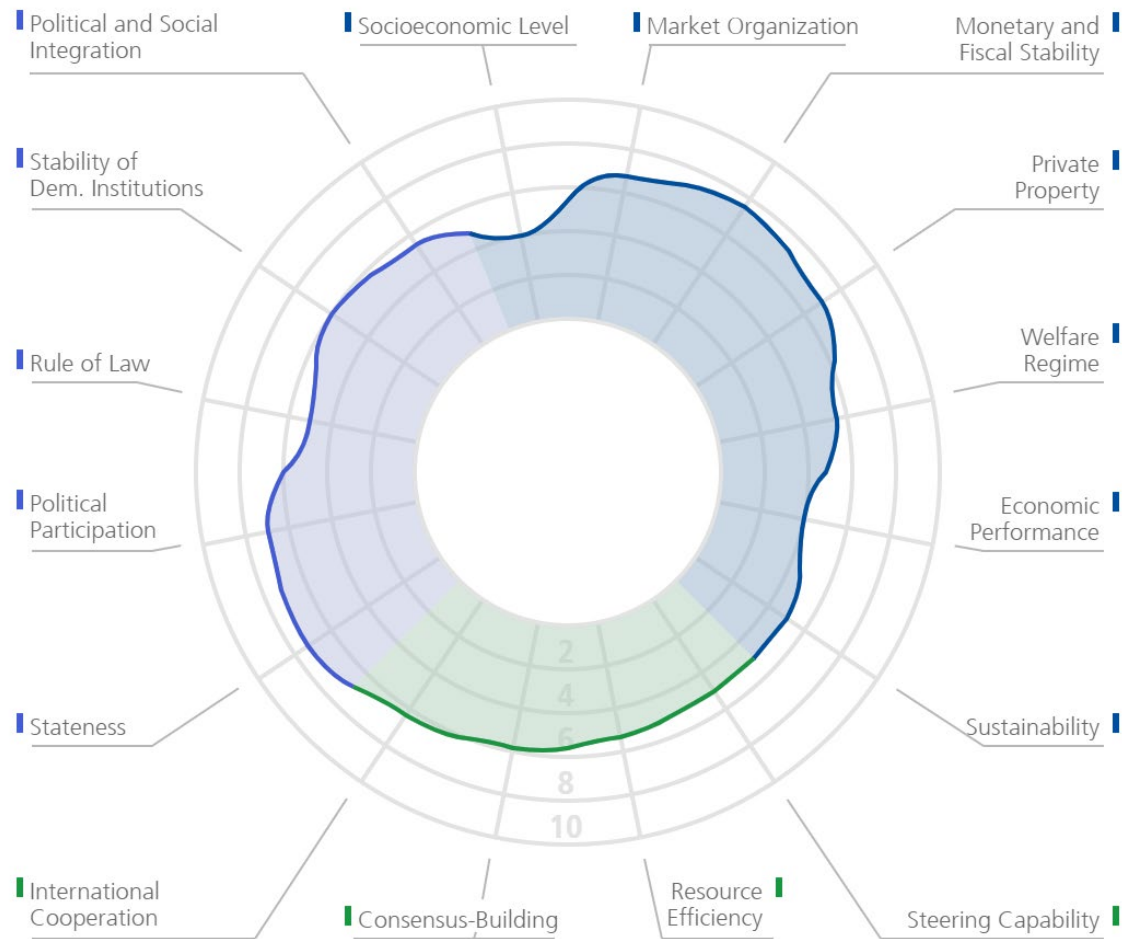
4.1 Economic and Political Context

The Moldovan economy has been severely affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and a surge in inflation. GDP has contracted by 5.9% and inflation has reached an average of 28.7% in 2022. Despite the efforts to mitigate the impact of the crises with a forceful fiscal impulse and swift monetary stance, private consumption was restrained by the erosion of households' disposable income and private investments by the uncertainty and challenging financial conditions, causing the economy to plunge into a recession in 2022. Moldova's external position has deteriorated due to the impact of the energy crisis and lower remittances. As share of GDP, external debt decreased to 62.1%. The monetary stance has been relaxed after inflation reached its peak in October 2022. In 2022, inflation surged to 28.7% triggered by adjustments in regulated prices. In 2023, the monetary authorities have decreased the policy rate three times to 14% from 21.5%. The fiscal position proved to be resilient in 2022, registering a deficit of 3.3%, thanks to a strong revenue performance. Public spending increased by 22.4% led by social spending and subsidies. Cash buffers were used toward the end of the year to secure the supply of energy.

GDP growth is expected to slowly rebound to 1.8% in 2023, reaching its potential only in 2024, due to inflation dynamics, energy security concerns, and the ongoing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Double digit inflation will persist in 2023, only receding slowly toward the National Bank of Moldova's inflation target of 5%, +/- 1.5% in 2024. Moldova's external position is expected to weaken, reflecting overall elevated import prices coupled with subdued capital inflows due to heightened uncertainty. Revenues are expected to decline in real terms as economic activity subsides, resulting in a fiscal deficit of 5.4% in 2023. The medium-term outlook will be influenced by the ability of the Government to mitigate the households' eroding purchasing power while keeping the momentum on the reform program to address low productivity growth, persistent structural and governance weaknesses, the significant state-owned enterprises footprint, stifled competition, an uneven playing field, and tax distortions. The risks of extreme weather events and energy shocks remain high. Persistent inequality of opportunity limits the ability to access public services and reduces resilience and intergenerational mobility. Significant uncertainty also remains around the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the Moldovan economy, and the supply and price of energy in 2023.ⁱⁱ

Moldova

Overall Results



Transformation Atlas 2022

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Democracy
 Economy
 Governance

Country Dashboard Moldova according to BTI Transformation Indexⁱⁱⁱ : the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) analyzes and evaluates whether and how developing countries and countries in transition are steering social change toward democracy and a market economy.

Economic Performance

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) between 2016 and 2019, Moldova developed steadily, reaching an average of 4% GDP growth per year (local currency), with GDP reaching \$11.97 billion in 2020. GDP per capita (PPP) also steadily grew in this period and reached \$13,574 (current U.S. dollars) in 2019 compared to \$10,610 in 2016. The upward trend, however, was interrupted by the pandemic and related restrictions on economic activity. According to the NBS, economic activity in the second and third quarters of 2020 decreased by 14% and 10%, respectively (compared to the same periods the year before). In January 2021, the World Bank forecasted that in 2020 the economic decline in Moldova will amount to 7.2%.

The DCFTA agreement with the European Union, which provisionally entered into force on September 1, 2014, contributed to the dynamic development of Moldovan trade (particularly with EU member states), which continued to rise until 2020. In 2019, total exports amounted to \$2.779 billion, of which as much as 66% went to the European Union. By comparison, in 2014, the European Union accounted for 54% of Moldova's exports. Imports from the European Union also increased, though not as much as exports. The economic crisis (both at the local and global levels) caused by the pandemic put an end to this upward trend. According to the NBS, in the first 11 months of 2020, exports decreased by 11.5% and imports fell by 8.6% (compared to the same period in 2019).

Romania strengthened its position as the largest importer of Moldovan products (with a share of 27.5% in 2019). As a result of Russia's partial lifting of its embargo on Moldovan goods, exports to Russia started to rise at the end of 2017 but amounted to just 8% of total exports in 2019 and 9% during the first three trimesters of 2020. The IT sector has rapidly developed in recent years, contributing to around 7% of GDP.

Socio Economic Development

Social exclusion in Moldova is associated with poverty and place of residence (e.g., urban vs rural or north vs south), and (to a lesser extent) by gender, ethnicity and religion. In 2019, as much as 25% of Moldovans lived below the national poverty line (currently just over MDL 2000 or around €100). In rural areas, this problem affects about one-third of the population, but only about 10% of the population in cities (4.5% in Chisinau). The worst situation is in the southern regions, where about 40% of inhabitants live below the poverty line. Additionally, non-urban residents have limited access to public services (e.g., health care, sanitation and quality education).

Poverty is closely related to education. More than 78% of adults who have not completed secondary education declare an extremely low income. Additionally, poverty is particularly widespread among people working in agriculture, pensioners and disabled people. Only 21.6% of people over 60 declare that their income allows them to live decent lives (BOP, October 2020).

Almost 43% of Moldovans (BOP, October 2020) declare that their earnings only cover the most basic needs and another 18.4% claim that they do not have enough money even for that.

In the UNDP's Human Development Index, Moldova's ranking is improving, but very slowly. Since independence, the country has managed to increase its score by 0.1 from 0.653 in 1990 to 0.75 in 2020. Moldova's Gini Index^{iv} score of 26.3 is very good but does not reflect the gap between urban and rural populations. (The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution.)

There is no doubt that the global economic slowdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic will also affect the earnings of Moldovans. In August 2020, 13% of the surveyed population declared that their regular payments (e.g., salaries, pensions and benefits) have been delayed due to the pandemic.

Despite this, Moldova has managed to achieve enormous progress in reducing the poverty rate. The number of "working poor" (i.e., people who live on less than \$3.20 a day, 2011 PPP) decreased from 68% of the population in 2000 to 7.9% in 2008 to only 0.9% in 2018 (World Bank). The reduction in poverty was primarily driven by a return to economic growth at the turn of the century, a gradual increase in pension.

The gender gap remains an important issue. Moldova's score in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) was 0.204 in 2019, with Moldova ranked 46th. The wages and pensions for women are significantly lower than for men, and women are under-represented in public offices.^v

Political Landscape

Moldova's society lacks consensus regarding a civic and ethnic-based definition of the Moldovan nation-state. The inability of Moldovan elites to propose an attractive identity model to which all citizens can subscribe continues to affect the cohesion of Moldova's ethnically diverse society in which Moldovans/Romanians account for around 78% of the population of right-bank Moldova (i.e., excluding Transnistria), while Ukrainians make up 9%, Russians 6% and Gagauz 4%. The titular majority also remains fragmented and uncertain of its identity, and the entire society (including the minorities) is deeply divided over attitudes toward history, national symbols, certain values or even the name of the official language. Parts of the population (namely Russian-speaking minorities) and political parties (left and center-left) support the so-called Moldovenism, which highlights the separateness of Moldovans and Romanians.

Proponents of this approach advocate a multiethnic civic state in which Russian plays a special role as a language of interethnic communication. On the other hand, a considerable proportion of Moldovans (mostly ethnic Moldovans and Moldovan Romanians), as well as right and center-right parties support a more ethnic-based view, according to which Moldovan statehood should be based on the titular nation, with a dominant role for the Romanian language and culture.

Although these groups differ in their views, they are mostly consistent as to the issue of preserving Moldovan statehood. Currently around 800,000 Moldovans (25% of the population) have Romanian passports. Applying for Romanian citizenship is perceived by most Moldovans as a pragmatic (rather than an ideological) step that allows them to travel and work freely within the European Union. The identity problem has directly affected the political scene and the party system, and has seriously impaired Moldova's ability to foster a sense of loyalty toward the state and a spirit of modern patriotism.

The Moldovan party system comprises a number of groupings, which – at least nominally – represent political programs. Unfortunately, the party system in Moldova is instrumentalized, only moderately stable and does not enjoy the trust of the general public. In 2020, only 20% of citizens stated that they had confidence in political parties, meaning that political parties are the least trusted public institution (including the police, banks or parliament) in Moldova. Splits in political parties, with members of parliament or local politicians defecting to other parties, are very common. Several groups are led by people who fled the country after being charged with serious crimes.

Most Moldovan parties are chieftain-style groupings, which tend to serve as instruments for the business interests of their leaders and sponsors. As access to funding remains unequal, these types of groupings are generally dependent on financial support from their sponsors, such as business tycoons or external actors (European Implementation Assessment 2020, p. 42). Bottom-up parties based on self governing structures do not constitute a dominant force. Political parties in Moldova tend to appeal to geopolitically (including historically and culturally) defined notions of “left-wing” (pro-Russian) and “right-wing” (pro-Western).

Trust in civil society is consistently undermined by a proportion of the political elite (especially left-wing parties), which accuses its members of acting in the interests of external actors. The total number of NGOs operating in Moldova is not small, but most of them are concentrated in the capital. To a much lesser extent, such organizations can be found in Bălți (northern Moldova) and in Comrat (the capital city of Gagauz Autonomy). In smaller towns and villages, civil society activity is very limited or nonexistent.

Generally, citizens approve of democratic norms and procedures, but – due to the poor performance of state institutions – the level of trust in them and democratic governance remains moderate.

On the declaratory level, all mainstream parties and civil society movements approve of democratic norms and values. Even parties willing to copy authoritarian government models (particularly from Russia), such as the Party of Socialists, Șor Party or the “Our Party” of Renato Usatîi, rhetorically do not reject democratic procedures. However, a significant proportion of the

political elite has adopted an instrumental approach toward democratic mechanisms. This is due to the country's Soviet past and the lack of an effective, well-established democratic state, as well as the fact that most interest groups in Moldova act in their own political and material interests and are willing to break democratic norms.

4.2 Legal Framework for Refugees in Moldova

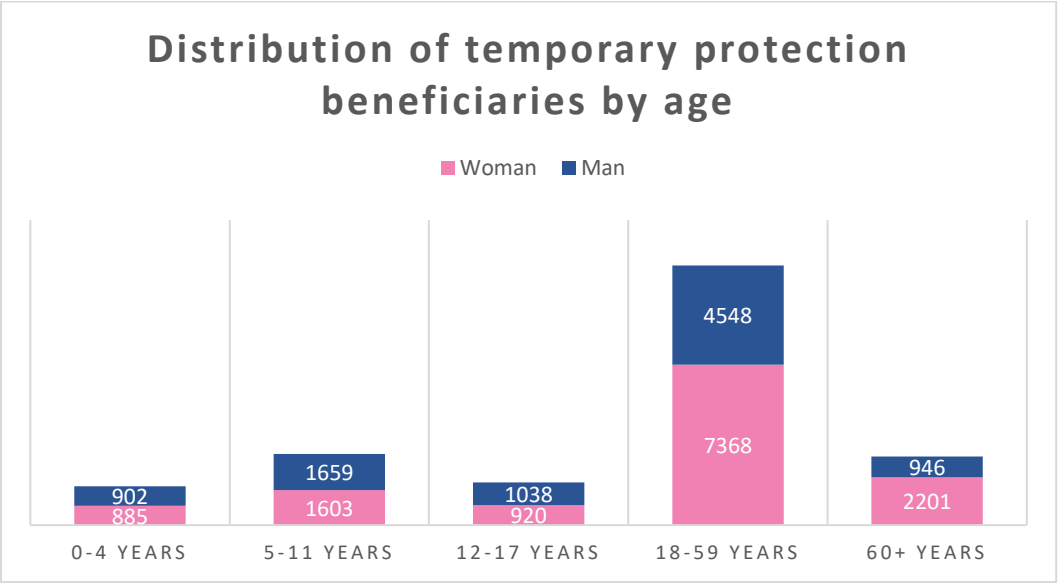
On 18 January 2023, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the temporary protection (TP) mechanism for refugees from Ukraine and third country nationals (TCN). The temporary protection is one of key mechanism that secures a legal status for Ukrainian refugees and TCNs and supports their integration into Moldova society. The temporary protection status lasts for one year with the possibility of renewal for an additional year. TP provides access to several rights and services including access to employment, temporary accommodation, emergency and primary medical assistance, public education for children, and social assistance for families with children and unaccompanied children.

Based on the latest report of the General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) regarding beneficiaries of temporary protection, there are 22058 TP beneficiaries as of 6th of November, 2023. In addition, 1243 people were registered in the asylum system, 3367 Ukrainian citizens having permanent residency and 3586 having temporary residency permits¹. The uptake of TP in Moldova has been relatively low, partly due to lack of information about the process and its implications, and indecision on the part of Ukrainians about whether they want to stay or not. Since 15th May 2023 the numbers have increased, however now there are some additional barriers to the process such as requiring official accommodation rental agreement documentation and certificates of good conduct (criminal records). Since September, Moldova Government has simplified proof of residence requirements for obtaining TP, reducing the difficulties refugees were facing when applying for TP.

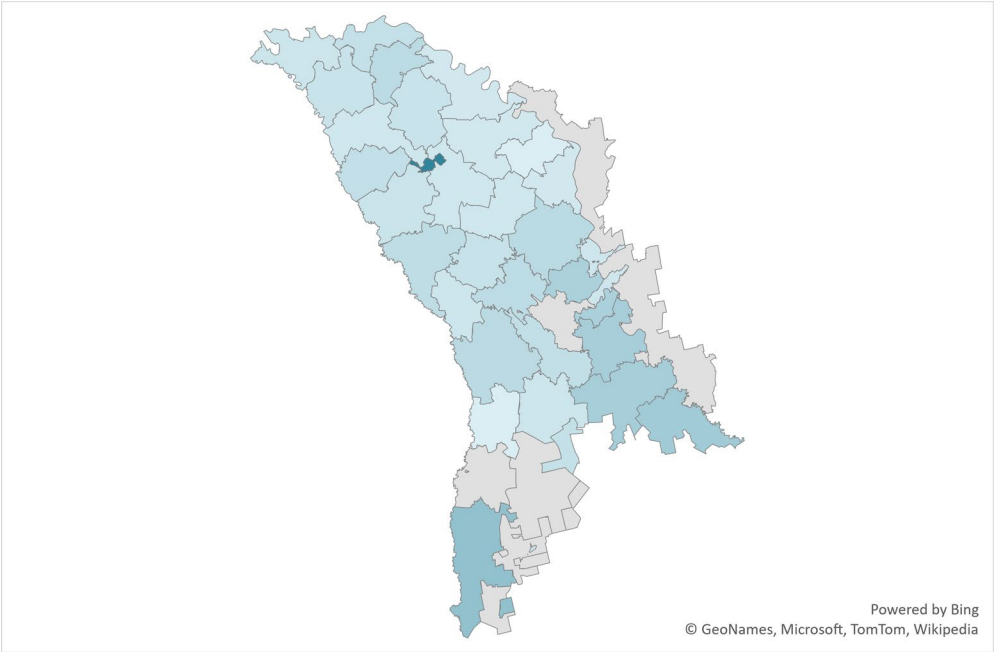
Most of the TP beneficiaries are adults between 18 and 59 years. Around 60% of the beneficiaries are women, primarily concentrated in urban areas such as Chisinau and Balti Municipalities. Chisinau Municipality alone has more than half of all the TP beneficiaries, indicating that most Ukrainian refugees and TCN prefer the capital as the primary destination for staying long-term in Moldova. Taking into account the regional distribution, more TP beneficiaries are in the South-East part of Moldova and around 1200 TP beneficiaries are residing on the left bank of the Nistru River in the unrecognized region of Transnistria.

¹ Monthly statistics of the General Inspectorate for Migration <https://igm.gov.md/ro/content/statistica-s%C4%83p%C4%83m%C3%A2nal%C4%83-inspectoratului-general-pentru-migra%C8%9Bie>

Graph 1. Distribution of temporary protection beneficiaries by age as of 6th of November 2023, General Inspectorate for Migration



Graph 2. Distribution of temporary protection beneficiaries by district (excluding Chisinau Municipality and Transnistria) as of 6th of November 2023, General Inspectorate for Migration



4.3 Dominant Sectors and Industries

Over the last decade, Moldova has achieved enormous progress in eliminating barriers to market entry and continues to strengthen its position in this field. According to the World Bank’s Doing

Business Index, between 2018 and 2020, Moldova increased its score in the category “starting a business” from 95.5 to 95.7 points (out of 100) and ranked 13 out of 190 countries. In comparison, in 2013, Moldova ranked only 92 out of 185 countries. Starting a business takes four days and three procedures, with no minimum paid-in capital requirement. On the other hand, market exit remains underdeveloped.

This data from below tables provides valuable insights into the distribution of the employed population in Moldova, which can inform policies and programs aimed at workforce development and economic growth in the country.

Table 7. The population aged 15 and over analyzed according to participation in the labor force, by age groups, gender and backgrounds, year 2022, according to National Bureau of Statistics

Age groups, Gender	Participation in the labor force				thousands of people		
	Workforce			The population outside the labor force	Labor force participation rate, %	Occupancy rate, %	Unemployment rate, %
	Total	Employed	Unemployed				
Total	890.0	862.3	27.7	1,240.1	41.8	40.5	3.1
15-24 y.o.	47.3	42.3	5.1	219.6	17.7	15.8	10.7
25-34 y.o.	199.8	194.7	5.1	173.5	53.5	52.2	2.5
35-44 y.o.	238.4	231.5	6.9	150.3	61.3	59.6	2.9
45-54 y.o.	213.2	206.8	6.4	121.4	63.7	61.8	3.0
55-64 y.o.	168.6	164.5	4.2	204.4	45.2	44.1	2.5
65 y.o. and over	22.7	22.6	0.0	370.9	5.8	5.7	0.0
Men	460.1	443.7	16.3	533.1	46.3	44.7	3.5
15-24 y.o.	27.8	25.2	0.0	104.9	20.9	19.0	0.0
25-34 y.o.	111.3	107.8	3.5	66.3	62.7	60.7	3.2
35-44 y.o.	117.0	113.4	3.7	72.1	61.9	59.9	3.2
45-54 y.o.	101.1	97.3	3.8	65.8	60.6	58.3	3.7
55-64 y.o.	90.7	88.1	0.0	79.2	53.4	51.8	0.0
65 y.o. and over	12.2	12.1	0.0	144.9	7.7	7.7	0.0
Women	430.0	418.6	11.4	707.0	37.8	36.8	2.6
15-24 y.o.	19.6	17.1	0.0	114.8	14.6	12.7	0.0
25-34 y.o.	88.5	87.0	0.0	107.2	45.2	44.4	0.0
35-44 y.o.	121.3	118.2	3.2	78.2	60.8	59.2	2.6
45-54 y.o.	112.1	109.5	0.0	55.6	66.8	65.3	0.0
55-64 y.o.	77.9	76.4	0.0	125.3	38.3	37.6	0.0
65 y.o. and over	10.6	10.5	0.0	225.9	4.5	4.4	0.0
Urban	408.2	393.6	14.6	423.3	49.1	47.3	3.6
15-24 y.o.	23.4	20.6	0.0	85.1	21.6	19.0	0.0
25-34 y.o.	118.5	115.0	3.5	68.0	63.5	61.7	2.9
35-44 y.o.	120.2	116.5	3.7	54.1	69.0	66.8	3.1
45-54 y.o.	78.1	74.9	3.1	30.3	72.0	69.1	4.0
55-64 y.o.	57.8	56.4	0.0	63.1	47.8	46.6	0.0
65 y.o. and over	10.2	10.1	0.0	122.7	7.7	7.6	0.0
Rural	481.8	468.8	13.1	816.8	37.1	36.1	2.7
15-24 y.o.	23.9	21.6	0.0	134.6	15.1	13.6	0.0
25-34 y.o.	81.3	79.7	0.0	105.5	43.5	42.7	0.0
35-44 y.o.	118.1	115.0	3.2	96.2	55.1	53.6	2.7
45-54 y.o.	135.1	131.9	3.3	91.1	59.7	58.3	2.4
55-64 y.o.	110.9	108.1	0.0	141.3	44.0	42.9	0.0
65 y.o. and over	12.5	12.5	0.0	248.2	4.8	4.8	0.0

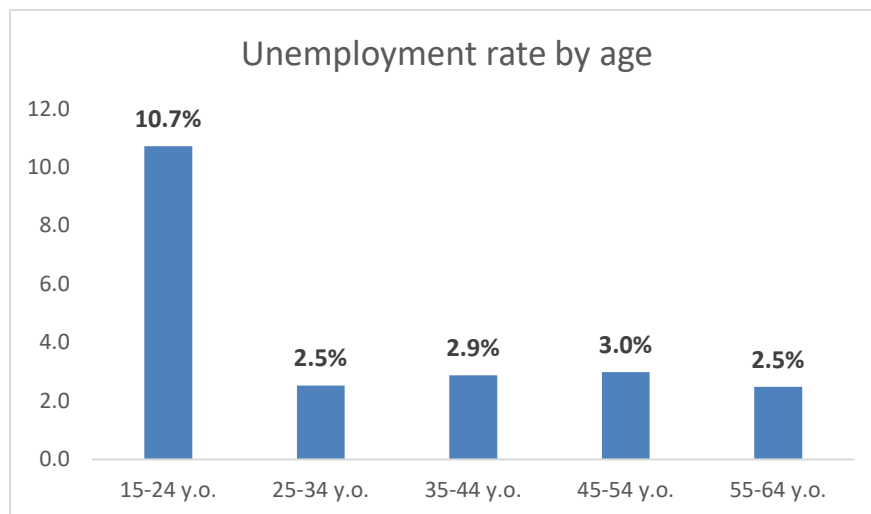
Total Labor Force: According to table 7, the total labor force in Moldova in 2022 was approximately 890,000 individuals, with the majority being employed (862,300) and a small percentage being unemployed (27,700). The labor force participation rate was 41.8%.

Age Groups: The data from table 7 reveals different patterns across various age groups. The highest participation rates were observed in the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups, indicating a peak in employment during these years. The 65 and over age group had the lowest participation rates, with very few individuals being part of the labor force.

Gender Disparities: Men had a slightly higher workforce participation rate (46.3%) compared to women (37.8%). However, the unemployment rate for men (3.5%) was marginally higher than for women (2.6%).

Urban vs. Rural Disparities: The data also highlights differences between urban and rural areas. The urban workforce participation rate was higher (49.1%) compared to rural areas (37.1%). However, urban areas had a slightly higher unemployment rate (3.6%) compared to rural areas (2.7%). **Youth Employment:** The 15-24 age group had a relatively high unemployment rate. The Graph 3 below provides details of the of unemployment rates by age. It can be highlighted the big gap between youth and the rest of the age groups. Among those between 15 and 24 years the rate of unemployment is at least 3 folds larger. The conclusion is that in both urban and rural areas, there is a need for more opportunities for young people to enter the workforce.

Graph 3. Unemployment rate by age in Moldova in year of 2022



Occupancy and Unemployment Rates: According to table 7, the occupancy rates were generally high, indicating that most people in the labor force were employed. The unemployment rate was relatively low overall, suggesting a relatively stable job market.

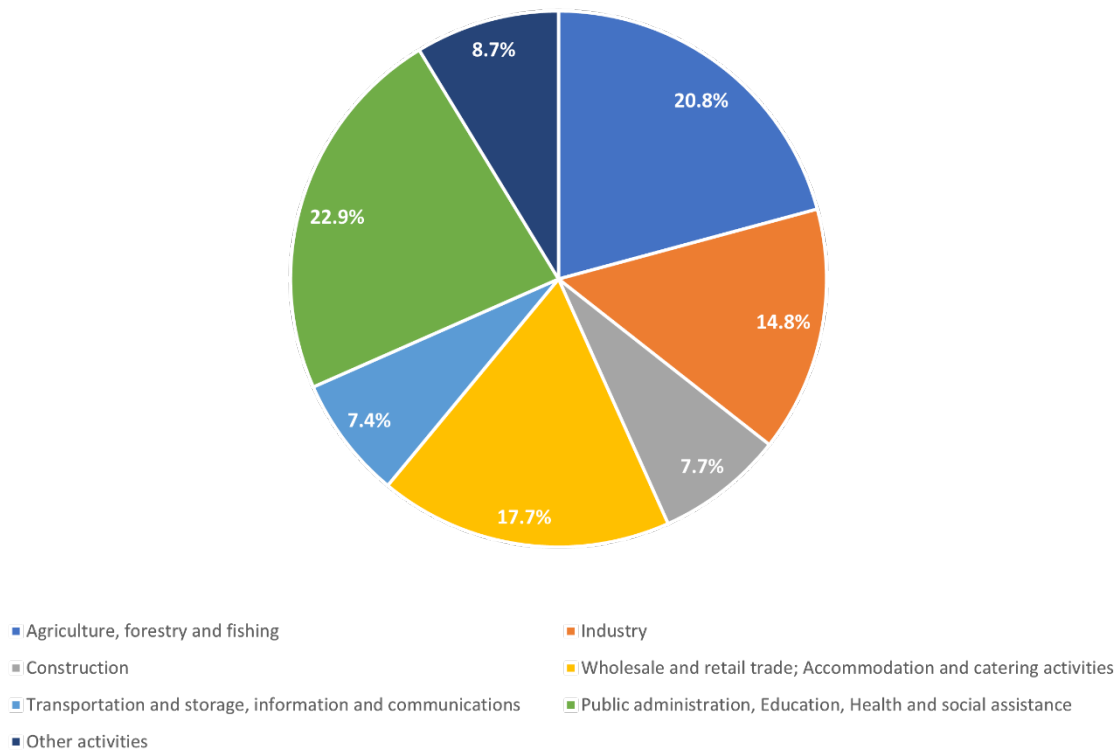
Employment Disparities by Region: According to table 7, there were notable differences in employment rates between urban and rural areas, with rural areas having a lower workforce participation rate. Efforts to improve employment opportunities and access to jobs in rural regions could help bridge this gap.

Table 8. The employed population in Moldova by economic activities, age groups, gender, and backgrounds for year 2022, according to National Bureau of Statistics

Gender, environments, economic activities	Total	Age Groups				(thousands of people)	
		15-24 y.o.	25-34 y.o.	35-44 y.o.	45-54 y.o.	55-64 y.o.	over 65 y.o.
Total	862.3	42.3	194.7	231.5	206.8	164.5	22.6
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	179.3	7.9	27.2	41.2	51.7	43.7	7.7
Industry	127.6	6.4	30.0	39.7	28.2	21.6	0.0
Construction	66.5	3.7	17.1	18.1	18.0	8.8	0.0
Wholesale and retail trade; Accommodation and catering activities	152.7	11.4	37.3	46.3	35.2	19.9	0.0
Transportation and storage, information and communications	63.8	3.1	19.7	16.8	13.6	9.5	0.0
Public administration, Education, Health and social assistance	197.4	3.7	41.6	48.3	47.4	50.2	6.1
Other activities	75.1	6.0	21.8	21.1	12.7	10.8	0.0
Men	443.7	25.2	107.8	113.4	97.3	88.1	12.1
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	112.6	6.2	18.3	23.7	30.4	29.0	4.9
Industry	66.5	3.3	17.3	17.4	13.4	13.9	0.0
Construction	61.3	3.7	15.6	17.3	15.8	8.2	0.0
Wholesale and retail trade; Accommodation and catering activities	74.2	6.5	21.0	22.0	14.9	9.0	0.0
Transportation and storage, information and communications	42.5	0.0	12.4	11.4	9.4	6.4	0.0
Public administration, Education, Health and social assistance	54.2	0.0	13.5	13.1	8.5	15.5	0.0
Other activities	32.5	0.0	9.6	8.5	4.9	6.0	0.0
Women	418.6	17.1	87.0	118.2	109.5	76.4	10.5
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	66.7	0.0	8.9	17.5	21.3	14.6	0.0
Industry	61.1	3.1	12.7	22.3	14.8	7.8	0.0
Construction	5.2	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wholesale and retail trade; Accommodation and catering activities	78.4	5.0	16.3	24.3	20.3	10.9	0.0
Transportation and storage, information and communications	21.3	0.0	7.3	5.4	4.2	3.1	0.0
Public administration, Education, Health and social assistance	143.2	0.0	28.1	35.3	38.9	34.7	3.5
Other activities	42.7	3.8	12.3	12.6	7.8	4.8	0.0
Urban	393.6	20.6	115.0	116.5	74.9	56.4	10.1
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	9.5	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Industry	60.1	0.0	16.7	17.8	11.6	10.3	0.0
Construction	29.5	0.0	8.7	9.3	7.1	3.0	0.0
Wholesale and retail trade; Accommodation and catering activities	102.3	7.9	28.4	31.5	21.1	11.2	0.0
Transportation and storage, information and communications	46.7	0.0	16.8	12.6	8.5	5.2	0.0
Public administration, Education, Health and social assistance	90.6	0.0	25.9	25.8	15.7	17.7	3.3
Other activities	54.9	4.0	16.9	16.6	8.8	6.3	0.0
Rural	468.8	21.6	79.7	115.0	131.9	108.1	12.5
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	169.8	7.9	25.6	38.3	49.4	41.0	7.6
Industry	67.6	3.7	13.3	21.9	16.6	11.4	0.0
Construction	37.0	0.0	8.4	8.8	10.9	5.8	0.0
Wholesale and retail trade; Accommodation and catering activities	50.3	3.5	8.8	14.8	14.2	8.7	0.0
Transportation and storage, information and communications	17.0	0.0	3.0	4.2	5.2	4.3	0.0
Public administration, Education, Health and social assistance	106.8	0.0	15.7	22.5	31.8	32.5	0.0
Other activities	20.2	0.0	4.9	4.5	3.9	4.5	0.0

Employment Distribution by Sector: The data indicates that the public sector employs a significant portion of the workforce, followed by the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector. This implies that the public sector is a key contributor to the overall employment landscape in Moldova, with substantial involvement in various administrative, educational, health, and social assistance activities.

Graph 4. The employed population in Moldova by economic activities, age groups, gender, and backgrounds



Gender Disparities in Employment Sectors: Men are more prominently represented in the agriculture and constructions sectors, while women are relatively more prevalent in the public administration, education, health, and social assistance sectors. This points to some degree of gender stereotyping in the labor market.

Urban vs. Rural Employment Patterns: Urban areas demonstrate a more diverse employment landscape, with a higher presence in sectors like Wholesale and retail trade, Accommodation and catering activities, and Transportation and storage. In contrast, rural areas have a significant workforce engaged in Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, reflecting the predominance of agricultural activities in these regions.

Concentration in Agriculture: The significant proportion of the employed population in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector, particularly in rural areas, highlights the importance of agriculture as a major source of employment in Moldova. There might be a need for initiatives to diversify employment opportunities in rural regions to reduce reliance on this sector.

The heavy reliance on agriculture in Moldova, especially in rural areas, poses risks such as economic vulnerability to market fluctuations and environmental challenges. In order to mitigate such risks, it is recommendable to promote diversification into other sectors like agro-tourism, renewable energy, and small-scale manufacturing. This can provide alternative income sources and reduce dependency on traditional agriculture.

Sectoral Disparities in Urban and Rural Areas: The employment patterns in urban and rural areas differ significantly across different economic activities. While urban regions exhibit a more varied sectoral distribution, rural areas are heavily reliant on Agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Initiatives to promote job diversification and skill development in rural areas could contribute to a more balanced employment landscape.

Table 9. Average monthly salary per sector in year of 2022, according to National Bureau of Statistics

Average monthly net salary gain, men and women in 2022	MDL
All economic activities	8,899.6
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	5,683.3
Extractive Industry	7,213.8
Manufacturing Industry	7,511.5
Production And Supply Of Electrical And Thermal Energy, Gas, Hot Water And Air Conditioning	12,627.2
Water Distribution; Sanitation, Waste Management, Decontamination Activities	7,255.8
Construction	7,793.2
Wholesale And Retail Trade; Maintenance And Repair Of Cars And Motorcycles	7,504.7
Transport And Storage	7,395.6
Accommodation And Public Catering Activities	5,374.4
Information And Communications	26,409.2
Financial And Insurance Activities	16,101.3
Real Estate Transactions	6,834.6
Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	10,033.2
Administrative Services Activities And Support Services Activities	6,497.8
Public Administration And Defense; Mandatory Social Insurance	10,327.9
Education	7,099.2
Health And Social Assistance	9,715.6
Art, Recreation And Leisure Activities	6,156.6
Other Service Activities	9,245.8

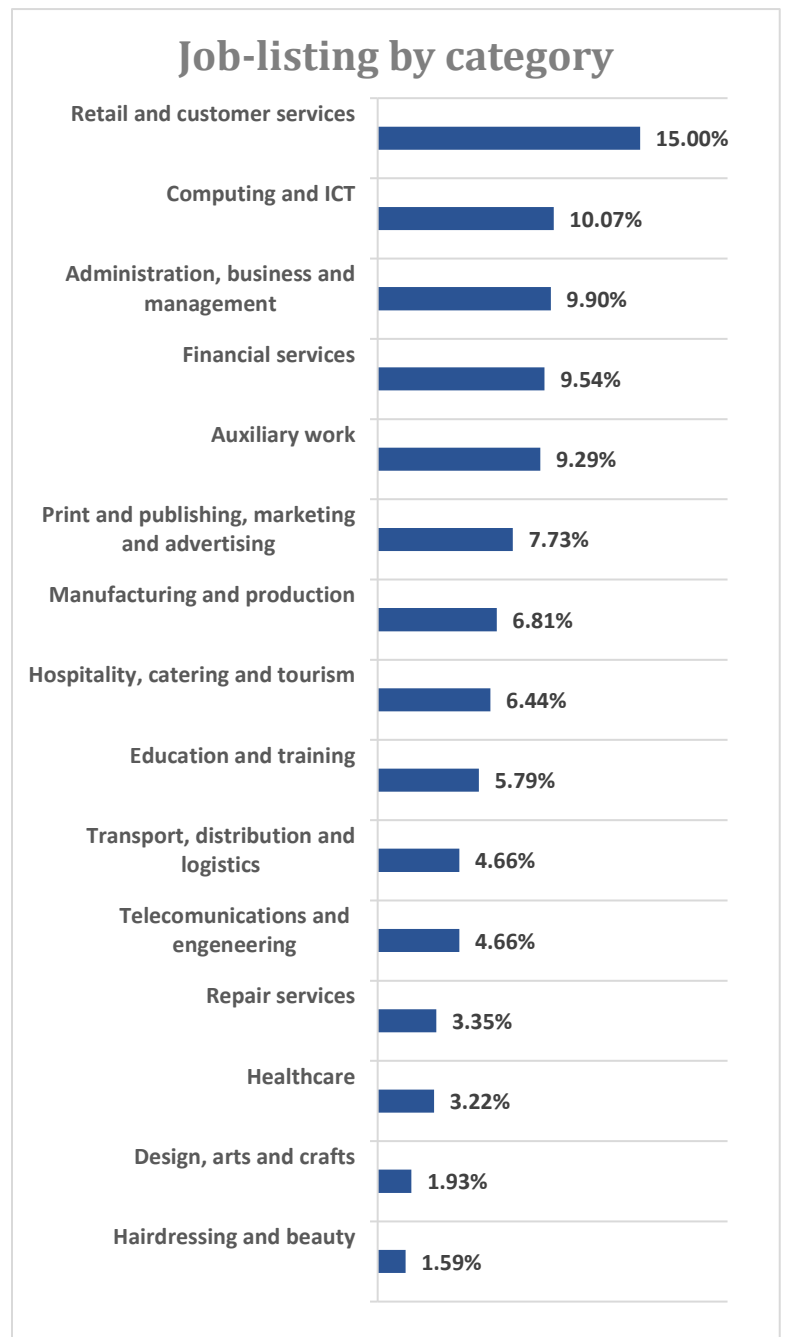
The average monthly net salary across all economic activities in Moldova was 8,899.6 Moldovan Lei (MDL), which is equivalent of ~465 EUR or ~490 USD.

Variation by Economic Activity: Highest Average Salary: The Information and Communications sector recorded the highest average monthly net salary, standing at an impressive 26,409.2 MDL, which is equivalent of ~1350 EUR or ~1480 USD. This sector often involves specialized skills and knowledge.

Lowest Average Salary: The Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries sector had the lowest average monthly net salary at 5,683.3 MDL, which is equivalent of ~290 EUR or ~320 USD. This may be attributed to the prevalence of manual labor and the seasonal nature of work in this sector.

Labor market analysis The analysis of Moldova labor market has been conducted to understand job offering trends and availability. The results are based on job listing on Moldova private and public employment portals for the second half of 2023. The analysis excludes job listings for government positions as they require a different recruitment procedure.

Overall, the highest number of job listings is in the retail and customer service (15%) category with another 6.4% in the HORECA. It is followed by the mostly office jobs in the information technologies and communication sector (10%), administration, business and management (9.9%) and financial services (9.5%). The engineering and manufacturing jobs have a combined share of around 12% with openings in the telecommunication, construction, and factory work. Creative industries such as marketing and advertising, design and arts have a share of around 9%. Another high-demand category is auxiliary work (9.3%), that usually low-skill labor. The auxiliary work category has an even higher share of the total available jobs in Moldova if we include non-internet advertising.



4.4 Labor Market Patterns in context of Ukraine response – survey results among companies

This chapter is based on the information provided by the 84 companies that participated in the survey. 82% represented small businesses mostly located in urban areas (81% of the sample). Most companies open to hiring refugees are located in urban areas (84%), especially in Chisinau (65%). The Graph 5 below provides a more detailed information on their typology.

In terms of areas of activity, more than one-fourth of those willing to hire refugees work in wholesale and retail trade (27%). At the same time, it is noted that of enterprises not open to hiring refugees, 17% operate in the field of manufacturing industry.

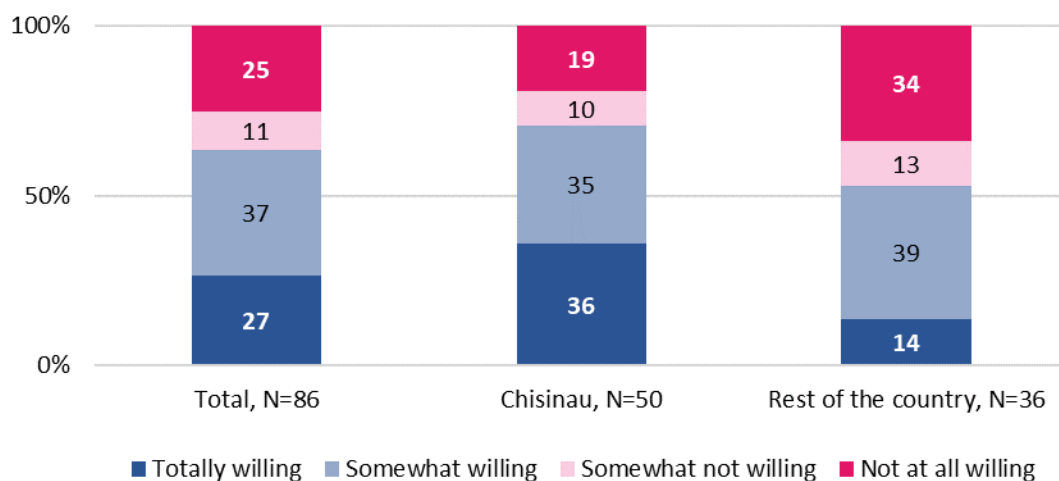
Graph 5. Profile of companies participating in the study, %

	Total, N=86	Are willing to hire refugees, N=54	Are not willing to hire refugees, N=32
Size	Small business 82	75	94
	Medium business 18	25	6
Region	North 17	15	21
	Centre 17	13	24
	Chisinau 58	65	47
	South 8	7	9
Area	Urban area 81	84	75
	Rural area 19	16	25
Field of economic activity	Wholesale and retail trade 25	27	21
	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing 15	16	13
	Transportation and storage 11	11	11
	Manufacturing industry 11	7	17
	Construction 9	9	10
	Health and social care 5	6	3
	Accommodation and food service activities 4	5	3
	Education 4	5	4
	Professional, scientific, and technical activities 4	4	4
	Production and supply of electricity and heat, gas, water 4	2	6
	Information and communication 3	4	0
	Public admin. and defense; social security 2	3	2
	Arts, entertainment, and recreation activities 2	1	3
	Real estate transactions 1	0	3

- **Willingness to hire refugees**

As shown in Graph 6 Most companies participating in the study are generally willing to hire Ukrainian refugees (64%). To a greater extent, companies located in Chisinau are willing to hire Ukrainian refugees (71%) compared to companies located in the rest of the country (53%).

Graph 6. Is your company willing to hire Ukrainian refugees? (one answer), %

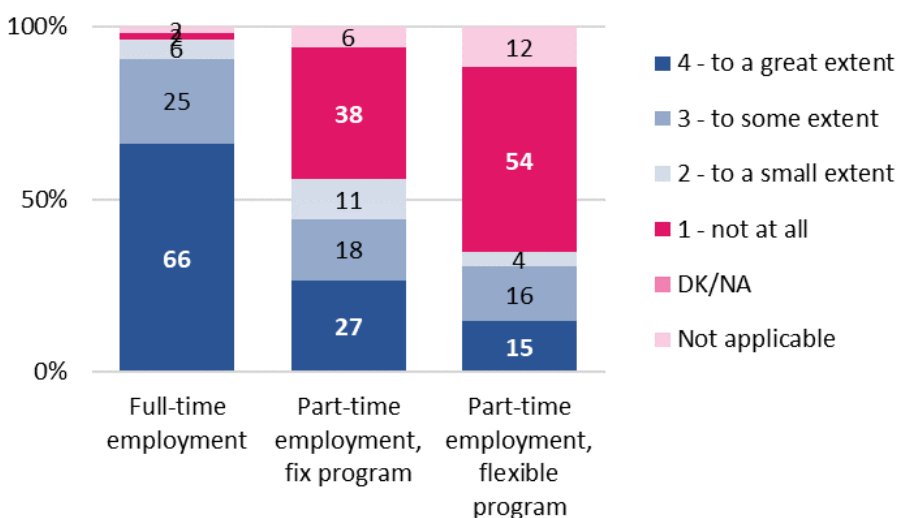


Further the attitudes of enterprises that declared they were open to hiring refugees are analyzed.

- **Working conditions offered/preferred**

Out of the companies open to hiring refugees, 97% would do it full-time, 56% are open to hiring refugees on part-time program with fixed working hours, and 35% - part time program with flexible program. (Graph 7 below)

Graph 7. In general, to what extent are you open to hiring people (including refugees) on the following work schedules: N=54, %



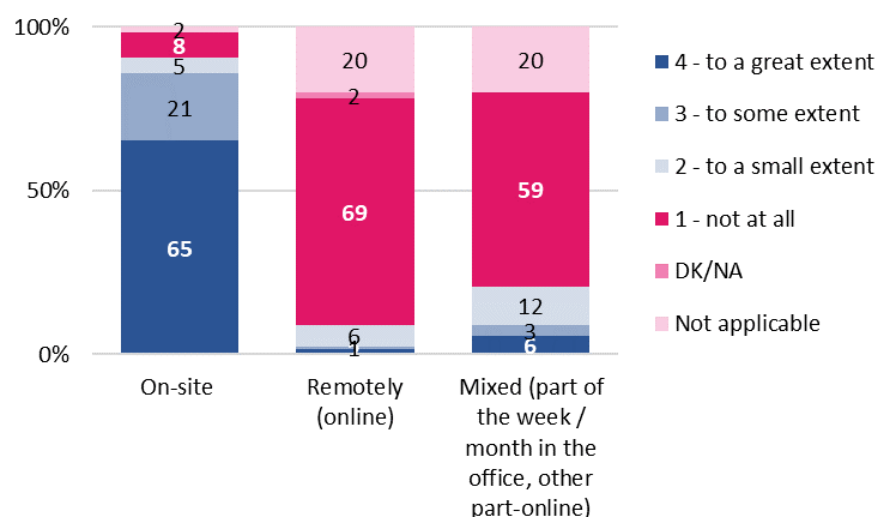
Most companies open to hiring refugees prefer to hire individuals for on-site work (91%). Companies are less open to hiring people with remote (9%) and mixed programs (21%) (Graph 8 below).

Employers who participated in interviews say that regarding the work schedule, for most vacancies full-time involvement is proposed (8 hours / day), but, if necessary and possible, the employer is willing to adjust to the employee's requirement, which is stipulated, inclusively, in the employment contract, according to the interviewees. At the same time, in the HoReCa field there is the possibility to work in shifts (two working days, two days off). At the same time, special conditions are proposed for parents who have children in kindergarten – the day starts one hour earlier and ends one hour earlier.

At the same time, it appears delivery services are open for refugees, which offer the possibility to establish independently the preferred work schedule and to respect it provided they work at least 20 hours per week.

One of the interviewed HoReCa employer mentioned that an employment contract was made with refugees in which it was stipulated that they can work up to 10 hours / day, instead of 12 hours / day, or up to 40 hours / week.

Graph 8. In general, to what extent are you open to hiring people (including refugees) with the following work formats: N=54, %



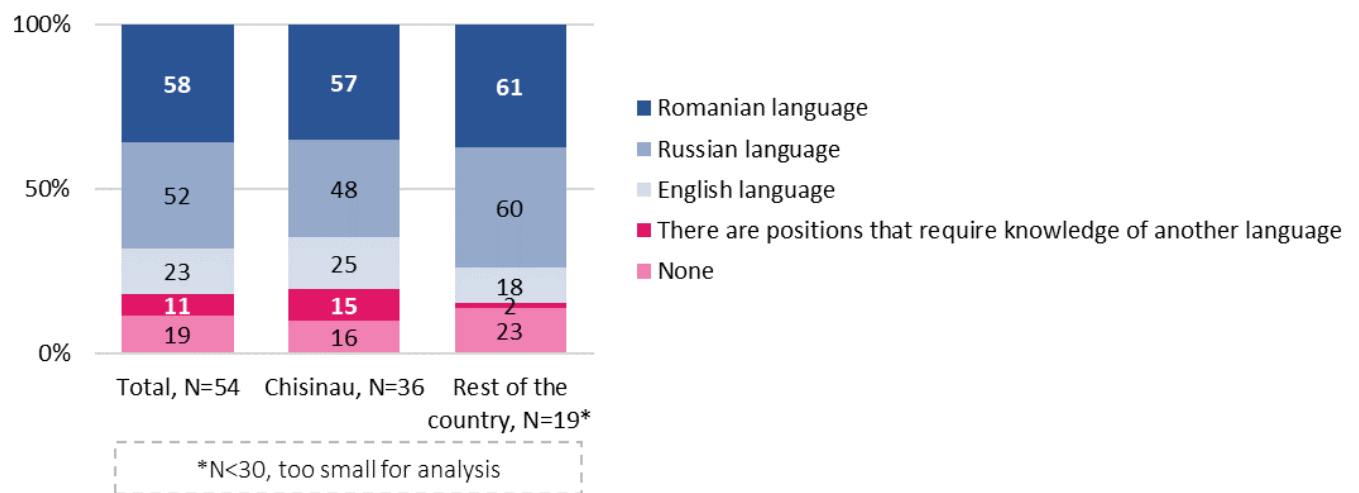
- **Language requirements**

As Shown in Graph 9, 57% of the representatives of companies in Chisinau say that they have positions that require compulsory knowledge of Romanian, 48% - of Russian and 25% - of English languages.

Businesses outside Chisinau are also requiring knowledge of Romanian (61%) and Russian (60%) languages.

Graph 9. Are there any positions in your company that require mandatory knowledge of the:

N=54, %



At the same time, in individual discussions, representatives of services that provide support to refugees in the process of employment, based on their experience, shared their information about the areas of activity of employers who are willing to hire refugees. In the respondent's opinion, the industries in which employers in Moldova are more willing to hire refugees include:

- Unskilled labor, e.g., manual labor;
- Transportation;
- Textile and clothing industry;
- Manufacturing industry;
- HoReCa / public alimentation;
- Commerce;
- Agriculture;
- Medicine;
- Food industry;
- Construction.

In individual discussions with representatives of organizations that provide refugees with employment support, they mention that for the most part they have a role in:

- Employment consultation / local labor market;
- Facilitating the employment of refugees;
- Provision of language and professional courses;
- Monitoring of beneficiaries and ensuring employment;

Remuneration conditions and other benefits

Regarding the offered salary, several interviewed employers could not mention concrete figures, arguing that the salary calculation formula depends on several factors, such as work schedule, studies, experience in the field, position occupied. Interviewees mentioned the salary was offered in accordance with the legislation. However, in the manufacture of baked goods, the employee can earn 450 lei (equivalent of 23 Euro or 25 USD) per day, as mentioned by an interviewed representative of a bakery network in Moldova.

A salary of 450 lei per day implies a monthly salary of 9450 lei (equivalent of 487 Euro or 531 USD), for a full work schedule (169 hours worked per month). We mention that in the Republic of Moldova the minimum salary per economy for 2023 is 4,000 lei (equivalent of 206 Euro or 225 USD), and the average salary per economy is 11,700 lei (equivalent of 602 Euro or 656 USD). According to the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, refugees can be employed, with a salary not lower than the average for the economy (not lower than 11,700 lei - equivalent of 602 Euro or 656 USD).

Other benefits offered to employees by certain Moldovan companies include:

- Private medical insurance;
- Opening the salary bank card;
- Lunch;
- "Well being" programs – trainings, events, etc.;
- Providing snacks (tea, coffee, etc.);
- Recreation area (park) on the territory where the office is located;
- Discount on car parts and fuel (for those who own a car).

To conclude about working conditions, some employers that participated in the study specified that all working conditions - work schedule, training, probationary period, salary - were discussed and agreed upon during the job interview.

- **Employment opportunities for refugees**

As seen on Graph 10, most of the companies participating in the study are willing to hire people, including refugees, for the following positions:

- Driver/courier (23%)
- Auxiliary workers (19%)
- Seller/Sales Agent (12%)
- Warehouseman/Porter (11%)
- Operator (10%)

Other work opportunities, mentioned in the in-depth interviews with employers.

Based on the interviews conducted, openings that employers are ready to offer cover a wide spectrum of jobs requiring different skills levels and certifications.

Some high skilled jobs mentioned are in the area of health such as psychologists, psychopedagogists and therapists. However, recognition of certificates policy needs to be clarified before being considered as an option for refugees.

Some other highly skilled positions that offer opportunities are:

- Database developer;
- QA tester/engineer;
- Front End Developer;
- Application Security Engineer.

The interviewed employers say that the IT field is very open including for refugees, since knowledge is important and the activity does not require knowing the Romanian language.

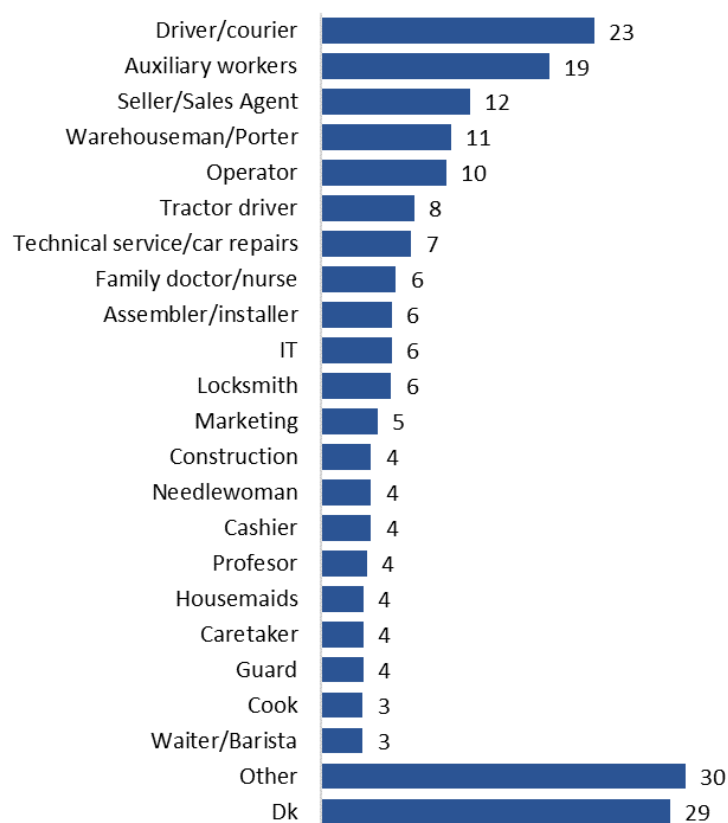
The real access to those positions are also related to the recognition or existence of paths to validate the certificates that refugees can bring.

Among low skilled jobs that are available according to the employers interviewed, the following were highlighted.

Seamstress;

- Embroidery machine craftsman;
- Pastry chef;
- Maid;
- Dishwasher;
- Waiters;
- Winery tour guide;
- Gardener.
- Cook;
- Assistant cook.

Graph 10. Please indicate the 3 job positions on which you would be willing to hire people (including refugees), N=54, %



4.5 Services for Social and Economic Inclusion of Refugees

Economic inclusion is a vital step towards ensuring that refugees and asylum-seekers can become self-reliant, contribute to their host communities, and rebuild their lives with dignity. In Moldova, various governmental and non-governmental organizations provide an array of tools and services designed to facilitate the economic inclusion of refugees. These tools range from vocational training programs to financial services and legal aid.

This chapter aims to evaluate the available tools and services in Moldova for the economic inclusion of refugees.

Language and Cultural Orientation:

To assist refugees in overcoming language barriers and understanding the culture of their host country, many organizations in Moldova offer language classes and cultural orientation programs. These are crucial for enabling refugees to communicate effectively and understand societal norms and expectations. At the Government level, the Ministry of Education and Research launched in 2023 the national program on learning the Romanian language. It is

intended for adults who want to improve their knowledge or study the Romanian language both at beginners and intermediate level.

Free of charge language courses are also offered by civil society organizations, community centers, universities, and private training centers. In Chisinau these are available at 151 Community Center, Charity Centre for Refugees and “Casa Providentei” Charity Foundation. In Balti free language courses are offered at Alecu Russo State University. Additionally, Romanian and English language courses are offered by the private project Rabota.md.

Social integration and support programs for refugees are available either through local governments or local NGOs. These opportunities are however accessible primarily in larger cities and towns. Day care and support center for guests from Ukraine “ProLife” offer a variety of programs including online learning, psychological support and community events. The Club of Human Rights within the framework of the project “Assistance to Ukrainian community mediators to strengthen social integration and sustainability in Moldova” that promotes the development of the institute of Ukrainian community mediators in Moldova. Psychological support programs are offered through initiatives like ReThink, RCTV Memoria and Krisenchat Ukraine.

Employment Assistance

State-led Initiatives: Moldova's Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research offers special vocational training programs for refugees. These are often conducted in partnership with international organizations like UNHCR. The programs are designed to equip refugees with job-specific skills in areas such as carpentry, plumbing, and information technology. National Employment Agency (ANOFM) of Moldova also provides a series of services to support job seekers such as career guidance, job consultation, professional qualification training and specialization courses, as well as skills certification. The current programs, however, are not tailored towards refugees and TCNs and would require a specialized approach to implement them within these institutions.

UN Agencies and development organizations: offer a large range of training programs aimed at refugees and asylum seekers in Moldova. Taking into account that the majority of refugees are women, a gender dimension is especially important. A key partner in this area is UN Women that supports women economic empowerment and resilience. Since 2015, UN Women has carried out the GirlsGoIT initiative to support and encourage women and girls in STEM and more recently have provided financial and technical support for women small producers to help grow their businesses, export items and create jobs in rural regions. There is an employment program for Ukrainian citizens and members of their families from Development Aid and Norwegian Refugee

Council (NRC) which offer consultation, employment assistance as well as additional financial perks covering transportation and children care costs.

Aside from big Government/Development organizations, there are several social initiatives that support employment for Ukrainian refugees and TCNs. The “U can” social initiative, with financial support from UNDP and the Bloomcoding team, has created employment opportunities and access to education for Ukrainian refugees. Another project tailored to the socially vulnerable groups is “Share Project” that was active in Moldova since 2019 and assisted employment for over 250 people.

Private-sector Collaborations: Several private companies have also shown interest in training refugees. For instance, IT firms provide coding bootcamps that help refugees gain skills rapidly and access higher-income opportunities. For adults there are free IT course offered through Moldova Association of ICT Companies (ATIC) with the program “*Women in online work*” and “*e-Skills for empowering women refugees*”. STEP IT Academy, GeekBrain and “*Women in Cyber*” programs offer alternative opportunities for refugees, but they are often for-profit programs. There are also course for youth – Tekwill Academy Kids² has launched free courses and classes lasting from 4 to 6 weeks for children and teenagers from Ukraine who are in Moldova. Classes are organized in Chisinau, Balti, Cahul and Comrat. The courses include programs in robotics, programming, web development and graphic design. Another alternative is Swedish-Ukrainian IT school Beetroot Academy, who offer accredited courses in front-end development, UI/UX design and project management.

Financial Assistance and Support

Financial support and assistance programs are crucial to help refugees and TCN’s cover basic needs during their integration in Moldova. It includes refugees’ assistance program, microfinance and small business loans. The refugee assistance in Moldova is realized through a combination of humanitarian assistance and Government assistance programs. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has launched a cash assistance program to provide financial support to refugees who fled Ukraine due to the war. The program is implemented jointly with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Caritas Moldova and Diaconia. The IOM Rental Assistance Project is a humanitarian financial assistance provided to refugees from Ukraine in Moldova to ensure their access to safe housing for a maximum period of 6 months. Another support service is run by World Vision that has been rapidly expanding its activities in four countries (Ukraine, Romania, Moldova and Georgia), caring for the most vulnerable refugees and

² Tekwil Academy Kids is implemented by Moldova Association of ICT Companies (ATIC)

internally displaced people. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection launched the program "UAHelp" which offers support to refugees and host families.

Start-up and business support programs: there are various programs in Moldova to support small business and entrepreneurship. Organization for Entrepreneurship Development (OED) offers a series of programs that of interest for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova looking to develop their business. OSMESD has the national program "*Start for Youth – a sustainable business at your home*" – which offers business consultation and supports in accessing funding. Another program aimed specifically at women is the National Pilot-Program „*Women in Business*” that provides financial and technical support for women-led start-ups.

Access to financial services: Some banks have relaxed regulations to allow refugees to open bank accounts, making it easier for them to receive payments and save money. Some examples include MAIB that offers discounted services for Ukrainian refugees, OTP Bank that opens free of charge accounts and cards, and ProCredit Bank that offers commission free withdrawal from Ukrainian banking cards. Another opportunity is microloans – small-scale loans available to refugees through various private financial institutions. These loans aim to provide initial capital for business development.

Based on the UNHCR Market Assessment Report^{vi}, it was highlighted that while basic necessities like food and hygiene products are generally available, there are challenges in accessing non-food items and financial services. The availability of bank branches and ATMs is limited, especially in rural areas, affecting refugees' ability to access financial services. The report suggests that this limited access may hinder refugees' economic integration and recommends improving financial infrastructure and services, particularly in remote areas.

In 2024, the UNHCR financial assistance program in Moldova, aiding vulnerable refugees from Ukraine, will undergo changes. From January, having legal status in Moldova is required to continue receiving finan

cial aid. This status ensures safe residence, access to services, and flexibility in readmission requirements. Current financial aid recipients can continue receiving support until January 2024, provided they have legal status in Moldova. New arrivals post-January 1, 2024, can enroll in the program and receive initial financial support for two months, after which legal status is needed for continued assistance. Ukrainian citizens are allowed a 90-day stay in Moldova with financial support; post this period, they must legalize their status to maintain assistance. Legal status in Moldova includes temporary protection, refugee status, humanitarian protection, statelessness status, or residency permits (temporary or permanent).

Legal Aid and Documentation

Support for Legal Employment: Governmental bodies such as the Bureau for Migration and Asylum offer legal aid services for refugees, helping them navigate employment laws and secure work permits. Local governments are also crucial, especially in rural areas, as they are one of the key information points in their communities and social assistants' workers act as a liaison between refugee response community and various international NGO's providing support to the refugees. Some examples include specialized free legal assistance for obtaining Temporary Protection status from the Rabota project. Legal assistance is offered by organizations such as Acted organization, which implement a new project - "Protection Case Management" offering support in areas of healthcare, education, employment and justice; Law Center of Advocates providing free legal consultation on issues of asylum and citizenship; and Center for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities focusing on legal assistance for people with special needs.

Conclusion and recommendations

Socio-economic inclusion of Ukrainian refugees encompasses a broad range of programs and initiatives designed to support their integration into host societies. These services are often provided by a combination of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and local community groups. In case of Moldova, these services are highly reliant of humanitarian organizations, as a primary funding source, and on civil society organizations as implementing partners. Moldovan Government has the role of coordination and support function.

In the context of this analysis, four key areas of socio-economic integration were outlined:

- Language and cultural orientation – in case of Moldova, there are abundant opportunities to help refugees overcome language barriers and understanding the culture of their host country. One challenging aspect is that these opportunities are primarily concentrated in urban centers and not always readily available for vulnerable population in remote areas. Therefore, it is also recommendable to expand the scope of language and cultural orientation programs, utilizing demographic data to identify and target underserved rural populations and ensure synergetic approach with other involved stakeholders.
- Employment assistance – includes programs for job training and employment counselling provided through government, NGO and humanitarian institutions. Some challenges of employment assistance for refugees are the lack of a strategic vision in its approach, there are very few internships or apprenticeships opportunities and that it rarely targets high-skilled professions. An outlier in this regard is the ICT sector that offers many training programs targeted for different beneficiaries. In this regard, the recommendation is to develop an employment assistance framework based on labor market analysis, focusing

on skill gap bridging, vocational training, and high-skilled sector targeting, including structured internships and apprenticeships.

- Financial assistance and support – financial assistance for refugees is provided primarily through humanitarian organizations covering most daily needs such as accommodation, healthcare, education and transportation. Other forms of financing are also available such as microfinancing and start-up grants, however there is little evidence that they are widely accessed by the refugees. Therefore, there is need to Enhance the financial assistance model by integrating microfinancing and startup grants, using financial inclusion metrics to measure access and impact.
- Legal aid and documentation – legal aid for refugees is relatively well covered by a combination of Government and humanitarian support services, especially with the introduction of the temporary protection status. One potential scenario is to streamline legal aid services using a technology-enabled and localized approach for more efficient delivery and accessibility.

As a key recommendation for socio-economic integration, it requires a more cohesive, long-term strategy involving multiple stakeholders—government, private sector, and civil society—could make the existing tools more effective and fill in the current gaps. The overarching objective should be a sustainable integration model that balances immediate relief with long-term economic resilience and professional development for refugees.

5. Refugees Profile in Moldova

The next chapter represents a detailed analysis of the profile of refugees who have found shelter in the Republic of Moldova.

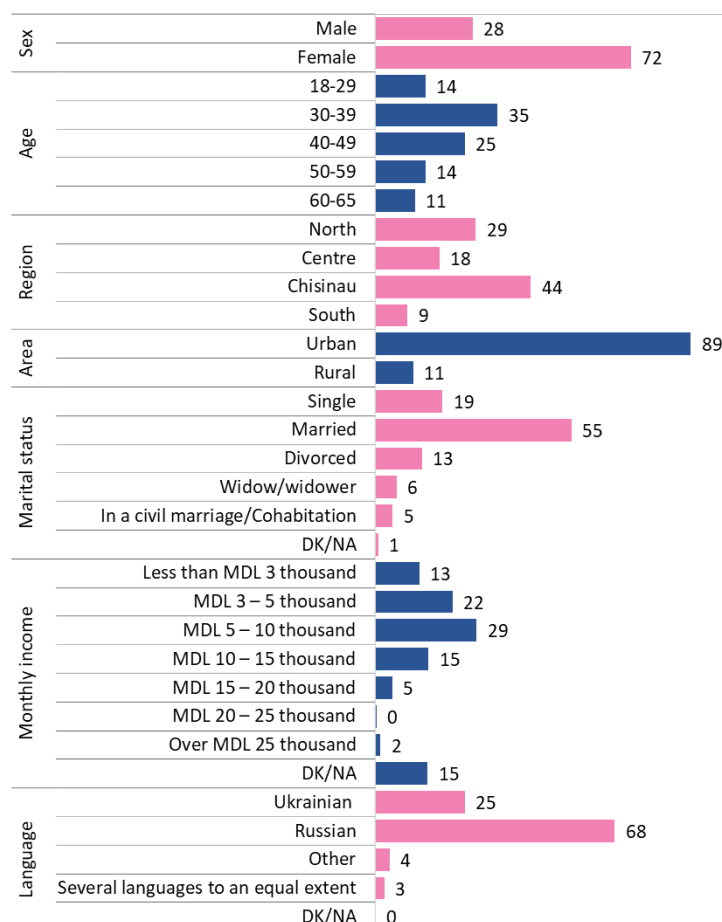
5.1 Professional Profile and Experience of Refugee Population in Moldova

This subchapter provides a detailed look at the skills, qualifications, and professional path of this refugee population within the Moldovan community.

5.1.1 Demographic profile of refugee population in Moldova

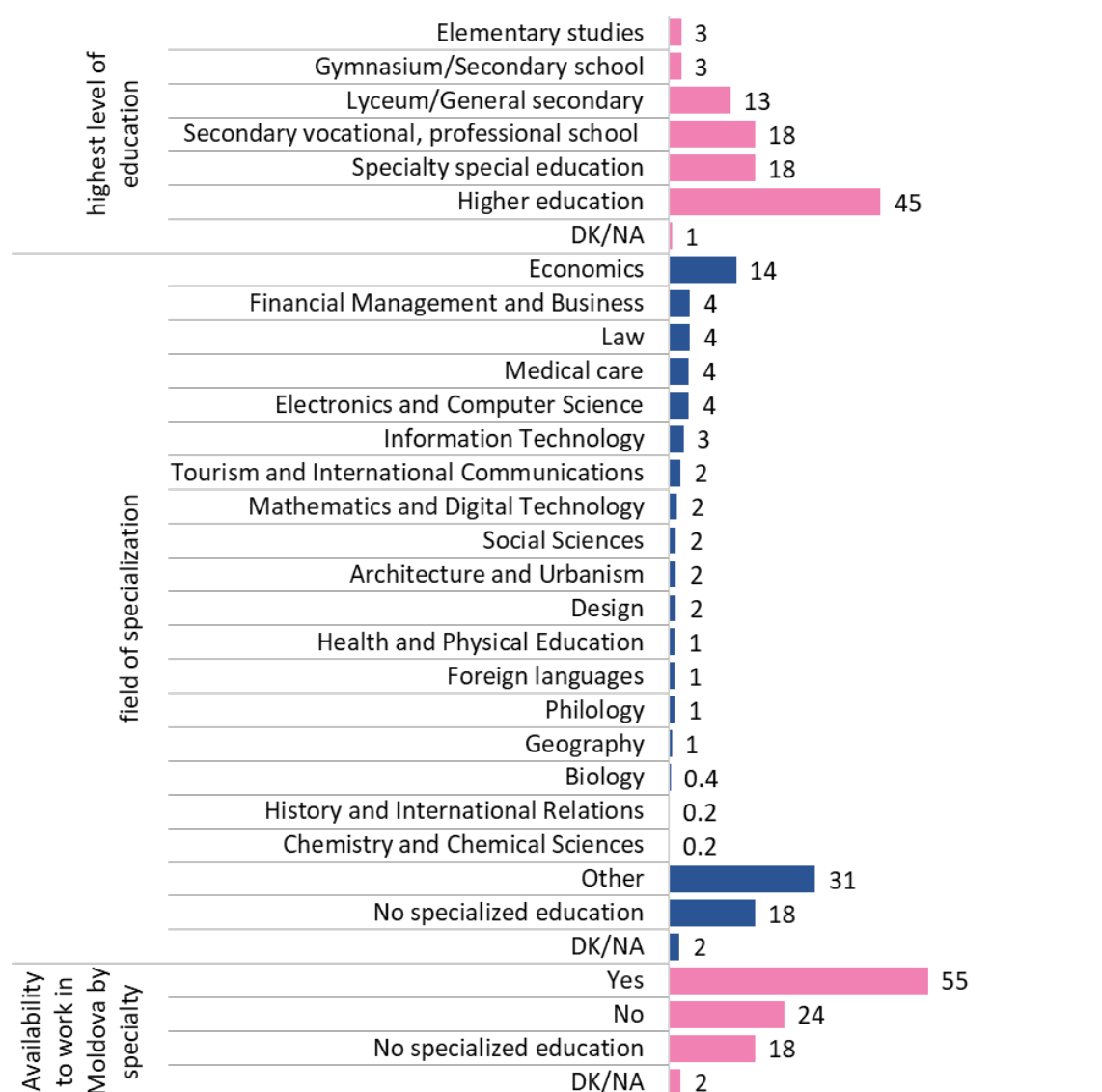
Most refugees participating in the survey are female (72%) (Graph 11). People living in urban areas constitute 89% of the respondents. About half of the participants are married (55%), while approximately a third (29%) have a monthly income between 5.000 and 10.000 MDL (257 USD - 550USD or 260 EUR – 520 EUR).

Graph 11. Socio-demographic profile of refugees interviewed – sex, age, region area, marital status, monthly income, spoken language, N=456, %



As shown in Graph 12, the results of the study point towards a quite high educational attainment of Ukrainian refugees in Moldova. Approximately half of the refugees taking part in the study (45%) have higher education. The most common field of specialization among refugees is Economics (14%). More than half of the respondents (55%) are available to work in Moldova in accordance with their respective specialization.

Graph 12. Socio-demographic profile of refugees interviewed - education level, N=456, %



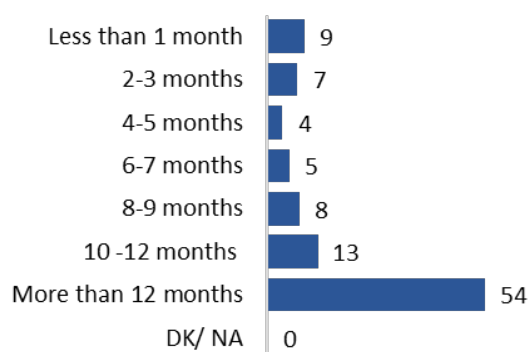
5.1.2 Other characteristics about refugees on the territory of Moldova

▪ Length of stay

Circa half of respondents (54%) have been in the country for over 12 months, indicating a significant proportion of refugees opting for longer-term stays. Following this, 13% have resided

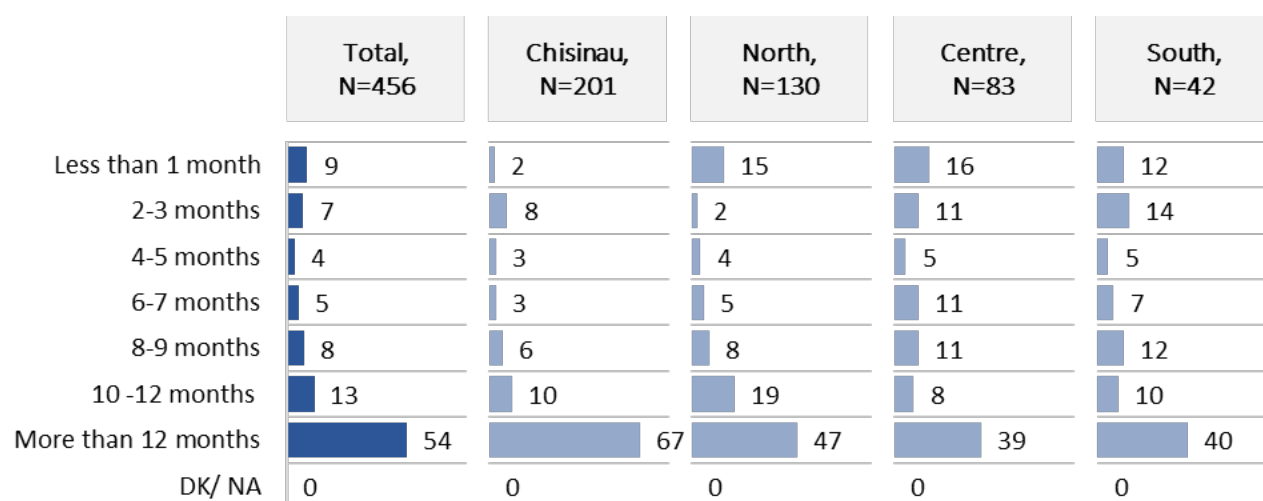
for a period of 10 to 12 months. Notably, the 8 - 9 month duration represents a smaller fraction of refugees at 4%. A quarter of the respondents have been in Moldova for less than 7 months. (Graph 13).

Graph 13. How long have you been in Moldova? (one answer possible), N=456, %



Chisinau has the highest concentration of long-term refugees, with 67% having stayed in Moldova for over 12 months (Graph 14). The Northern region, with 19%, has the highest percentage of refugees who have stayed between 10 to 12 months. Despite variances across regions, the most consistent finding across all regions is that a significant majority, ranging from 39% to 67%, have been in the country for over a year.

Graph 14. Disaggregated by region. How long have you been in Moldova? (one answer possible), %

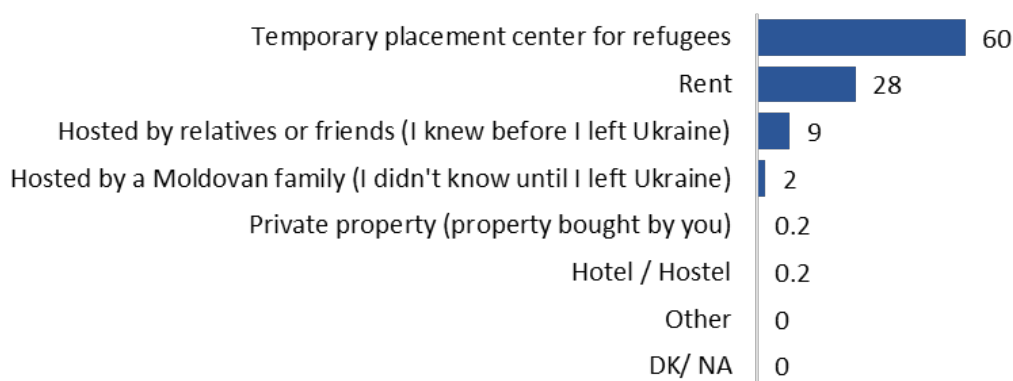


▪ Housing conditions

As shown in Graph 15, Most survey participants (60%) are currently residing in temporary placement centers for refugees. 28% of the respondents live in rented accommodations, making

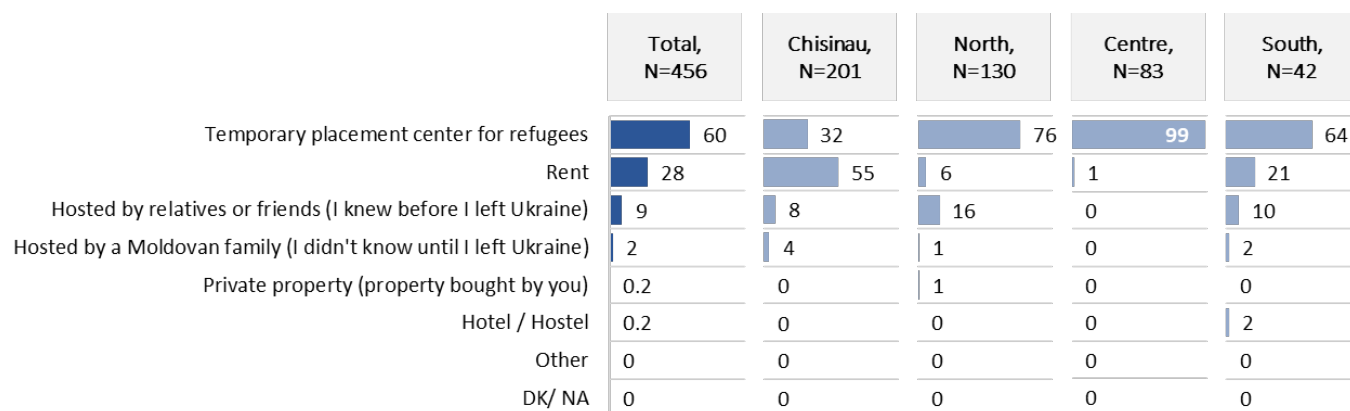
it the second most common living arrangement. A smaller segment - 9% - is being hosted by relatives or friends they knew before leaving Ukraine. It's noteworthy that only a minimal fraction (2%) are hosted by Moldovan families they didn't know prior to departure from Ukraine.

Graph 15. Where do you live now? (one answer possible), N=456, %



The Graph 16 below, shows that Respondents from the Central (99%), Northern (76%) and Southern (64%) regions to larger degree live in temporary placement centers for refugees, compared to Chisinau. Rental accommodations are most prominent among respondents from Chisinau, mentioned as current accommodation by 55% of respondents. This is in stark contrast to the Centre and North regions, with only 1% and 6% respectively living in rented spaces. While 9% of the total respondents are hosted by relatives or friends they knew before leaving Ukraine, this share rises to 16% in the North.

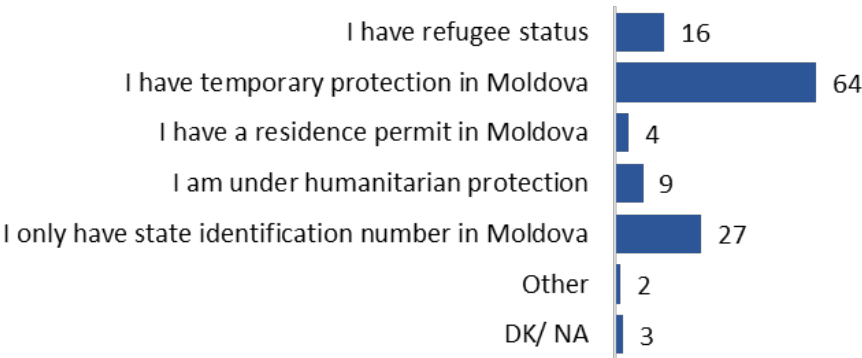
Graph 16. Disaggregated by region. Where do you live now? (one answer possible), %



▪ Legal status

Circa two out of three respondents (64%) have been granted temporary protection in Moldova, while 27% possess only a state identification number in Moldova. A smaller percentage, 16%, have a refugee status (Graph 17).

Graph 17. At the moment, what is your official status in the Republic of Moldova? (multiple response), N=456, %



The Southern region stands out with a higher percentage of individuals (76%) having temporary protection in Moldova compared to the average (64%). Chisinau has a distinctly higher proportion of individuals (43%) who possess only a state identification number, which is significantly above the total average of 27%. In contrast, the North, with only 8%, is considerably below this average. Both the North and Centre regions have a slightly higher share of respondents with refugee status (22% and 23% respectively) compared to the overall average of 16% (Graph 18).

Graph 18. Disaggregated by region. At the moment, what is your official status in the Republic of Moldova? (multiple response), %

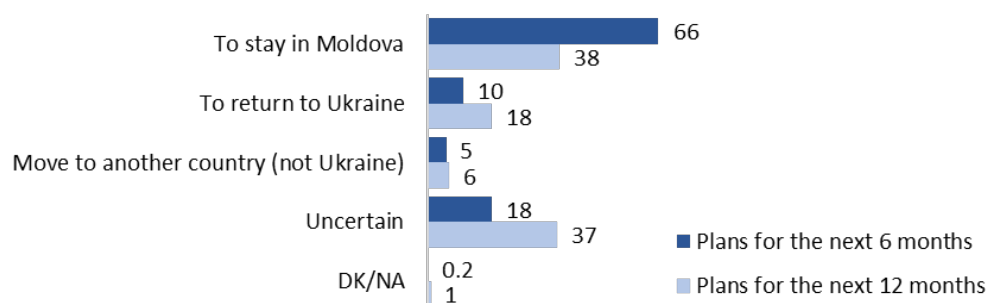
	Total, N=456	Chisinau, N=201	North, N=130	Centre, N=83	South, N=42
I have refugee status	16	8	22	23	17
I have temporary protection in Moldova	64	65	62	58	76
I have a residence permit in Moldova	4	6	4	0	5
I am under humanitarian protection	9	6	12	7	14
I only have state identification number in Moldova	27	43	8	19	24
Other	2	0	5	0	0
DK/ NA	3	3	1	4	5

▪ **Intention of permanence**

A significant proportion of the interviewees plan to stay in Moldova in the upcoming 6 months from the time of the interview (66%), while a smaller proportion (38%) plan to stay in Moldova in the next 12 months. This indicates a notable decrease in the intention to reside in Moldova

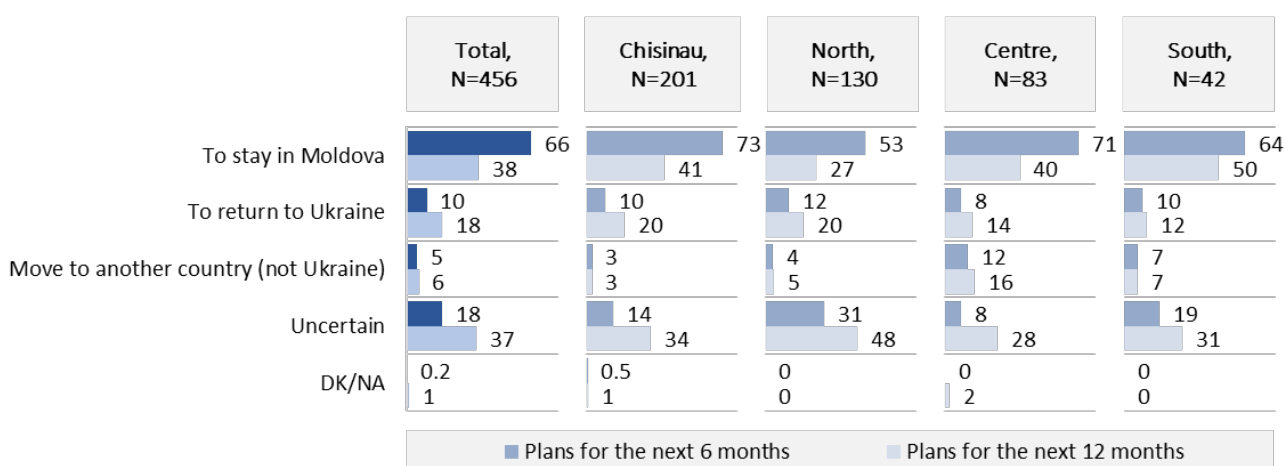
long-term (Graph 19). Plans to return to Ukraine see an increase from 10% for the next 6 months to 18% for the next 12 months, suggesting a near doubling in individuals intending to go back to Ukraine within a year. The intention to move to a country other than Ukraine remains relatively stable, with only a slight increase from 5% to 6% over the two periods.

Graph 19. What are your plans for the next 6/12 months? (one answer possible), N=456, %



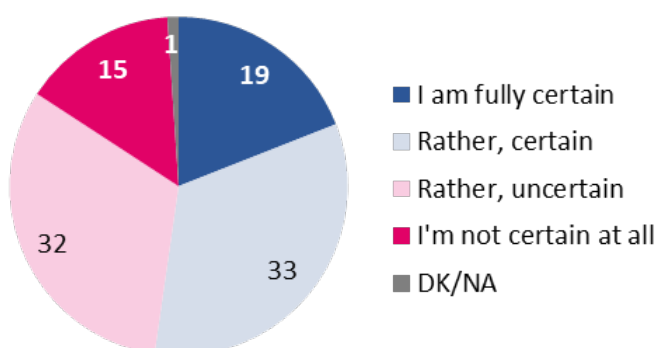
The North region shows a substantial decline in respondents planning to stay in Moldova, dropping from 53% in the next 6 months to 27% in the next 12 months. The respondents from the Centre region display a slight inclination to move to another country, with the percentage rising from 12% in the next 6 months to 16% in the next 12 months, which is higher than the overall average.

Graph 20. Disaggregated by region. What are your plans for the next 6/12 months? (one answer possible), %



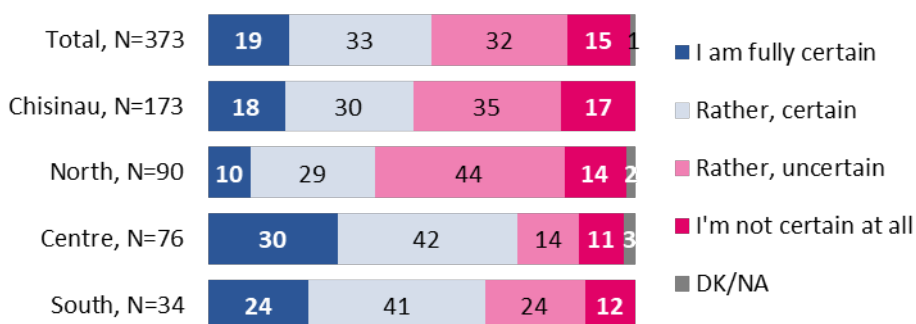
A combined majority of 52% of the respondents that have plans are generally certain about their future plans, with 19% being fully certain and an additional 33% feeling rather certain. Conversely, a significant 47% are rather uncertain about their plans, this comprises 32% who are rather uncertain and 15% who are not certain at all.

Graph 21. How certain are you in your plans for the future? (one answer possible), N=373, % of those who have plans



The Centre stands out for its heightened level of certainty. 30% of respondents are fully certain about their future plans, and 42% feel rather certain, making the combined positive inclination towards certainty (72%) the highest among all regions. The Northern region has the highest percentage of respondents who are uncertain about their future plans, standing at 58%. The capital city, Chisinau, presents a more mixed picture. While 48% are certain, 52% are uncertain about their future plans.

Graph 22. Disaggregated by region. How certain are you in your plans for the future? (one answer possible), % of those who have plans



Analyzing these indicators is crucial from a programmatic perspective as it helps in understanding the stability and future plans of the refugee population. This information guides the design and implementation of support programs, ensuring they are tailored to the actual needs and intentions of refugees. For instance, a high intent to stay in Moldova signals a need for long-term integration programs, whereas plans to return to Ukraine suggest the necessity for temporary support and reintegration assistance. Understanding regional variations in intentions and certainty also allows for more targeted and effective resource allocation.

▪ Sources of income

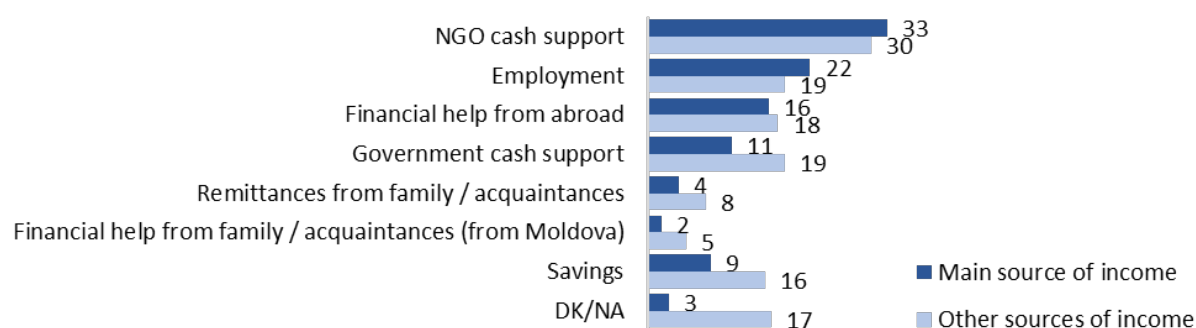
In the case of the interviewed refugee households, the primary source of income for 33% is derived from cash support provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while 11% rely on government cash support as their primary source of income. Additionally, 16% of these households receive financial aid from overseas as their main income source.

Significantly, 22% of the interviewed refugees depend on salaries (employment) as the principal source of household income.

It's worth noting that 9% of the interviewed refugees mentioned that they primarily subsist on savings and do not have any other source of income.

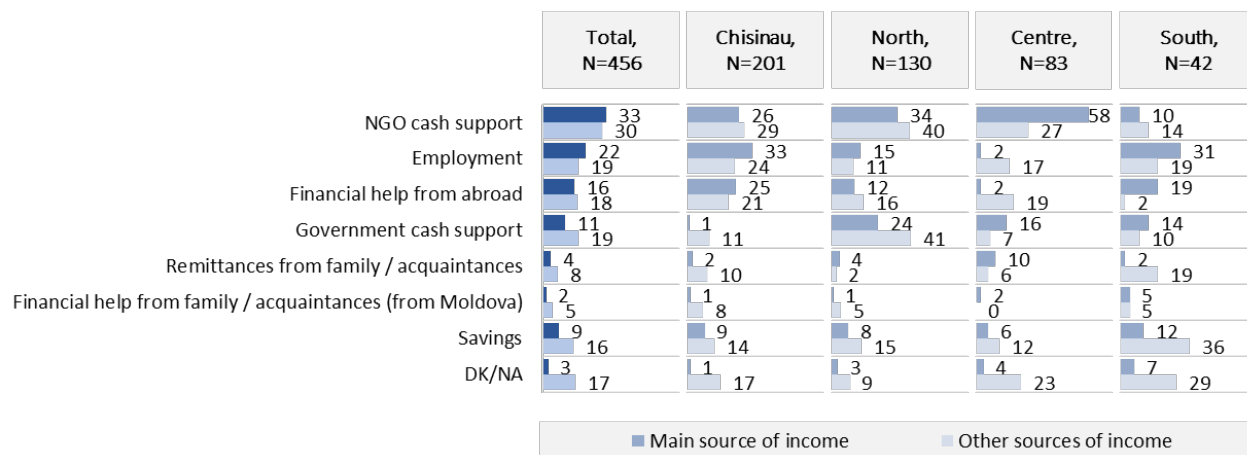
Graph 23. What are the other sources of income for your household? (multiple response),

N=456, %



The level of dependency varies from region to region as shown in Graph 24. The respondents from Central region heavily rely on NGO cash support, with 58% identifying it as their main source of income, which is substantially higher than the overall average of 33%. Chisinau has a notable 33% of respondents who primarily rely on employment, a figure higher than the total average of 22%. Similarly, 31% of the Southern region respondents see employment as the primary source. The Northern region stands out with 24% of surveyed refugees from the region primarily depending on government cash support, which is more than double the overall average of 11%; moreover, 41% also have it as their other source of income.

Graph 24. Disaggregated by region. What are the other sources of income for your household? (multiple response), %



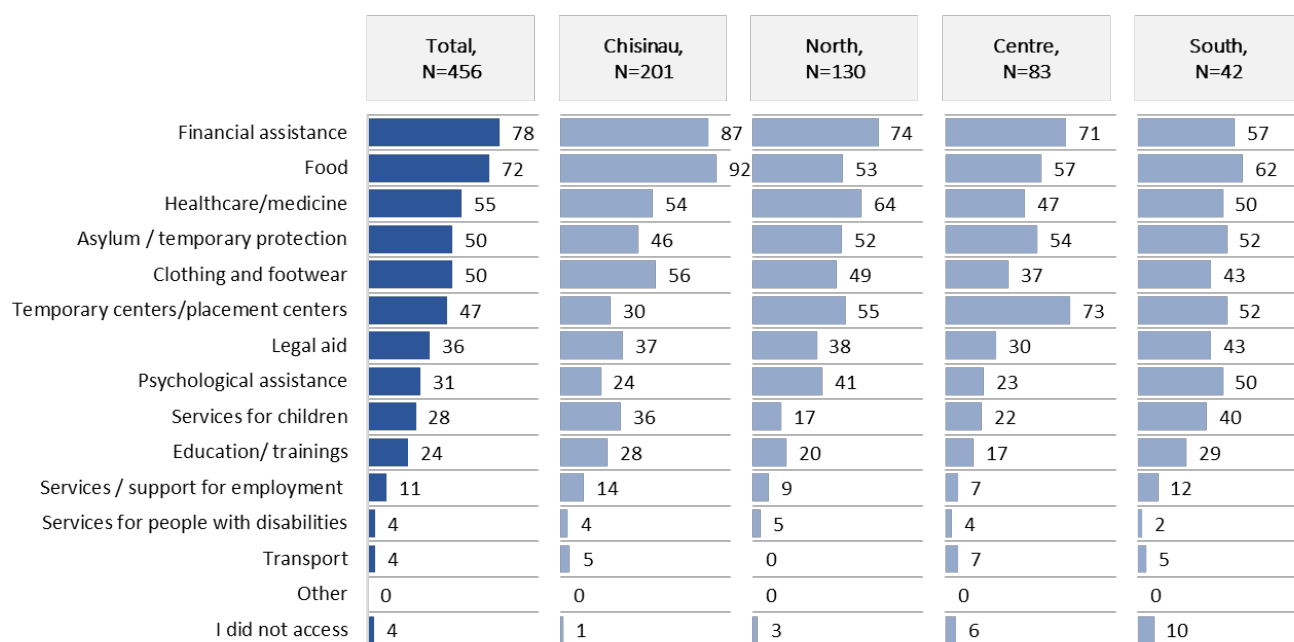
Since the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, more than half of the Ukrainian refugees in Moldova who participated in the study have accessed the primary services for living, such as financing, food, medical services, temporary protection, clothing/shoes. This trend is also observed in the case of disaggregation by region.

11% of the refugees who participated in the survey asked for support in the employment process. It is noticed that most respondents from the Center region applied for accommodation in placement centers (73%), followed by financial support (71%). In other regions, the share of refugees who accessed the services of temporary centers/placement centers is lower than in the Center (30% in Chisinau, 55% in the North and 52% in the South). The refugees interviewed from the South and North used psychological services to a greater extent than the refugees from the Center and Chisinau (Graph 26).

Graph 25. Since the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine have you accessed the following Refugee Support Services? (multiple response), N=456, %



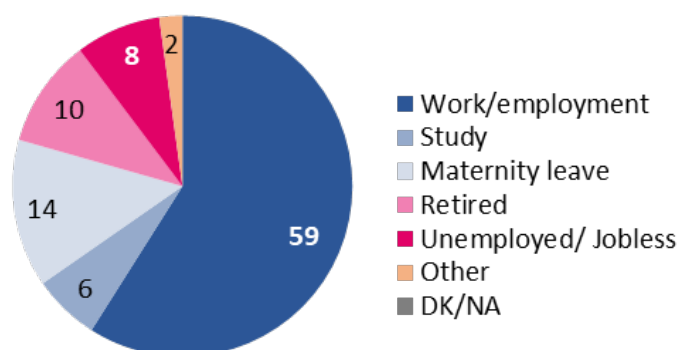
Graph 26. Disaggregated by region. Since the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine have you accessed the following Refugee Support Services? (multiple response), %



5.1.2 Work experience in Ukraine

Most of the respondents (59%) were engaged in work or employment before arriving to Moldova. 14% were on maternity leave and 10% of the respondents were retired before their move to Moldova. Meanwhile, 8% were unemployed or jobless. A smaller segment, 6%, were studying.

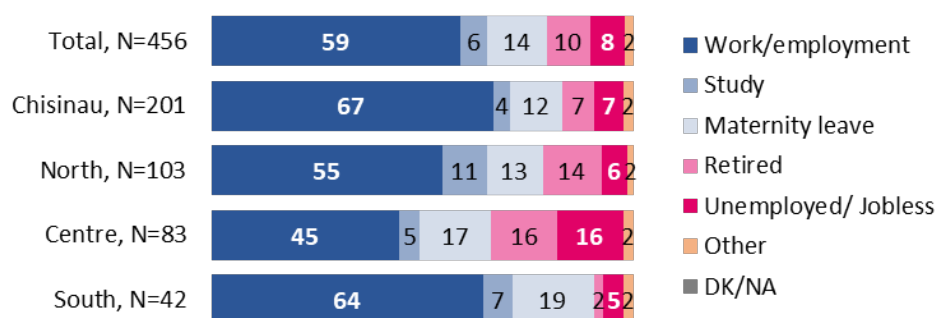
Graph 27. Before coming to Moldova, what was your main activity? (one answer possible), N=456, %



Chisinau and South stand out with higher employment rates of the respondents (67% and 64% respectively) than the overall average of 59%. The Centre region is below average at 45%. The North region is notable for its higher percentage of interviewed individuals involved in studies at

11%, nearly double the total average of 6%. North and Centre regions show a higher percentage of retired individuals at 14% and 16%, respectively. This is in stark contrast with the South region, which is significantly below average at just 2%. A notable 16% of respondents from the Centre were unemployed or jobless before moving to Moldova, which is double the total average of 8%.

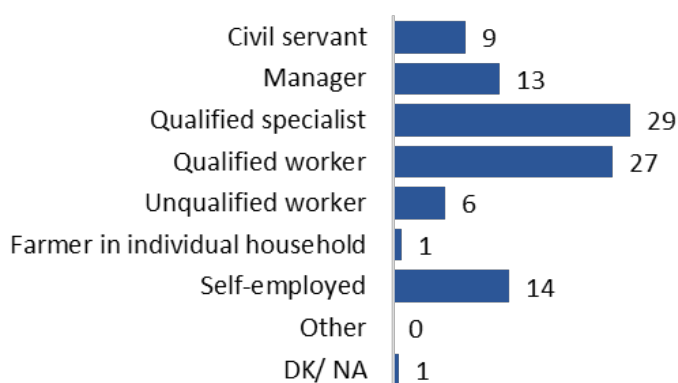
Graph 28. Disaggregated by region. Before coming to Moldova, what was your main activity? (one answer possible), %



About a third of the respondents that were employed were qualified specialists (29%) and qualified workers (27%) at their last job in Ukraine.

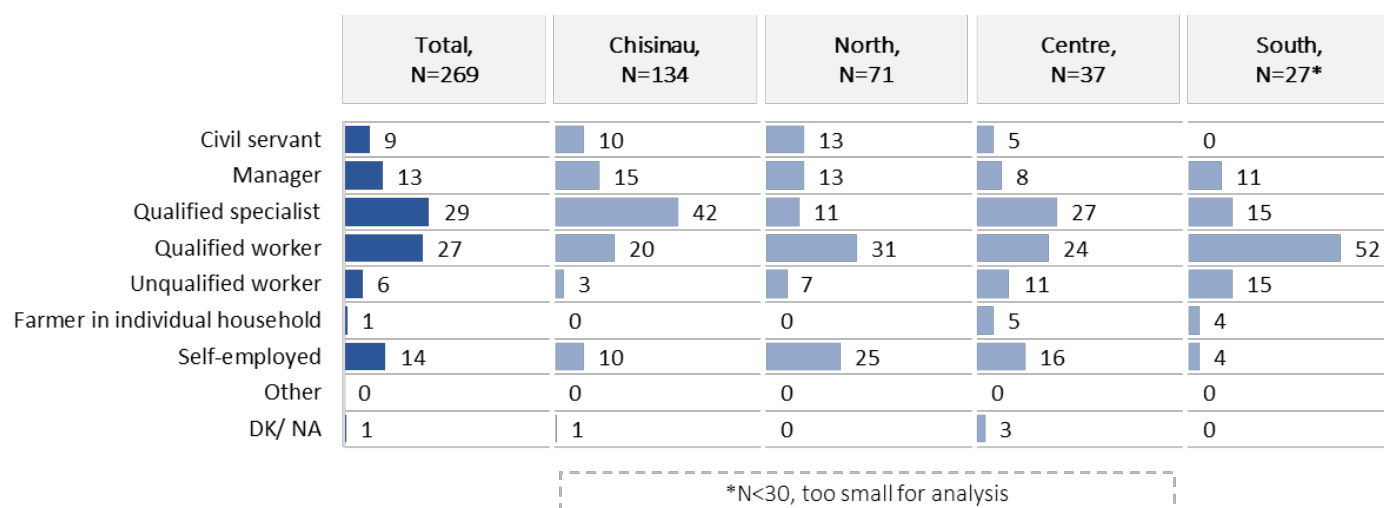
13% of the respondents who were employed in Ukraine had been managers, and 9% - had worked as civil servants. 14% were self-employed, indicating entrepreneurship or freelance work among the respondents.

Graph 29. What was the position you held at your last job in Ukraine? (one answer possible), N=269, % of those who were employed before coming to Moldova



Chisinau stands out with 42% of its respondents having been qualified specialists in Ukraine, significantly higher than the total average of 29%. A notable quarter (25%) of respondents from the North had been self-employed in Ukraine. In the South, over half of the respondents (52%) mention they used to be qualified workers, and 15% - that they had been unqualified workers.

Graph 30. Disaggregated by region. What was the position you held at your last job in Ukraine? (one answer possible), % of those who were employed before coming to Moldova



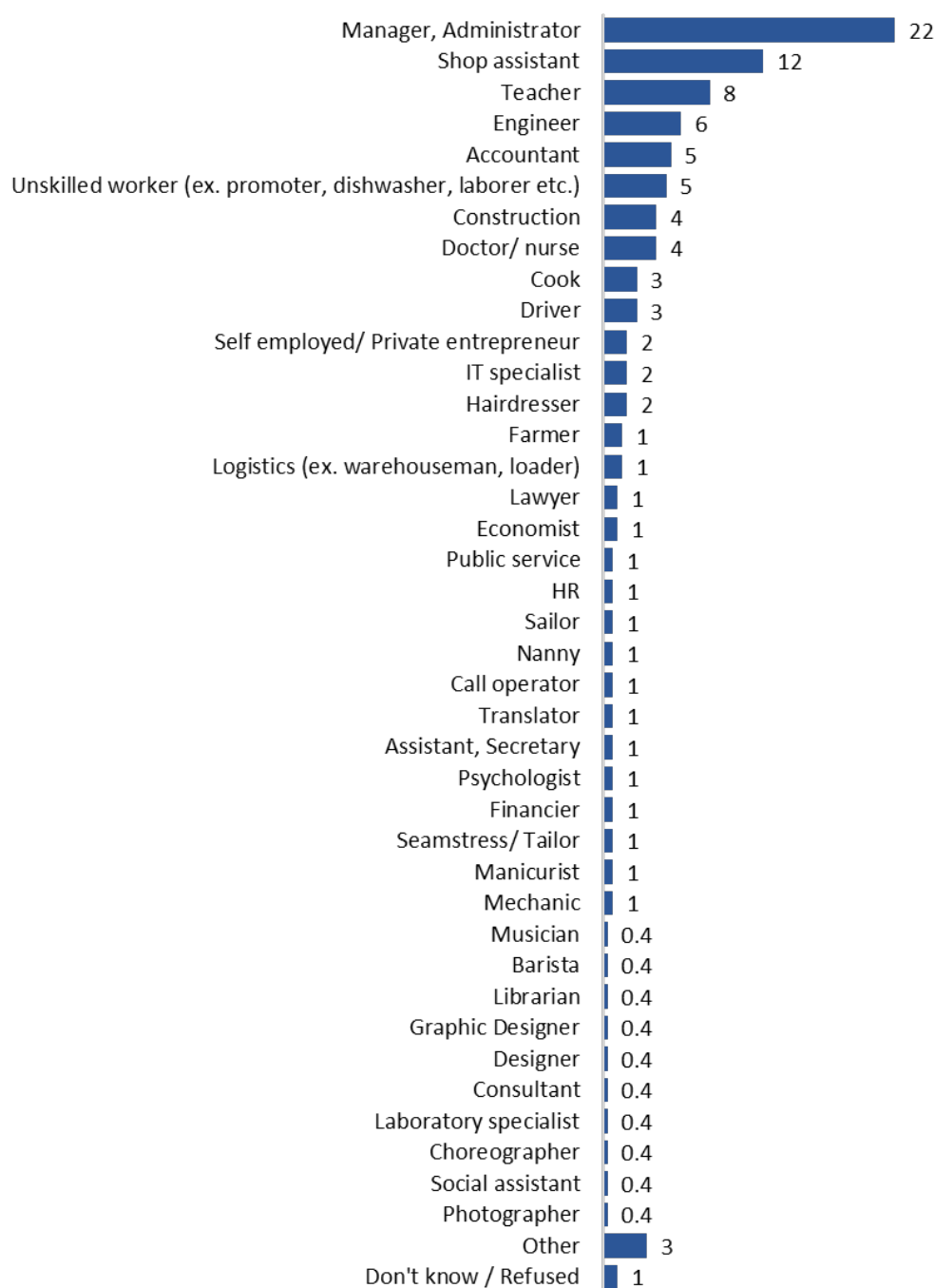
The predominant sectors in which respondents were previously employed are "Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles", encompassing 23% of the participants. This is followed by "Education" at 10% of respondents being involved in academic or instructional roles. The third major sector, is "Processing, goods manufacturing, repair, and installation" and "Transport, warehousing, postal and courier services", mentioned by 8% of the respondents.

Graph 31. Please tell us what industry you were employed in at your last job. (one answer possible), N=269, % of those who were employed before coming to Moldova



Respondents participating in the study who were employed before coming to Moldova held a different range of positions, with the most common being manager/administrator (22%) and shop assistant (12%), teacher (8%), engineer (6%), accountant (5%), unskilled worker (5%), construction (4%), doctor/ nurse (4%) (Graph 32).

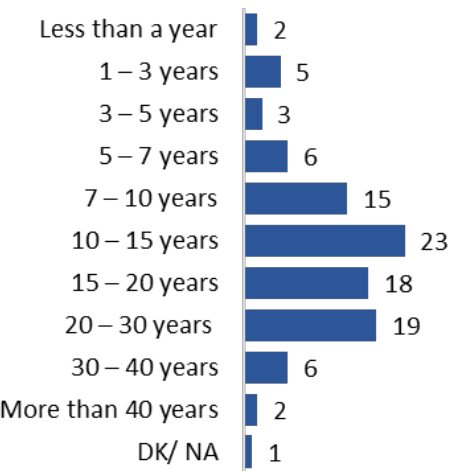
Graph 32. What position did you hold? (open-ended), N=269, % of those who were employed before coming to Moldova



Most respondents that have been employed possess substantial employment experience, showcasing a seasoned workforce. A combined 60% of participants have over a decade of employment experience: 23% for 10-15 years, 18% for 15-20 years, 19% for 20-30 years, and 2% for more than 40 years. On the other end, only a minor segment of the respondents, 2%, have

less than a year of experience, suggesting that novices in the employment realm are minimal in this sample.

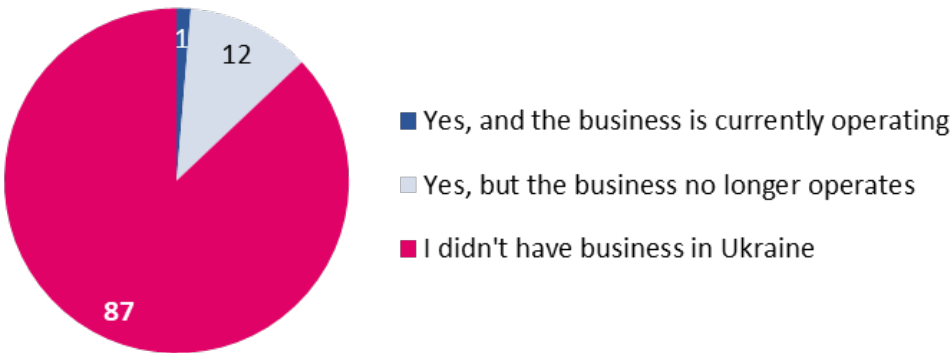
Graph 33. What is your employment experience in general (years of employment, regardless of the field)? (one answer possible), N=269, % of those who were employed before coming to Moldova



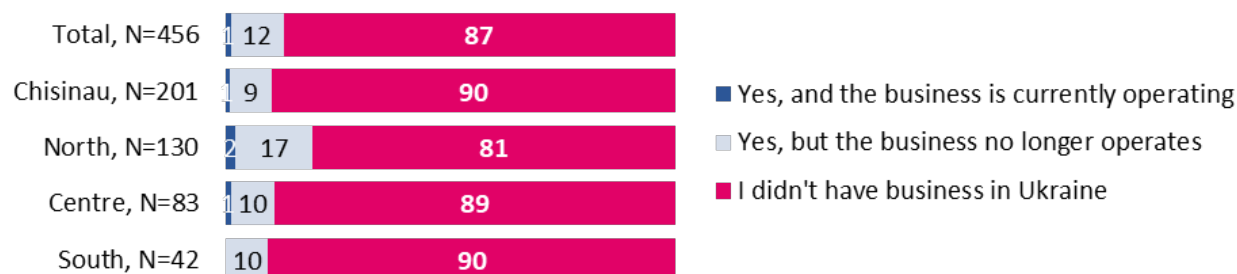
5.1.3 Business experience in Ukraine

A majority of respondents (87%) did not own a business in Ukraine prior to their arrival in Moldova, with this trend being consistent across all regions. However, of those who did own businesses, 12% had businesses that are no longer in operation, with the North region having a slightly elevated share of these respondents at 17%. 1% of business owners indicated that their businesses were still operating in Ukraine at the time of the survey.

Graph 34. Before you came to Moldova, did you own business in Ukraine? (one answer possible), N=456, %

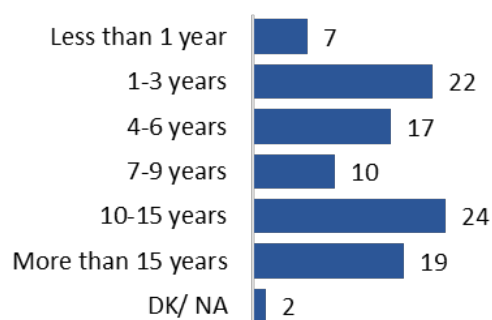


Graph 35. Disaggregated by region. Before you came to Moldova, did you own business in Ukraine? (one answer possible), %



About a quarter of the respondents who owned a business in Ukraine before coming to Moldova did so for 10-15 years, while about one-fifth did it for 1-3 years (22%) or for more than 15 years (19%).

Graph 36. How long have you owned this business? (one answer possible), N=59, % of those who had any business in Ukraine



About half of respondents who owned a business in Ukraine before coming to Moldova mentioned the business had been in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, and motorcycles (49%) (Graph 37).

In the case of the Focus Groups, there were several participants who were entrepreneurs before they came to the Republic of Moldova, and they had businesses in Ukraine, which ceased its activity, in most cases.

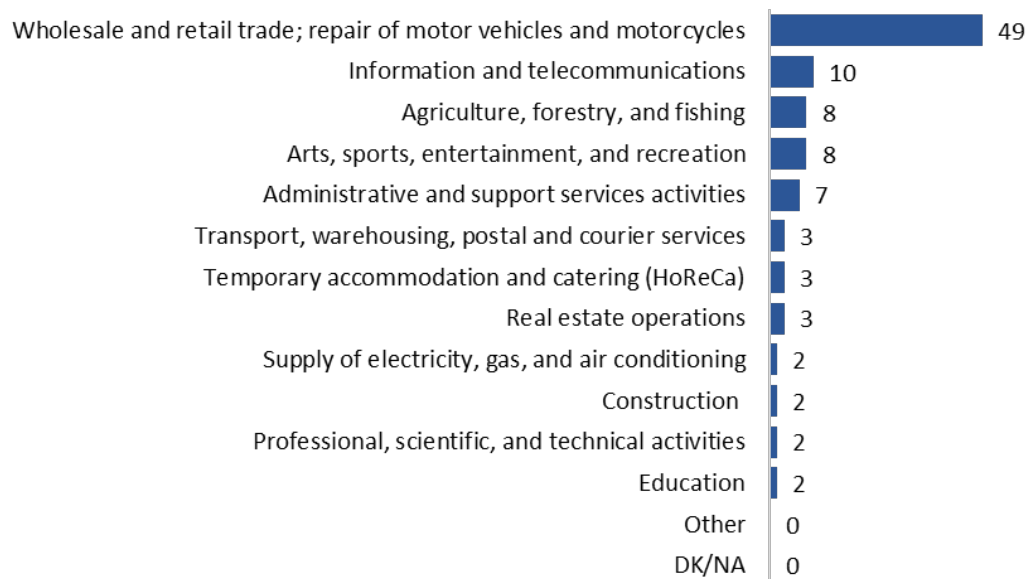
Participants named the businesses they owned:

- Shop selling walnuts;
- Selling medicinal herbs and spices;
- Legal firm (notary);
- Manufacture of mushroom mycelium;

- Beauty salon.

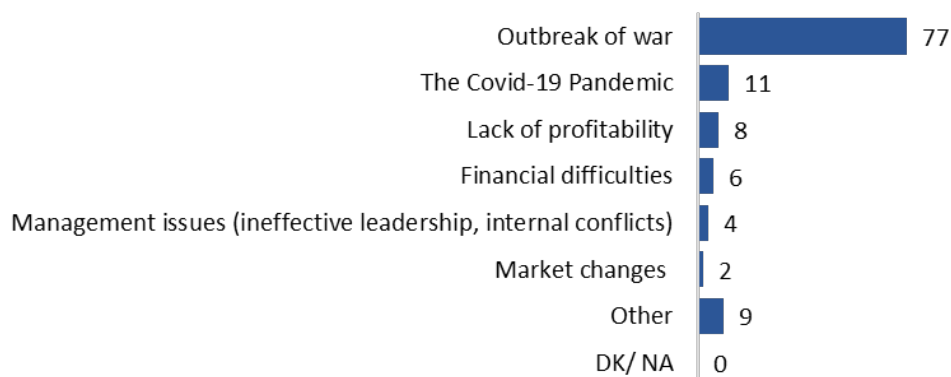
The interviewees who had prior business ownership experience before arriving in Moldova expressed a desire to resume their entrepreneurial pursuits. However, they encountered various obstacles, with the primary challenge being a lack of familiarity with the entrepreneurial landscape in Moldova.

Graph 37. What was/ is the main field of economic activity of your business? (open-ended), N=59, % of those who had any business in Ukraine



Most businesses owned by respondents who had a business in Ukraine closed due to the outbreak of war (77%). One in ten respondents specified their businesses had ceased their activity because of the Covid-19 Pandemic (11%).

Graph 38. Why did your business cease its activity? (multiple answer possible), N=59, % of those who had any business in Ukraine



5.1.4 Work experience in Moldova

The highest share of respondents (25%) are employed in Moldova. This is notably higher in Chisinau at 31% compared to 18% in the North, 20% in the Centre, and 24% in the South. The second largest category are the respondents who are unemployed and actively seeking work, with the South having a notably higher percentage at 36%. Childcare leave is the next most common occupation at 15% of respondents overall, with the Centre region slightly higher at 19%. Interestingly, 10% of interviewees in Chisinau are engaged in remote work for a company based in Ukraine, which is slightly higher than in other regions. Additionally, while 10% of respondents report being retired, this share is slightly lower in the South (2%) (Graph 39, 40).

The topic of work experience in Moldova was also discussed **with refugees during focus groups**. Some of the refugees said that they had the experience of working officially on the territory of Moldova, in the following positions:

- sales consultant at the clothing store;
- barber at his own barbershop;
- social pedagogist;
- baker;
- social worker;
- auxiliary worker in the store;
- manager of the temporary placement center for refugees;
- employee of the town hall;
- kindergarten assistant teacher;
- kindergarten teacher;
- project assistant;
- worker at a plant;
- event organizer for children;

At the same time, one of the refugees mentioned they found a job in Moldova, due to the collaboration of the Federation of Speech Therapists of Ukraine who contacted the Association of Speech Therapists and Psychopedagogists of Moldova to recommend the refugee's candidacy.

Most of the refugees participating in the discussions mention that at the moment they do not work in Moldova, being either students, working remotely for organizations in Ukraine, or volunteering, helping refugees, pensioners, children with Down syndrome and other vulnerable categories.

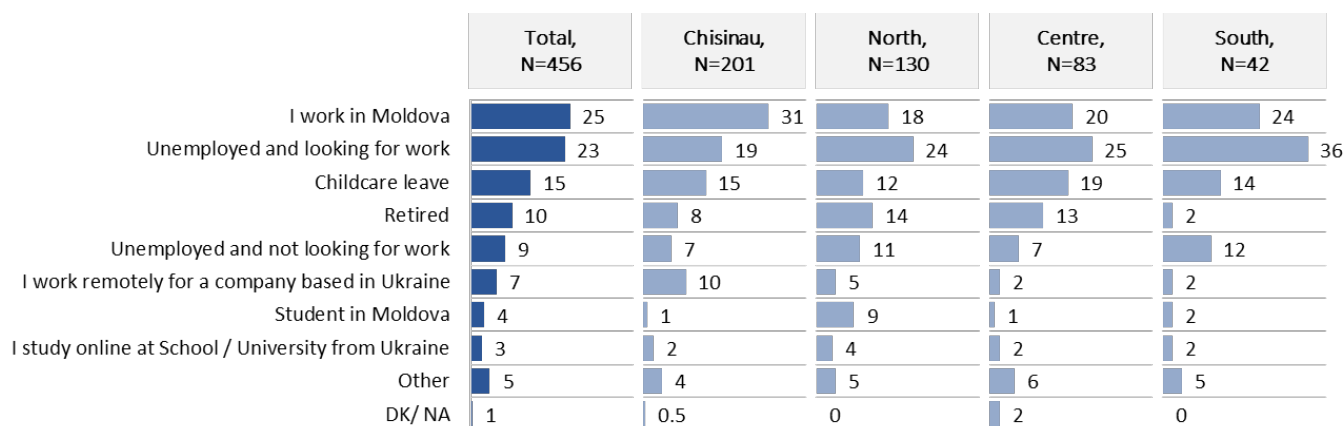
Another part of the interviewees mentions that they did not try to find a job in Moldova. Among the reasons were mentioned: interest in opening a business (continuing the business they had in Ukraine), caring for children / people with special needs / elderly.

No refugee who participated in the study mentioned that they had approached any organization/ company to help them get a job. The only option used by refugees in the job search was to monitor ads posted on the internet, information from stands or through the acquaintance network.

Graph 39. What is your occupation at the moment? (one answer possible), N=456, %



Graph 40. Disaggregated by region. What is your occupation at the moment? (one answer possible), %



The top three areas in which respondents would agree to work in Moldova are arts, recreation and leisure activities (20%), wholesale and retail trade; maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (19%) and information and communication (16%).

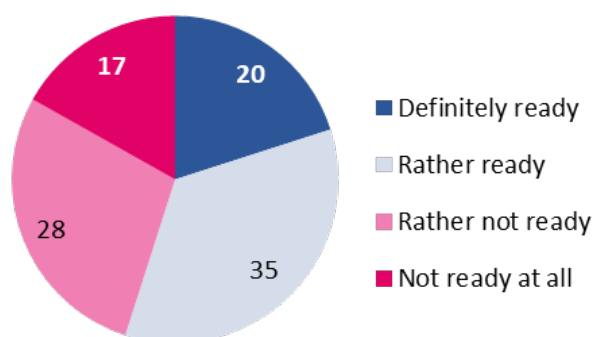
On the other hand, most of the companies participating in the study are willing to hire people, including refugees, for the following positions: driver/courier (23%), auxiliary workers (19%), seller/Sales Agent (12%), warehouseman/Porter (11%), operator (10%).

Graph 41. In which areas would you agree to get an offer to work in Moldova? (multiple response), N=456, %

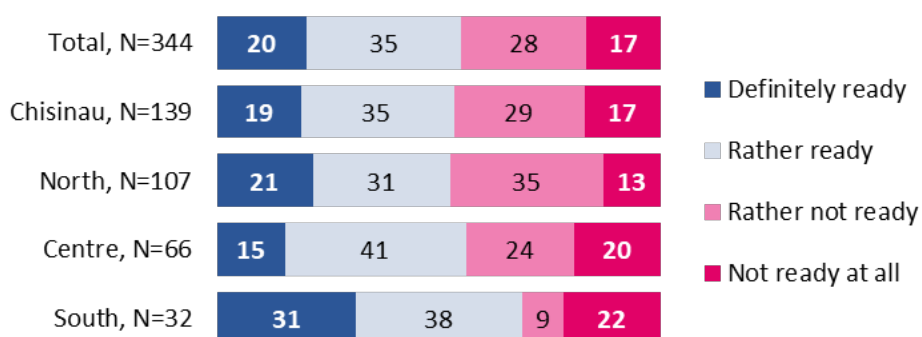


A combined total of 55% of respondents that don't work in Moldova are either generally ready to get a job, with Chisinau and the North showing similar readiness levels at 54% and 52% respectively, the Centre at 56%, and the South leading with 69%.

Graph 42. How ready are you to get a job in Moldova? (one answer possible), N=344, % of those who do not work in Moldova



Graph 43. Disaggregated by region. How ready are you to get a job in Moldova? (one answer possible), N=344, % of those who do not work in Moldova

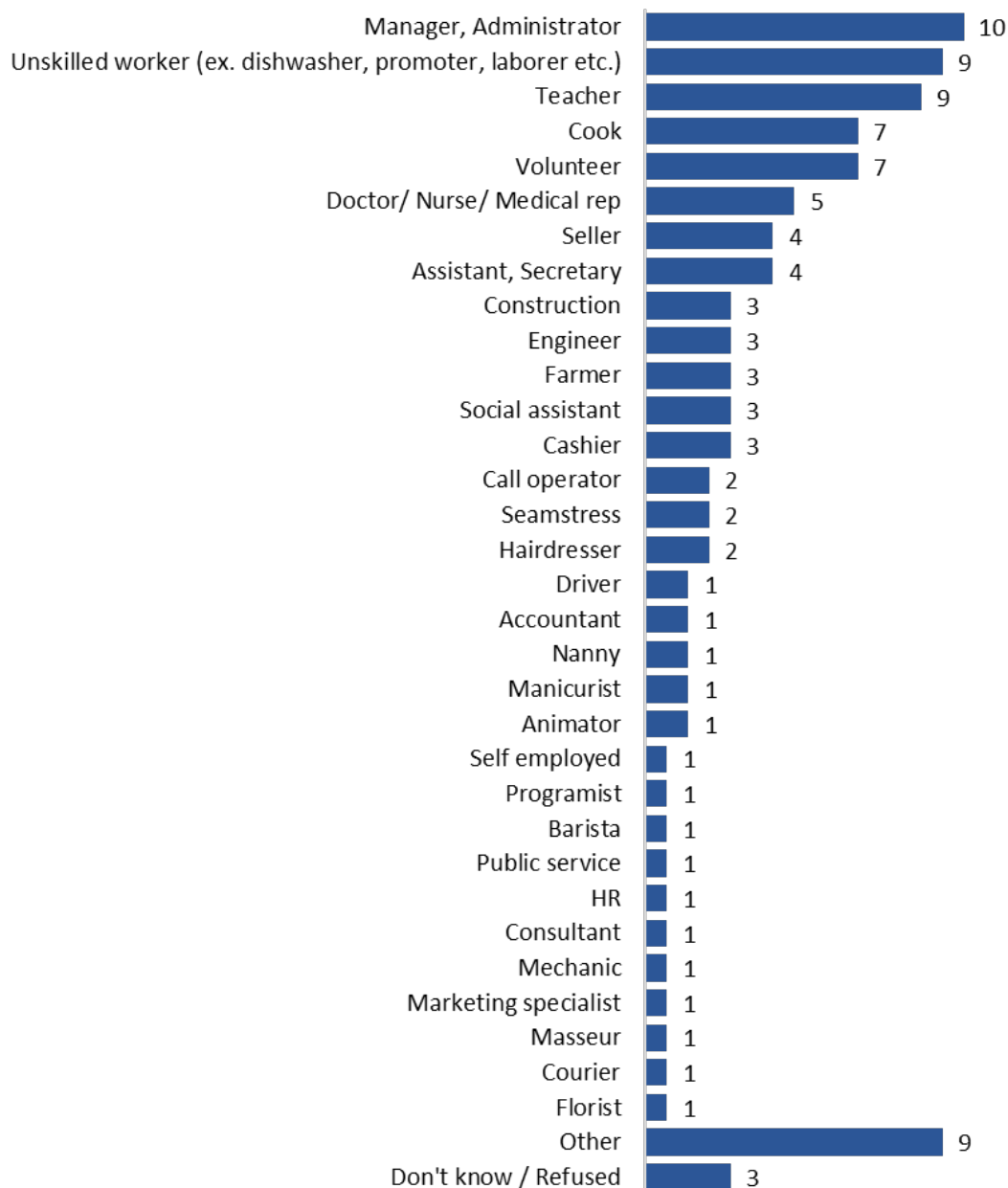


The most common jobs among the respondents who had work experience in Moldova include:

- Manager/administrator (10% of respondents who had work experience in Moldova)
- Unskilled worker (9%)
- Teacher (9%)
- Cook (7%)
- Volunteer (7%).

Respondents participating in the study who were employed **before coming to Moldova** mostly worked in the following positions manager/administrator (22%) and shop assistant (12%), teacher (8%), engineer (6%), accountant (5%), unskilled worker (5%), construction (4%), doctor/nurse (4%) (Graph 44).

Graph 44. What (was) is your position at your job in Moldova? (open-ended), N=149, % of those who had work experience in Moldova

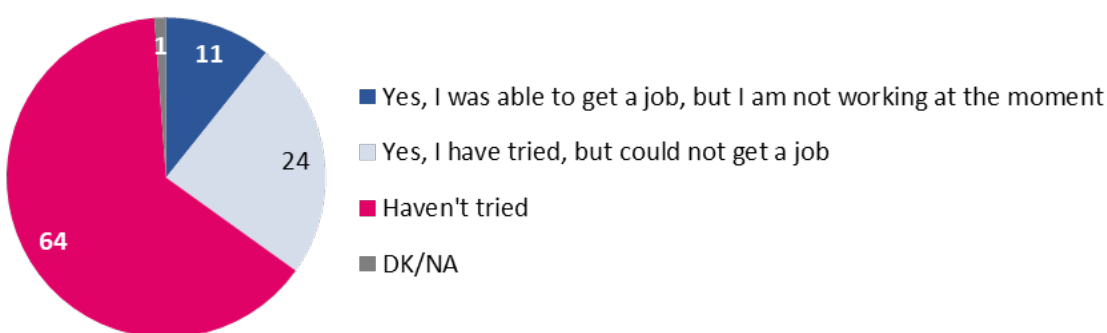


At the same time, in **interviews with representatives of organizations that provide support** in the employment of refugees, respondents mentioned successful examples of refugees who managed to find employment in Moldova. Respondents provided **concrete examples of refugees who have successfully integrated** into Moldova's labor market:

- One respondent mentioned that 52 refugees in Cahul rayon were employed, working at Draxlmaier, the Giurgiulesti International Free Port, the Nufărul Alb sanatorium, and the Cahul Health Center.
- A refugee who held an administrative position in Ukraine is currently employed as a call center operator for an organization that works with refugees. The respondent stated that the refugee is satisfied with her position and the fact that she can help her fellow nationals.
- Two kindergarten teachers who continue their work with children with disabilities in Moldova.
- A refugee from Ukraine was employed at a brewery where he worked for half a year, being satisfied with the job, even though he previously worked as a sailor and only had knowledge of the beer production process.
- Hiring speech therapists, psychologists, and educators in schools with instruction in the Russian language and centers for children with disabilities.
- Small businesses being opened by groups of graduates of massage and manicure courses.

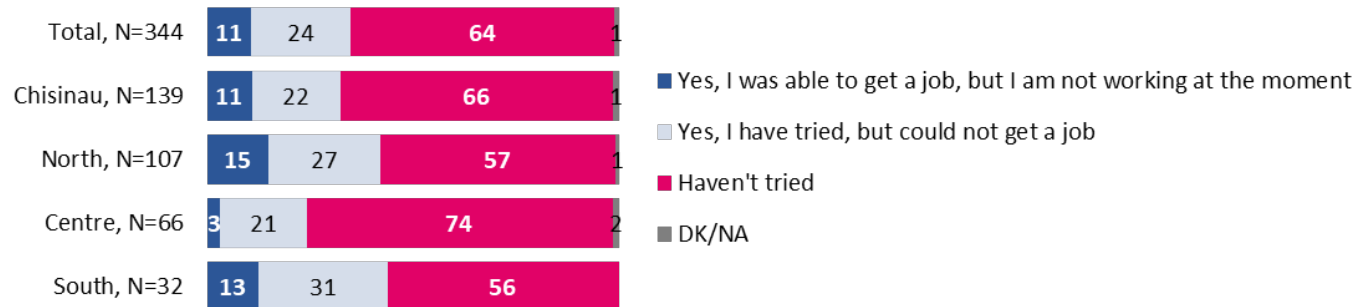
Among the respondents who are not currently working in Moldova, the majority (64%) have not tried to get a job while living in Moldova.

Graph 45. Have you tried to get a job while living in Moldova? (one answer possible), N=344,
% of those who do not work in Moldova



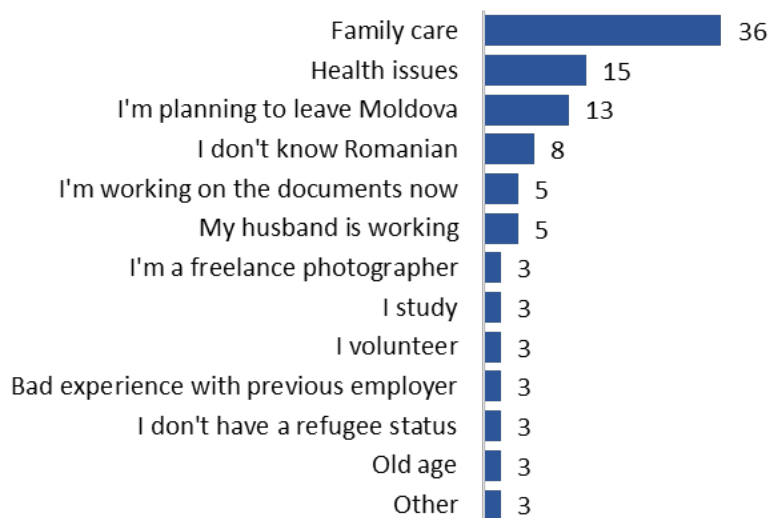
Compared to the total sample, the North region has a slightly higher percentage of respondents who were able to get a job but aren't working now (15% compared to 11% total) and those who tried but couldn't find a job (27% compared to 24% total). In contrast, the Centre stands out with the lowest percentage of individuals who managed to secure a job but aren't currently employed – 3%. The South, meanwhile, has the highest share of respondents who tried but couldn't get a job (31%).

Graph 46. Disaggregated by region. Have you tried to get a job while living in Moldova? (one answer possible), N=344, % of those who do not work in Moldova



Among the reasons why refugees do not seek work in Moldova are family care (36%), health issues (15%) and plans to leave Moldova (13%).

Graph 47. Please tell us what are the reasons you are not looking for a job. (open-ended), N=39, % of those unemployed who are not looking for work



- **Job search mechanisms**

According to the survey data, the main three sources of job information for refugees who are ready to work are social networks (for 56% of respondents), specialized job search platforms (29%) and NGO websites (28%) (Graph 48).

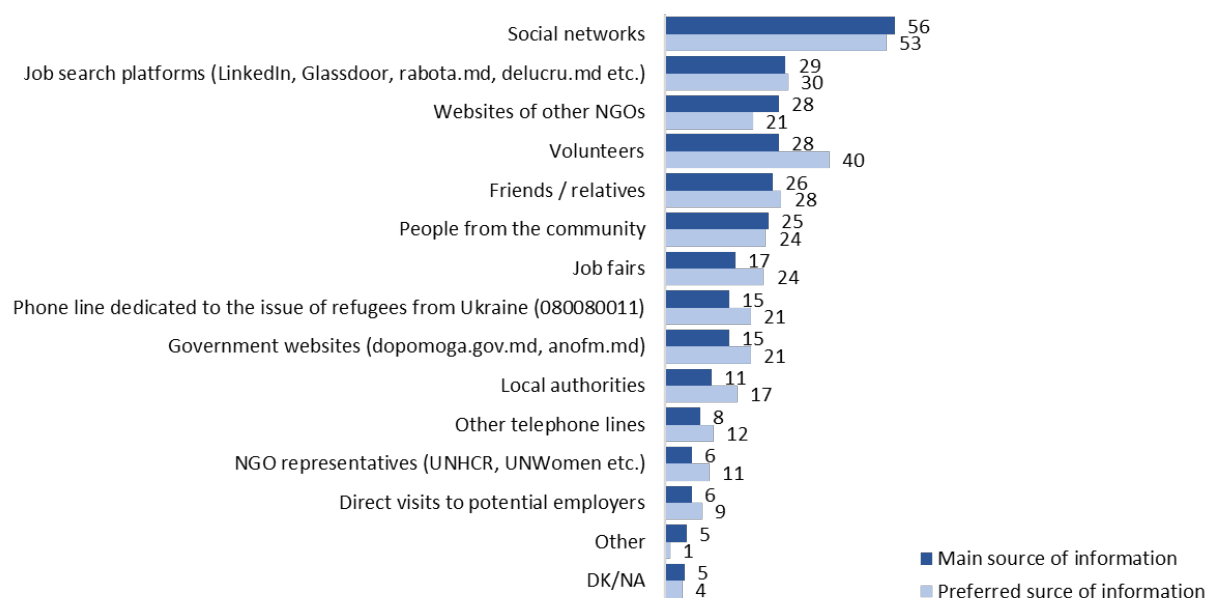
And as for the top three sources of information on jobs in Moldova, which the interviewed refugees ready to work would prefer, these are social networks, volunteers, specialized job search platforms.

The **refugees that participated in focus groups** were asked about the sources through which they are looking for jobs in Moldova. And their responses seem to support the survey. More specifically they mentioned:

- online ads;
- acquaintances who either recommend them to well-known employers or offer them positions;
- specialized job-seeking platforms such as rabota.md, robota.md, 999.md;
- Facebook, Telegram, Viber, or specialized groups on Facebook;
- asking potential employers directly about vacancies;
- Employment Agency.

At the same time, it was mentioned that during searching for a remote job on the internet there were cases of scams or inaccurate information.

Graph 48. What are the main/ preferred sources of information you use to access information related to employment opportunities for refugees? (multiple response), N=189, % of those who are ready to get a job in Moldova



5.1.5 Working conditions

Of those who would prefer any work format other than self-employment, respondents predominantly prefer the on-site work format (33%), or any other work that does not involve heavy physical activity, according to the Focus Group participants. The mixed format, which involves a combination of on-site and remote work, is the second most preferred at 27%. Meanwhile, 20% of the respondents favor the remote (online) work format. 17% mentioned that

the work format did not matter (Graph 49). While employers are more willing to hire full time, refugees (potential employees) are more interested in part time or remote jobs. Out of the companies that stated they are open to hiring refugees 97% are also open to hiring full-time, 56% are open to hiring refugees on part-time program with fix program, and 35% - part time program with flexible program.

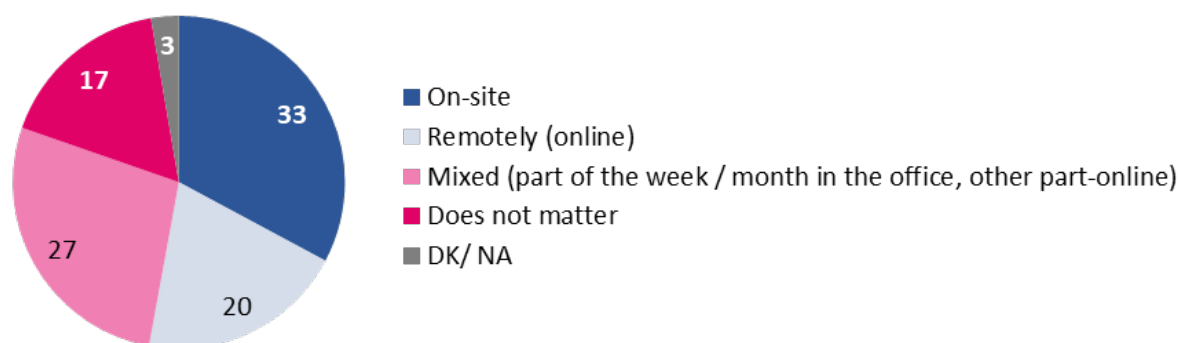
During the Focus Group interviews, participants who had children mentioned that they prefer part-time or flexible work schedule, or remote work, because of having young children or being students. One of the main criteria regarding the job mentioned in the group discussions is the possibility of performing tasks in Russian, Romanian not being a required language.

Among the regions, the South has a significant inclination towards on-site work with a preference of 60%, higher than the total average of 33%. Chisinau respondents stand out with a stronger preference for the mixed format at 39%. The preference for remote work is highest in Chisinau at 26%, and notably lower in the North (12%) (Graph 50).

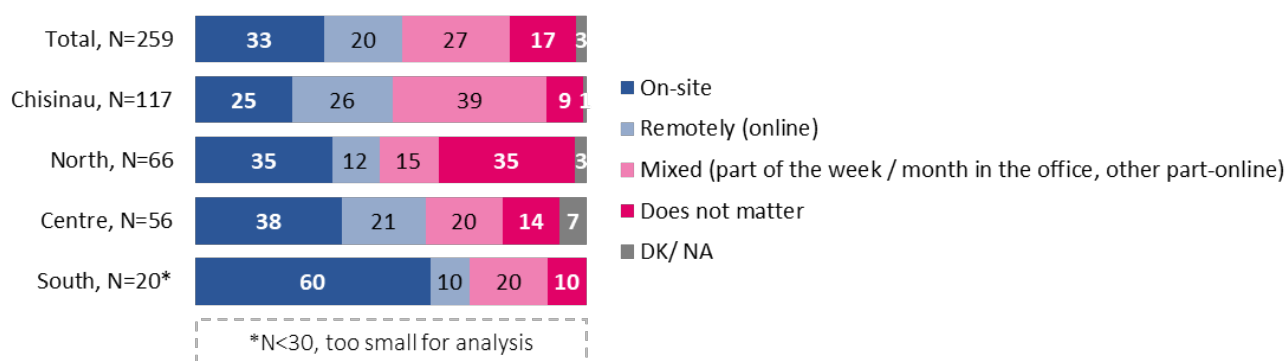
Some of the focus group participants cannot afford to rent and live in refugee accommodation centers located outside Chisinau, which is why they are looking for jobs near the centers where they live. Those who live outside Chisinau claim that they cannot find a job in their town, because the number of vacancies is low, and that they are often redirected to the capital, but daily commute to Chisinau would cost too much.

Most interviewees from Focus Group say they did not have certain criteria in choosing the job. The most important thing was to find an activity that would bring them income, regardless of working conditions.

Graph 49. If do not talk about self-employment, what would be for you the preferred format of work? (one answer possible), N=259, % of those who would prefer any work schedule other than self-employment

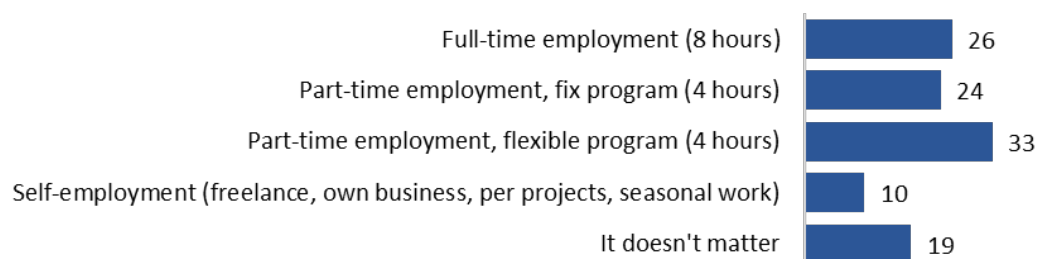


Graph 50. Disaggregated by region. If do not talk about self-employment, what would be for you the preferred format of work? (one answer possible), N=259, % of those who would prefer any work schedule other than self-employment



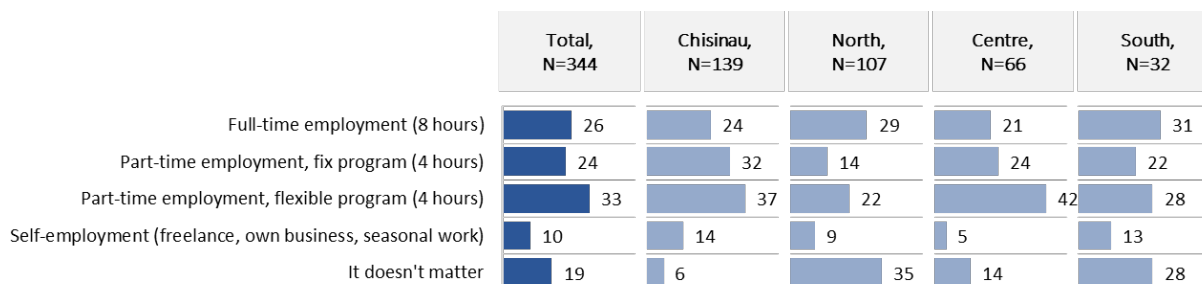
A third of respondents who do not work in Moldova (33%) would be interested in working part-time with a flexible schedule (4 hours), while about one-third each would prefer fixed full-time employment (8 hours) (26%) or part-time employment (4 hours) (24%).

Graph 51. In what kind of work schedule would you interest in for a job in Moldova? (multiple response), N=344, % of those who do not work in Moldova



Respondents from Central (42%) and Chisinau (37%) regions appear to be more interested in part-time flexible employment. To the respondents that are interested in self-employment, the most attractive sectors are beauty industry (22%), IT Industry (17%) and Trade (14%).

Graph 52. Disaggregated by region. In what kind of work schedule would you interest in for a job in Moldova? (multiple response), N=344, % of those who do not work in Moldova



During the **focus groups with refugees** some interviewees was not sure what amount would be needed for a minimum living in Moldova, being in the country for a short time. Salary requirements depend on several factors, such as: the flexibility of the work schedule, the requirements from the employer regarding the necessary skills, the monthly expenses that the employee bears, including the payment of rent. Thus, in dependence on the work schedule, some believe that full-time involvement requires to be paid starting with about 1000 EUR, and part-time involvement – with about 500 EUR, in dependence on the volume of work.

The interviewees believe that their salary expectations could be achieved in Moldova, as the labor market is large, there are a lot of proposals, and it is possible to find something suitable to their preferences.

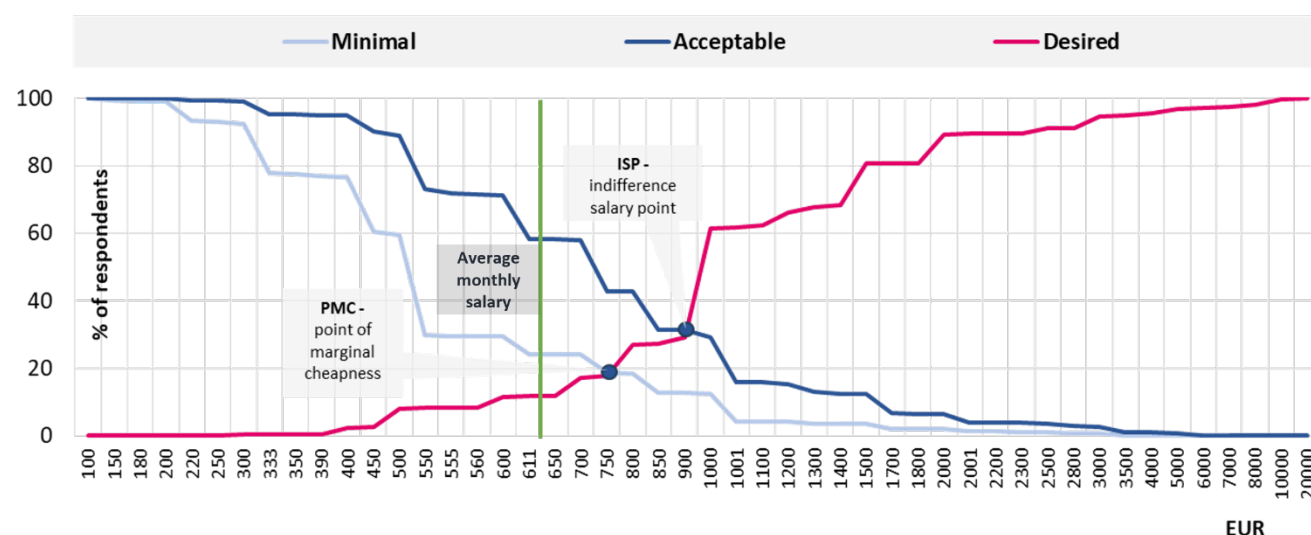
Some refugees are forced to accept a job with a much lower salary than the salary they had in Ukraine. And some consider that Moldovan employers are taking advantage of the situation in which the refugees find themselves, with the urgent need for money and a job, and thus propose low wages, motivating the offer by the fact that Moldova is a poor country and cannot offer higher wages.

The graph 53 include the data on the salary considered “Acceptable” and salary considered “Desired”, with the curve intersection being a point called the **indifference salary point (ISP)** – this is the salary that most people do not consider neither high, nor low.

The intersection of the "Minimal" and "Desired" curves provides a point of maximum cheapness (PMC - point of marginal cheapness), which signifies the minimum wage desired by respondents.

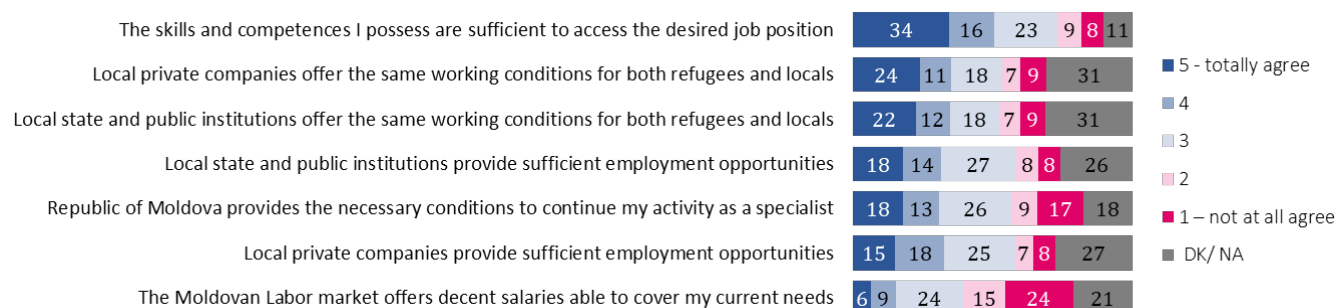
Thus, it can be concluded that for about 30% of the respondents, the salary of EUR 900 would be considered suitable, and about 60% of the interviewed refugees would like a salary of EUR 1000. Both the minimum accepted salary - 750 EUR (PMC - point of marginal cheapness) and the salary representing the ISP (indifference point) - 900 EUR, are above the average salary in the Republic of Moldova, which in 2023 represents approximately 611 EUR.

Graph 53. For you, what would be a minimal/ acceptable/ desired salary proposal (in dollars) to accept a job offer for a full working month in Moldova? (open-ended), N=456



Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all agree, and 5 - totally agree, to what extent they agree with a series of statements. About half of respondents believe that their skills are sufficient to get a job they want. At the same time, over a third of the interviewed persons say that both local state institutions and private ones offer equal working conditions for both refugees and Moldovans. A share of 24% of respondents did not agree at all with the statement that the Moldovan market labor offers decent salaries able to cover their current needs.

Graph 54. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all agree, and 5 - totally agree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding employment opportunities for refugees in Moldova? N=456, %

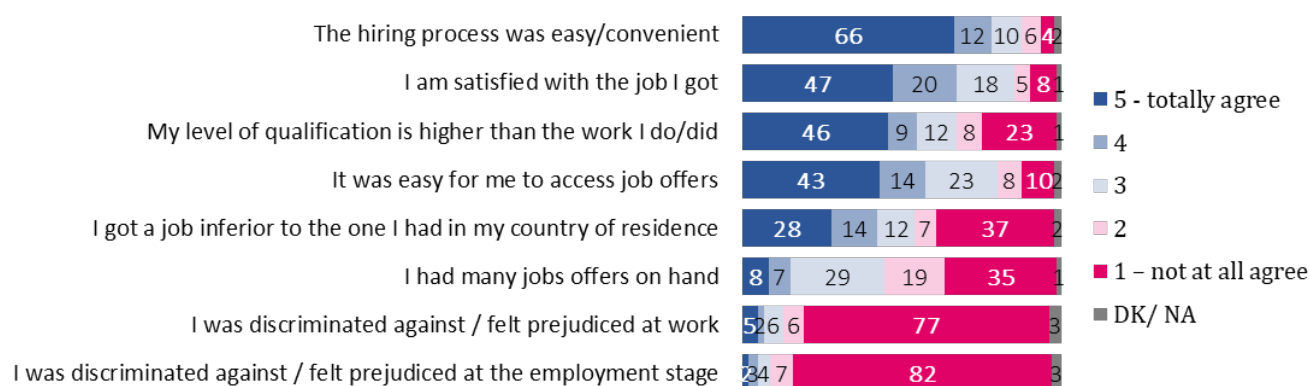


Respondents who had work experience in Moldova were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all agree, and 5 - totally agree, to what extent they agree with a series of statements. Most respondents who had experience working in Moldova claim that the employment process was easy (66%).

Almost half of interviewees who worked/ work in Moldova claim that they are satisfied with the obtained job (47%). At the same time, 46% of respondents consider their qualification to be higher than the position they perform (46%). 28% of respondents totally agree with the statement “I got a job inferior to the one I had in my country of residence”.

A share of 5% of respondents said that they totally agree with the statement “I was discriminated against/ felt prejudiced at work”, when 77% not at all agree with this statement.

Graph 55. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your employment experience and work conditions in Moldova? *N=149, % of those who had work experience in Moldova*



- **Needs of the refugees regarding the integration in the Moldovan labor market**

During key informant interviews, the representatives of the services that provide support in the employment process for refugees talked about the requests and needs expressed by refugees regarding their integration on the Moldovan labor market:

- **Employment opportunities for highly qualified specialists.** Some refugees wish to work in a position similar to the one they held in Ukraine, particularly in fields like accounting, legal work, etc.
- **Requests for course diversification.** Several respondents mentioned that some beneficiaries request training courses that are not currently offered by their organization, such as accounting or pastry making courses.
- **Part-time or remote work opportunities** for refugees with young children or other dependents

- Specialized **Romanian language courses** related to the refugees' field of work to enable communication with business clients.
- **Skilled job opportunities.** A respondent from the Employment Agency mentioned that the agency offers unskilled job opportunities that do not require specific qualifications, while some refugees would prefer to find work in their specialized field.
- Obtaining a **residence permit** – one respondent claimed that with a provisional residence permit, refugees have the same rights as citizens.

5.1.6 Self-employment in Moldova

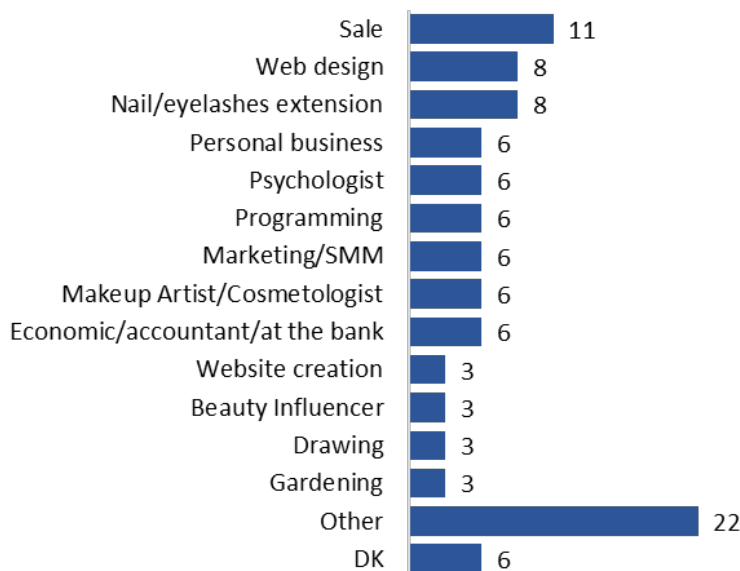
A share of 10% (36 respondents) of the respondents who do not have a job in Moldova would be interested in self-employment. The most attractive sectors are beauty industry (22%), IT Industry (17%), Trade (14%), marketing (8%), art/ design (8%).

Graph 56. If we talk about self-employment, in what sector/industry would you be interested in working? (open-ended), N=36, % of those who are interested in self-employment in Moldova



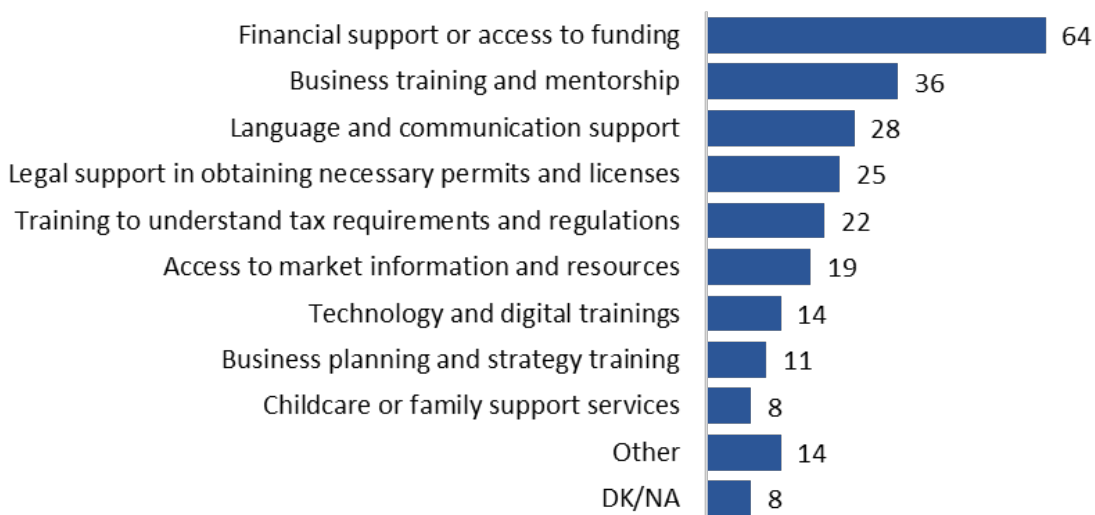
When asked what they would like to do, interviewees mentioned sales (11%), followed by web design and nail/eyelash extensions (8% each). Also, a share of 6% of this segment of respondents expressed interest in personal entrepreneurship, psychology, programming, and marketing.

Graph 57. What exactly would you like to do? (open-ended), N=36, % of those who are interested in self-employment in Moldova



The majority of respondents who is interested in self-employment, mentioned that they need financial support or access to financing for this (64%). Other necessities mentioned are business training and mentorship (36%), communication support (28%), legal support (25%), training to understand tax requirements (22%), access to market information and resources (19%).

Graph 58. What kind of support do you need to open your own business in Moldova? (multiple response), N=36, % of those who are interested in self-employment in Moldova



36% of refugees who are interested in opening their own business on the territory of Moldova mention that the barrier for this is the lack of finances. Less mentioned were linguistic problems and lack of legal knowledge.

Graph 59. What are the main challenges you have to start your own business in Moldova? (open-ended), N=36, % of those who are interested in self-employment in Moldova



Barriers to refugees who are open to self-employment

Speaking about the difficulties faced by refugees in the process of self-employment in the Republic of Moldova, focus group participants who had a business in Ukraine mention that the state does not provide conditions for refugees to open in Moldova the business they had in Ukraine. The interviewees claim that it is difficult or impossible to obtain a patent, in Moldova the laws being differ from those in Ukraine. Some interviewees say that for a refugee to open their business in Moldova, they must reach illegal paths through the involvement of Moldovans: *"... You must hire Moldovans, pay people someone to open the business. But I don't want to."*

Another barrier is the lack of possibility to distribute goods through points of sale in Moldova, such as supermarkets, groceries, etc. In this regard, the interviewee proposes that the state allow producers to distribute their goods through shops, supermarkets, small groceries, etc. In order to organize this process, refugees also ask for support and explanations.

In discussing the barriers and difficulties faced by **refugees who have tried to become or are self-employed**, an interviewee mentioned that the main difficulty for offering cleaning services is the lack of equipment necessary to perform more complex work – steamer, vacuum cleaner, etc.

Refugees who provide barber/hairdressing services mention that they face high prices for tools and equipment for his salon, the price being 2-2.5 times higher than in Ukraine: *"I cannot get used to the prices. Everything is very expensive in Moldova. [...] When I started buying equipment, it hurt my soul that I knew it was cheaper in Ukraine."* Financial difficulties related to the

development of the business – renting a larger space, arranging the work area, recreation for clients, etc. – were mentioned as a difficulty.

In addition to financial challenges, at the beginning of launching the business, some refugees claim to have faced organizational and legal difficulties. In this regard, the participants say that it was not clear how to obtain the patent and to whom to address this request, being redirected from the City Hall to the State Tax Service, then to other institutions. The process of obtaining the patent was sophisticated and complicated, even with the support of lawyers: *"... even at the town hall they did not know how to do it correctly. They sent me to the Tax Service, the Tax Service – to the town hall to get a work permit. Even if the lawyers helped, there were times when I didn't know how to do it, because then they had changed the law, I didn't have the temporary protection."*

In discussions with refugees who are open to self-employment, the topic of support they need to develop their business on the territory of the Republic of Moldova was discussed. Similar to the survey findings, refugees in FGs that were open to self-employment mentioned the need for finances and information (relevant information on opening a business legally, explanation of certain laws, conditions, etc.)

Those who are involved in offering cleaning services believe that the state or NGOs can help by providing material support, i.e. purchasing those necessary devices, or through financial support that would be allocated for the purchase of materials necessary for more efficient work, which will increase income and clientele.

At the same time, refugees who would like to deal with the distribution of goods mentioned the need for financial support, necessary at each stage of the distribution and sale cycle: transportation of goods to Moldova, assembly/disassembly, rent of a warehouse/commercial space/point of sale, logistics process through the country, etc.

In addition, the interviewee with the barber services mentioned that finances were necessary both in case of opening a shop – rent of space, payment of utilities, salaries, etc., and in the case of renting “an armchair” in an already existing shop.

When asked if they had tried to obtain funding by applying for grants, some refugees mentioned that they had had experience applying for grants, but it had been fruitless: *"They called us, they promised to help us, they promised to help us all, who participated in trainings organized for 2-3 days, but [nothing came of it]..."*.

On the other hand, one of the participants in the discussion says that, living in a small village, LPA representatives found out that he had a business in Ukraine and recommended that he apply to the project to acquire financing for opening his own business in Moldova.

For the most part, the interviewed refugees do not know where they can turn to receive the support they need for opening a business in Moldova, including legal, financial, material, or technical support.

5.2 Main Barriers to refugee population employability

The Republic of Moldova, as a neighboring country to Ukraine, has been witnessing an influx of Ukrainian refugees seeking stability and security. As they endeavor to integrate into the Moldovan society and workforce, both the refugees and the employers face a spectrum of challenges. On one side, refugees grapple with a myriad of barriers, ranging from linguistic limitations to unfamiliarity with the local job market. On the other side, employers express concerns about administrative hurdles, potential cultural misalignments, and the temporary nature of refugee status.

This analysis delves into a comparative study of the barriers and challenges encountered by both refugees in their quest for employment and employers in their hiring processes. The goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation, shedding light on potential areas of intervention and support to facilitate smoother integration of refugees into the Moldovan workforce.

5.2.1 Barriers and challenges faced by refugees in the process of employment

- Language barrier

The language barrier is the most prominent. One-third **of the refugees who are ready to work in Moldova** faced the problem of not understanding the language in which the information was provided during searches for employment opportunities. This problem to a greater extent is found among respondents living in the North of the country (43%). Also, 51% of the refugees who tried to get a job in Moldova (51%) faced language barriers.

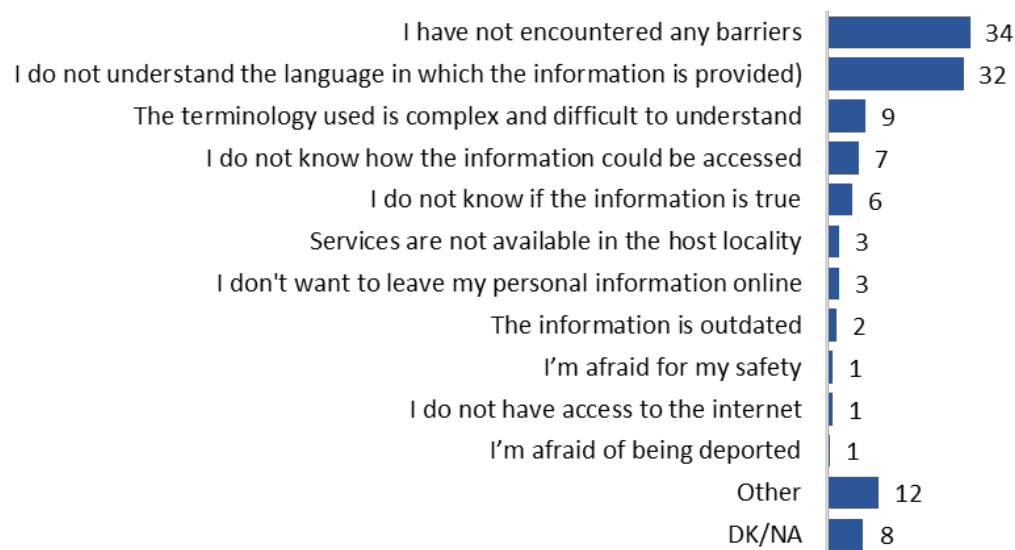
Most often respondents specify that due to lack of or beginner knowledge of Romanian, they will not be able to work according to their qualifications (*"I feel potentially that only with the Russian language I will not be able to work"*). According to some interviewees, there were cases when employers refused or reported the vacancy as filled after learning that the candidates had Ukrainian documents. One participant claims that being in the refugee center they were visited by representatives of the territorial employment service who presented them with available job offers, including the positions of accountants (a position previously held by the participant), but the employer would not hire them due to lack of knowledge of Romanian. In general, the interviewees are of the opinion that without the knowledge of Romanian language they will not be able to work in Moldova. *"The work was a lot, but with the knowledge of Russian*

few accepted. Knowledge of Romanian or English was required. But we only know Ukrainian and Russian".

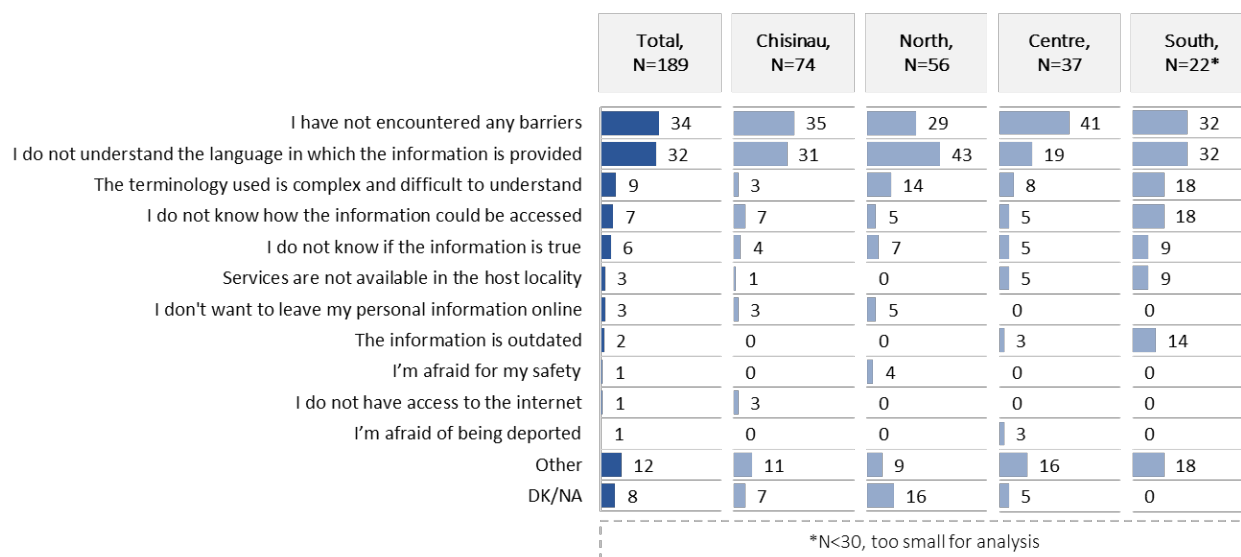
Key Informant interviewees that provide support to refugees in the process of Employment mentioned that Romanian language is an essential requirement for high-skilled positions (e.g., medical professions). This issue is less prevalent in regions of the country where most of the population speaks Russian (e.g., Gagauzia) or in the case of employment in educational institutions with instruction in Russian. In the same context, they mentioned that there is lack of time or other resources to attend Romanian language courses, as individuals are busy caring for children or elderly people. Also, one of the challenges is lack of time or other resources to attend Romanian language courses, as individuals are busy caring for children or elderly people.

Other barriers faced are the complex terminology used (9%), lack of knowledge about how the information could be accessed (7%), lack of trust in existing information (6%).

Graph 60. What are the main barriers you face in you search for information related employment opportunities? (multiple response), N=189, % of those who are ready to get a job in Moldova



Graph 61. Disaggregated by region. What are the main barriers you face in you search for information related employment opportunities? (multiple response), N=189, % of those who are ready to get a job in Moldova



- Limited opportunities

In addition, it is noted that the lack of adequate employment opportunities and positions compatible with the level of skills is another significant challenge, being mentioned by 21% of participants.

It is noted that refugees who tried to get employment in Moldova and who reside in the North declare that they do not have employment opportunities (33%) and lack the offer of work that corresponds to their qualifications and abilities (20%).

- Childcare duties and uncertainty about the future

Moreover, the need to care for children (11%) and uncertainty about the future (8%) are other relevant factors in the difficulty of accessing the labor market. About one in five respondents from Chisinau that tried to get a job mentioned they have children in need of care (18%).

- Cost of starting a job

Another impediment is the expensive cost of the commute due to **the organization of training courses for refugees in Chisinau**, including Romanian language courses. The same problem concerns the presence of workplaces, most of reportedly located in Chisinau.

- Legal barriers

On the other hand, interviewees spoke about **legal barriers**. Some of the study participants say that employers draw up a 6-month contract for provision of services with refugees with the possibility of extension, and not an individual work contract for an indefinite period. This approach creates a sense of uncertainty for the near future, because the refugees are not sure whether the employer will extend the contract or not: *"Being a specialist in the Ukrainian Labor Code, I can say that it is wonderful in our country, because it protects the employee, their interests. If the same fixed-term service contract was drawn up twice in a row, it automatically became an open-ended contract and protects the employee"*.

- Low salary

Another concern related to this aspect is that people who work under contracts for provision of services have to pay taxes by themselves and do not benefit from all the benefits according to the Labor Code – vacation, social insurance, medical insurance, etc. All this, according to the interviewees, favors the illegal employment of refugees, who agree to work for a salary of 300-350 MDL/day, but which will not be taxed.

- Other challenges

At the same time, some of the interviewees mention that they face difficulties in the hiring process, **being rejected by employers due to insufficient experience** in the field, even though they were recent graduate of the professional training courses organized in Moldova.

Another aspect observed by the interviewees following their experience of working in Moldova, was the impression that employers do not retain nor value employees who show interest and dedication: *"...what I faced in Ukraine - if a person manifests as a dedicated employee of an organization, they are cherished. [...] But [in Moldova], they very quickly replace you with another employee"*.

Another problem that the interviewed refugees encountered was being **referred to a job by the Territorial Employment Service that did not meet the criteria proposed** by the employer, thus the refugees were rejected due to lack of experience or qualification.

Refugees mentioned other barriers in the hiring process:

- health problems/ old age;
- difficulties in finding flexible working hours (for students);
- lack of institutions to support young children while parents are at work;
- low wages, high workload;

- failure to provide certificates that would confirm sick leave. According to the refugees, they can receive only an extract signed by the family doctor, which the employer cannot accept as evidence of an illness, therefore the sick leave cannot be paid.

Graph 62. What are the main barriers you face in finding a job in Moldova? (open-ended),

N=120, % of those who tried to get a job in Moldova



5.2.2 Barriers and challenges faced by employers in the hiring process

The main challenges identified by the **interviewed employers** in the process of hiring refugees are language barriers (30%) and documents (14%). At the same time, almost a quarter of employer respondents (23%) declare there are no barriers and challenges in the process of hiring refugees.

The difficulty related by lack of knowledge of Romanian Language is encountered by employers even at the stage of drawing up the contract, because it is written in the Romanian language. To cope with the created situations, employers translate the individual employment contract into Russian to be clear to the employed refugee. On the other hand, the language barrier is found in the communication process between the employed refugee and the beneficiary of the services provided by him. In some cases, over time this difficulty was eliminated, as beneficiaries got used to the fact that the employee speaks only Russian, but also the employed refugees learned some basic phrases in Romanian language, say the interviewees. On the other hand, some employers claim that they require an employee to know at least some introductory phrases in Romanian language, because this involves interacting with different people, even those who may not

understand Russian, so refugee employees who did not want to learn the necessary minimum of Romanian were rejected.

Graph 63. What barriers or challenges may appear in the process of hiring refugees? (open-ended), N=54, %

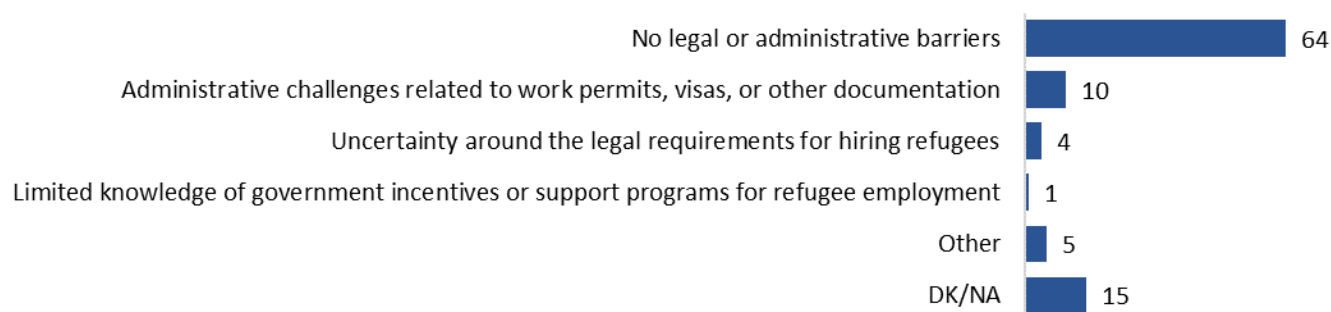


Most of the interviewed employers (64%) did not identify any legal or administrative barriers preventing them from hiring refugees. But, 1 in 10 of the respondents say they had faced administrative challenges related to work permits, visas, or other documentation.

Even if in the survey the majority of employers declared that they did not have legal barriers, in the interviews this barrier was mentioned as an existing one. Employers interviewed stated that they are limited to legislative difficulties – regarding the correctness an employment contract with the refugee, as some displaced citizens of Ukraine had problems with documents. In order to solve the difficulties created, employers turn to lawyers either from outside the company or to lawyers employed within the company.

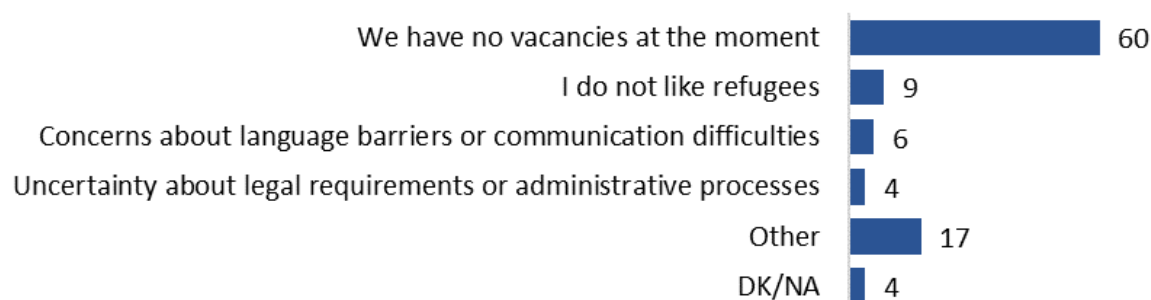
In addition to legislative difficulties, the interviewed employers say they had difficulties paying the refugees' salary on the card, as they do not work with cash pay. Due to legal proceedings, it was not possible for employed refugees to obtain a salary bank card, which caused employers to give in to paying cash wages.

Graph 64. What are the legal or administrative barriers that prevent you from hiring refugees? (open-ended), N=54, %



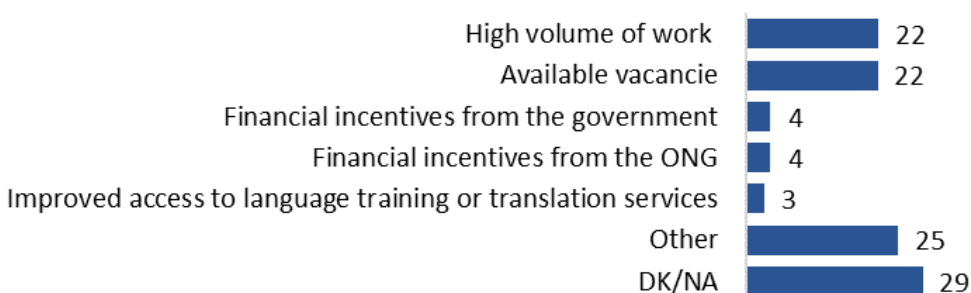
Companies who said they were not willing hire refugees mostly cite the lack of current vacancies as the main reason (60%).

Graph 65. What are the reasons you do not want to hire refugees? (multiple response), N=32, % of those who are not willing to hiring refugees



A high volume of work (22%) and the availability of vacancies (22%) would primarily make the interviewed companies that initially expressed unwillingness to hire refugees more likely to consider hiring them.

Graph 66. What factors would make you more likely to hire refugees? (multiple answer), N=32, % of those who are not willing to hiring refugees



5.2.3 Analysis of barriers to refugee population employability

Challenges faced by the refugees seeking employment in Moldova can be grouped into four categories:

Language and cultural barriers

- Language barriers are often cited as challenge during job seeking, not just because Romanian language is a requirement in many jobs but also because it impedes access to information and constitute a linguistic barrier in communication with potential employers and future colleagues.
- Language barriers are even more pronounced in the case of TCN that don't have fluency in neither Romanian nor Russian further impeding their economic and social inclusion.
- Lack of accessible and affordable language courses combined with general uncertainty for long-term perspective of living and working in Moldova further limits employment opportunities.

Skills and competencies

- Ukrainian refugees are, in general, highly educated, which generates a mismatch between their skills and the largely low-level, unskilled jobs available in the Moldovan labor market.
- Skilled workers are not willing to change their field of work or engage in unskilled labor as it is both professionally and financially un-rewarding.
- There is a lack of quality training and upskilling programs both within the public sector (through the National Employment Agency) as well as the private sector, where small and medium-sized companies lack the necessary resources to train staff.

Intentions and motivation

- While some intention surveys indicate that the Ukrainian refugees are willing to stay in Moldova for the next 6 to 12 months, the long-term intention is to return to Ukraine as soon as the war is over. This prevents refugees from seeking a long-term career and employment in Moldova and limit themselves primarily to short-term and service contracts.
- Refugees who do not actively seek employment, rely on prior savings, continue their former work online, and/or are receiving humanitarian assistance to cover all their essential needs, which is worth almost as much as they could earn in most locally available jobs.

- Lack of motivation to work, is especially noticeable in individuals living in RACs as their accommodation, food and financial needs are covered by the response community and Moldovan Government.

Employment preference and legal challenges

- Compared to Ukraine, Moldova generally lacks a culture of part-time employment that gives much needed flexibility to parents and care givers that are seeking a job.
- A full-time employment also presents its challenges as there is uncertainty about legislation and labor laws applied in the context of refugees. Even with the existence of temporary protection status, refugees find it difficult to navigate the administrative and legal requirements opting for informal or short-term contracts.
- Informal employment and independent contracting in turn limits the ability of refugees working in Moldova to fully access social insurance, medical insurance and have retirement benefits.
- A major barrier, especially in rural locations is an absence of public transportation. As a result, refugees move to Chisinau to access more employment opportunities and childcare facilities.

Overall, the challenges faced by the Moldova employers offering jobs to refugees can be grouped into four categories:

Language barriers

- Challenges associated with language are also reported by Moldovan companies offering employment to refugees. It is encountered at all stages of employment – starting from outlining job requirements, conducting job interviews, translating employment contracts and onboarding for the new staff.
- Jobs that require writing and communication skills are especially challenging, when the applicants has little or no knowledge of Romanian language. As a result many vacancies in the professional services are limited to refugees seeking employment.

Legal and administrative barriers

- Even though legal or administrative barriers that prevent companies from hiring refugees were cited only by 10% of the interviewed employers, they still constitute a significant problem for small and medium businesses that lack legal expertise.
- Even though the new temporary protection status has already entered into force, its mechanisms and some of its provisions are unclear or disadvantages to businesses that want to hire refugees. As a result, companies sometimes opt for informal employment or independent contracting to avoid dealing with legal difficulties.

- Another barrier is recognition of professional qualifications and certifications required for specialized jobs.

Organization capacity

- Smaller companies have limited resources to train up new staff, provide equipment and pay them through apprenticeships or probation periods.
- Insufficient financial resources within the organization to establish and sustain dedicated courses for refugees. Rising prices limit the introduction of new courses or sometimes require beneficiaries to pay for materials or tools.
- Shortage of instructors and other human resources involved in providing support/services. One respondent mentions that if they had an employer who would organize specialized training courses, the organization would be willing to pay for them.

Lack of long-term commitment

- Employers are reluctant to hire people who they believe will probably leave within a short time, as it takes time and resources to train new staff.
- Unwillingness of employers to hire refugees, believing these workers will leave in 2-3 months. Furthermore, it was expressed that employers are less open to hiring refugee individuals aged 16-18, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable categories, even though if these workers stay for a minimum of 6 months, the employer is eligible for a subsidy.

Insights and Comparisons:

Shared Challenge - Language and Communication: Both refugees and employers identify language as a primary challenge. This suggests a strong need for language training programs and perhaps translation services or tools to bridge this gap initially.

Recognition of Qualifications: Both sides face challenges with the recognition of qualifications. This points to a potential area for policy reform, creating standardized methods for assessing and recognizing foreign qualifications.

Cultural Understanding: Both groups identified potential cultural misunderstandings. This could be addressed through cultural exchange programs, workshops, or integration initiatives to promote understanding and unity in the workplace.

Support and Resources: While refugees need more access to resources, employers feel the need for more support in training. Partnering the two could lead to programs where refugees get access to the resources they need, and employers get the training support they desire.

Legal Complexities: Employers face legal and bureaucratic hurdles, indicating a potential need for simplifying processes or providing clearer guidelines and assistance for hiring refugees.

Misconceptions and Awareness: Employers' lack of knowledge or misconceptions about refugees suggests a need for awareness campaigns, showcasing the potential benefits and dispelling myths about hiring refugees.

Potential Opportunities:

Skills Matching Platforms: Creating platforms where refugees can list their skills and qualifications, which can then be matched with employers seeking those specific skills.

Leveraging Unique Skillsets: Ukrainian refugees come with varied backgrounds and experiences. By creating skills assessment and recognition platforms, employers can tap into potentially unrecognized talents and experiences that these refugees bring. This can lead to innovative solutions and diverse perspectives in problem-solving.

Language and Cultural Workshops: Workshops that help refugees integrate faster and help employers understand the cultural nuances.

Collaborative Community Initiatives: Encouraging collaborations between local communities and refugees can lead to grassroots initiatives that address employment barriers. This can range from language tutorials, networking events, to job fairs specifically targeting the refugee demographic.

Policy Reforms: Advocating for reforms that make the recognition of foreign qualifications easier and streamline the hiring process for refugees.

Government Incentives and Partnerships: Recognizing the challenges on both sides, the Moldovan government could step in with incentives for businesses that actively hire and train refugees. This not only promotes refugee employment but can also boost the economy by filling job vacancies faster.

In conclusion, while there are distinct challenges for both refugees and employers, many of these challenges intersect and offer opportunities for solutions that can benefit both groups. With the right interventions, such as training programs, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms, these barriers can be reduced, fostering a more inclusive and productive work environment.

6 Skills Analysis and Refugee Motivations

This chapter offers a comprehensive exploration of skills and motivations within the labor market, particularly within the context of the refugee population. It centers around three key aspects: a detailed skills analysis, an examination of motivations driving labor market integration, and the identification of potential areas for training and skills development among refugees.

6.1 Skills Analysis

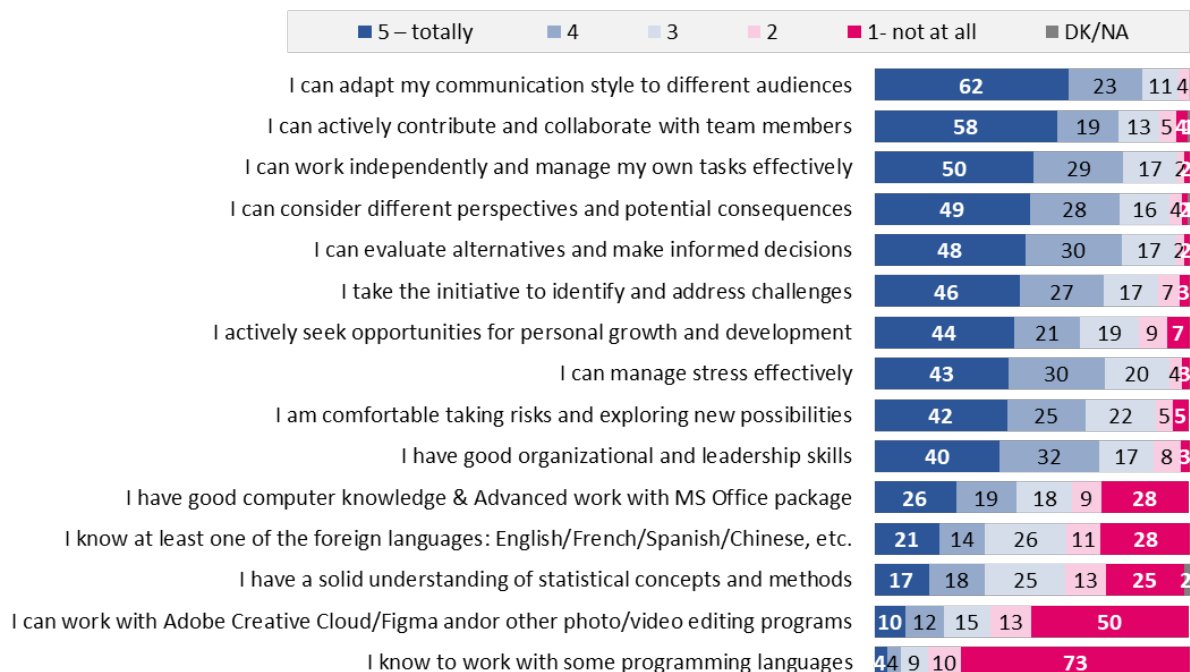
The subchapter focuses on skills analysis, investigating both the skills that the interviewed refugees have and the skills required by employers from potential employees.

6.1.1 Skills of refugees

The top 3 skills that the interviewed refugees declare to fully possess are:

- Ability to adapt communication style to different audiences.
- Ability to actively contribute and collaborate with team members.
- Ability to work independently and manage own tasks effectively.

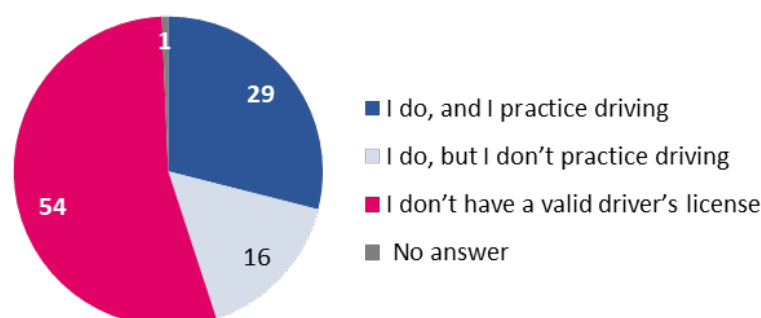
Graph 67. Next, I will read you some statements that relate to your skills. Please evaluate to what extent each of the options describes you using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 - not at all, and 5 – totally (one answer per line), N=456, %



45% of the refugees participating in the study have a driver's license, of which more than half practice driving.

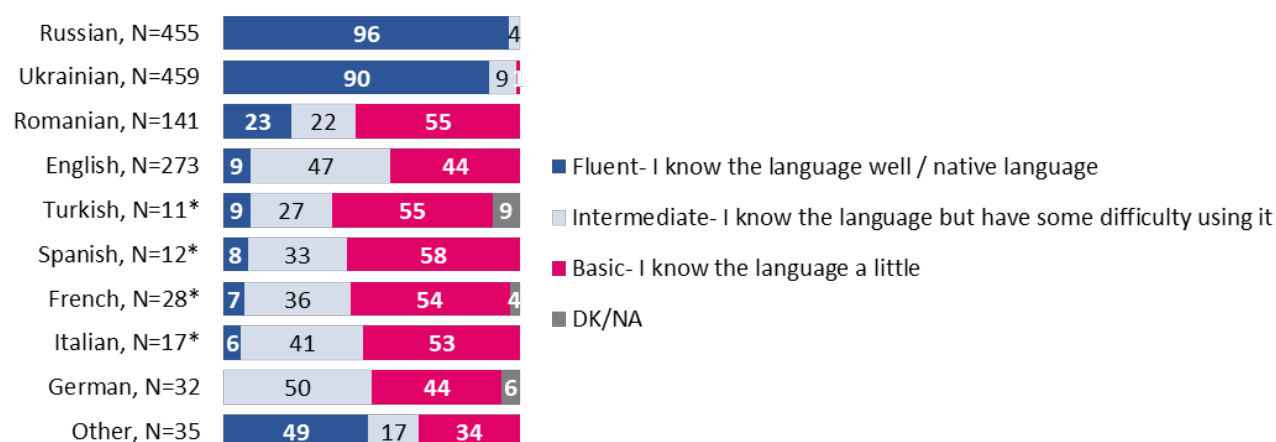
At the same time, 54% of respondents do not have a driver's license.

Graph 68. Do you have a valid driver's license? (one possible answer), N=456, %

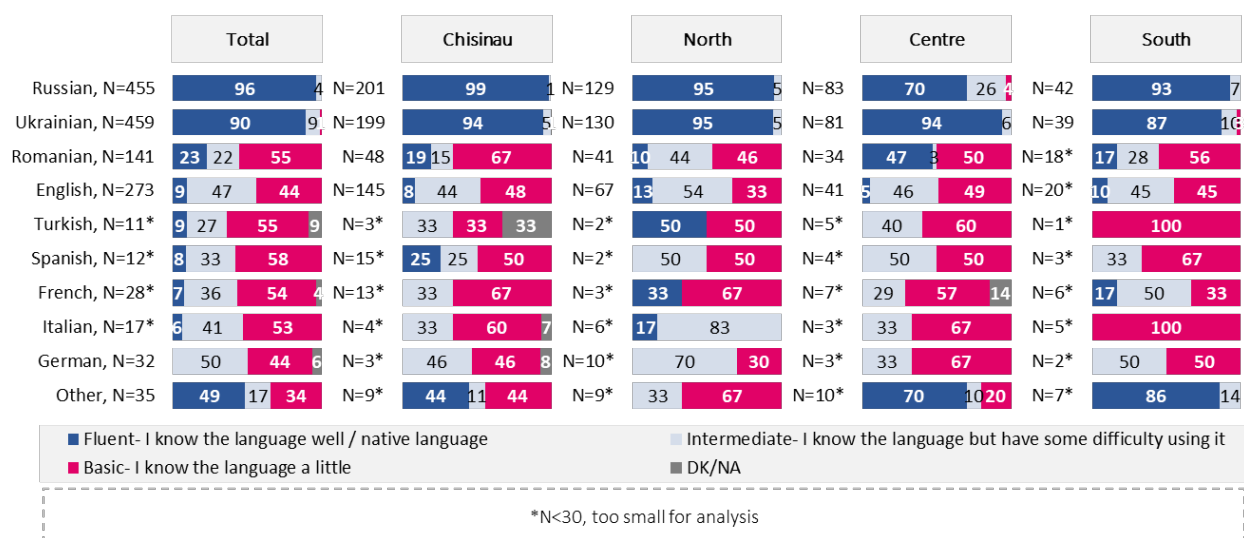


According to the survey results, the majority of those who know Russian, are fluent in it (96%). On the other hand, 90% of respondents who know Ukrainian, know it fluently. In contrast, English poses a greater challenge for those who know it, with 9% of respondents reporting fluent knowledge and 47% - an intermediate level.

Graph 69. How would you rate your skills in every language we speak; are you at fluent, intermediate, or basic level, %



Graph 70. Disaggregated by region. How would you rate your skills in every language we speak; are you at fluent, intermediate, or basic level? %

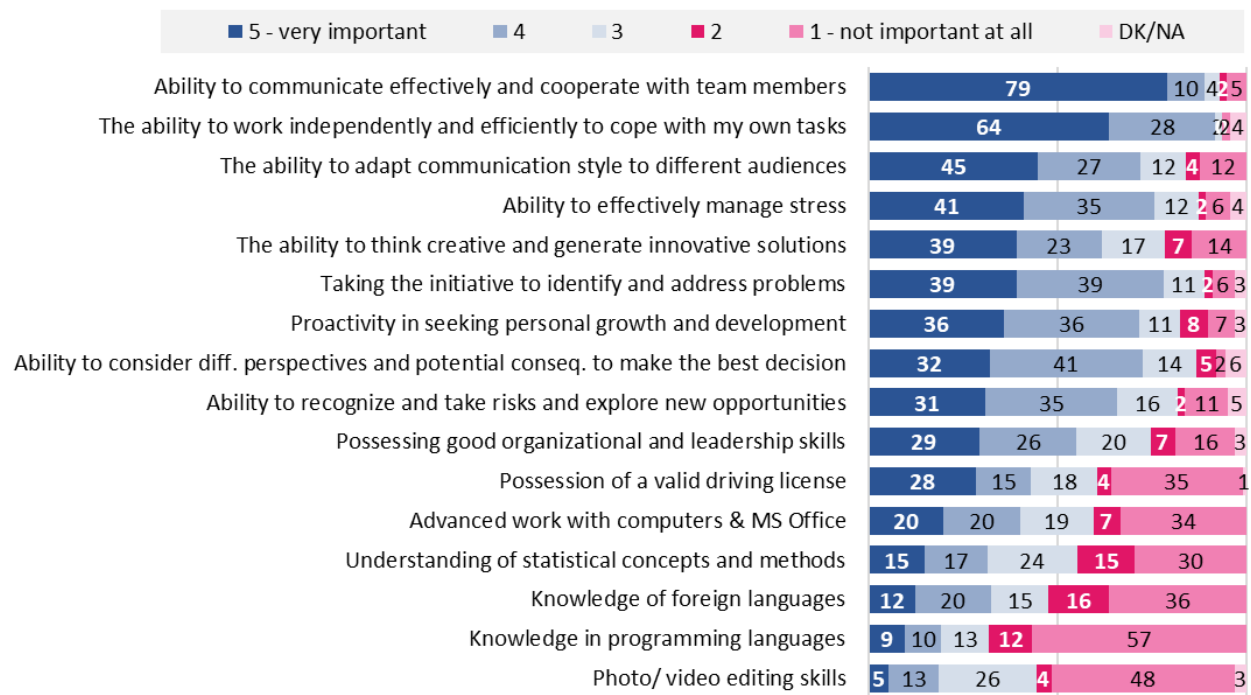


6.1.2 Skills required by employers

Top 3 skills considered very important by the companies that participated in the study in potential employees were:

- Ability to communicate effectively and cooperate with team members.
- The ability to work independently and efficiently to handle tasks.
- The ability to adapt communication style to different audiences.

Graph 71. Next, I will read you some statements that relate to the skills of employees. Please evaluate to what extent each of them is important to be possessed by a potential employee of your company, N=54, %



Employers and key informants mentioned during interviews that the following skills are necessary for an employee:

- Cognitive abilities to learn;
- Willingness to learn new things;
- Discipline;
- Communicability;
- Stress tolerance;
- Flexibility;
- Troubleshooting;
- Negotiation skills;
- Responsibility;
- Neat appearance;
- Kindness;
- Compliance with workplace requirements;
- Professionalism;

- In the opinion of one respondent, employers do not have separate requirements for refugees compared to Moldovan citizens. Therefore, most employers have language proficiency requirements related to Romanian language skills, as they would for Moldovan candidates.

In connection with the technical skills that a potential employee must possess, depending on the position occupied, they must include:

- Computer use at medium level;
- Knowledge of basic accounting;
- Sales skills;
- Knowledge of foreign languages or Romanian, at least at a basic level;
- Personal means of transport – bicycle, scooter, car, etc. (in case of courier position).

- Status and future plans

Status of the refugee, their plans on staying and physical requirements were mentioned during the qualitative study. In the opinion of the interviewed employers mention that the most important criterion is that the candidate be registered with the Bureau of Migration and Asylum and have a personal identifier (IDNP).

Another requirement for the potential employee was stability in future plans. Employers say that because refugees apply for a job for a short-fixed term – 2-3 months, because they have plans to leave Moldova, employers are available to offer refugees only per diem work, or without drawing up an individual employment contract.

The representatives of the HoReCa field who participated in the study say that the basic condition that must be met by all employees is the passing the medical control, and hygienic-sanitary training conducted by the employer.

6.1.3 Skills Gap Analysis

There are two key components in skill gap analysis – hard skills, also called technical skills that are job-specific, relevant to each position and seniority level, and soft skills that are some general characteristics, relevant to personality traits that fit for a larger variety of job requirements. Hard skills are sector and job specific, and it requires an in-depth analysis that goes beyond the scope of this research. There are however a set of universal hard skills that will be outlined in the graph below:

Graph 72. Soft skills vs Hard skills from the refugee's perspective



Graph 73. Soft skills vs Hard skills from the employer's perspective



Based on the skills declared by the interviewed refugees from Moldova, it is evident that they possess a strong capability to adapt their communication style to different audiences. This skill demonstrates their potential to effectively engage with diverse groups, which could be beneficial in various work environments. Additionally, their ability to actively contribute and collaborate with team members reflects a strong aptitude for teamwork and cooperation, indicating their

potential to integrate well into collaborative work settings. Furthermore, their proficiency in working independently and efficiently managing their tasks signifies their self-reliance and organizational skills, which are essential qualities in many professional roles.

Key Insights:

Skills Match: There's a significant alignment between the skills refugees claim to possess and what potential employers look for. Specifically, both groups value:

- Ability to adapt communication style to different audiences.
- Ability to communicate effectively and cooperate with team members.
- Ability to work independently and manage own tasks effectively.

In terms of hard skills, it is more difficult to map without going into an in-depth analysis of job-specific skills. There is however a good alignment on the ICT and digital skills but a misalignment on the capacity to drive a vehicle – a job opportunity more suitable for transportation and delivery services.

Language Proficiency: Russian and Ukrainian language fluency is high among refugees. English proficiency, however, is more varied, with a significant portion (47%) at an intermediate level.

Registration and Stability: Employers prioritize candidates who are registered with the Bureau of Migration and Asylum and have a personal identification number (IDNP). There's also a concern about the short-term plans of refugees, which affects the kind of employment opportunities offered.

Soft Skills: Employers value a range of soft skills from cognitive abilities to appearance and kindness. These skills are often intangible but play a critical role in employee performance and company culture.

Action Points:

Training and Workshops: Considering the alignment in skills between refugees and what employers seek, it might be worthwhile to organize training sessions or workshops. Specifically, English proficiency courses could be beneficial, given its importance in global communication.

Awareness Programs for Employers: Design programs that educate potential employers about the skill sets of refugees. Highlight the alignment between the skills refugees possess and what they're looking for.

Guidance on Migration Process: Offer workshops or counseling sessions to guide refugees through the registration process with the Bureau of Migration and Asylum. This could increase their employability.

Job Contract Flexibility: Advocate for or develop programs that allow for flexible job contracts. This can cater to both the needs of employers and the temporary plans of some refugees.

Soft Skills Workshops: Organize workshops focusing on enhancing soft skills. This can be especially valuable for refugees unfamiliar with the Moldovan work culture or those seeking to improve specific attributes like stress tolerance or negotiation skills.

Technical Skills Courses: Depending on the demand in the job market, offer courses in computer usage, basic accounting, or other technical areas that employers prioritize.

Mentorship Programs: Pairing refugees with local mentors in their respective fields can help them adapt faster, learn the nuances of the job market, and network more effectively.

In summary, the data suggests a significant overlap in the skills refugees have and what employers in Moldova are looking for. With the right interventions, there's a potential for a mutually beneficial relationship between Moldovan employers and Ukrainian refugees.

Empowering Refugees: Strategies for Workforce Integration and Skill Enhancement

Awareness Programs for Employers

Objective: To inform and educate potential employers about the benefits of hiring Ukrainian refugees, addressing concerns, and showcasing successful stories.

Rationale: Employers might have reservations or misconceptions about hiring refugees. By promoting awareness and understanding, we can facilitate smoother integration of refugees into the Moldovan job market.

Key Components:

- **Workshops & Seminars:** Organize sessions where experts talk about the benefits of a diverse workforce, dispelling myths about refugees.
- **Success Stories:** Share testimonials and case studies of refugees who've successfully integrated into the Moldovan workplace, and employers who've had positive experiences with refugee hires.
- **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Offer courses for employers and their staff to understand Ukrainian cultural nuances, ensuring a harmonious working environment.

- **Financial Incentives:** Highlight any government or organizational incentives available for employers hiring refugees.
- **Q&A Forums:** Regularly scheduled sessions where employers can ask questions and get answers regarding hiring refugees.
- **Informational Materials:** Distribute brochures, videos, and online resources detailing the process, benefits, and support available when hiring refugees.
- **Online Portal:** A dedicated website where employers can access all the resources, FAQs, and contact experts for further assistance.

Expected Outcomes: Increased understanding and willingness among Moldovan employers to hire Ukrainian refugees, leading to higher employment rates among the refugee community.

Guidance on Migration Process

Objective: To provide clear and comprehensive information on the migration process, ensuring Ukrainian refugees understand their rights, responsibilities, and the steps needed for a successful transition.

Rationale: Understanding the migration process can be daunting. By providing structured guidance, refugees can navigate the system more efficiently, reducing stress and errors.

Key Components:

- **Step-by-Step Guides:** Detailed instructions on each stage of the migration process, from arrival to acquiring work permits or residency.
- **Legal Workshops:** Regularly scheduled sessions where refugees can learn about their legal rights and get answers to their queries from legal experts.
- **Documentation Assistance:** Centers or online platforms where refugees can get help with paperwork, translations, or any documentation-related issues.
- **Rights & Responsibilities:** Informational sessions on the rights of refugees in Moldova and their responsibilities.
- **Local Integration Programs:** Workshops focusing on Moldovan culture, language, and social norms to help refugees integrate faster.
- **Helpline:** A dedicated phone line where refugees can ask questions or seek assistance regarding the migration process.
- **Online Portal:** A comprehensive website detailing all aspects of the migration process, with downloadable resources, FAQs, and contact information for various support agencies.

Expected Outcomes: Empowered refugees with a clear understanding of the migration process, leading to faster and smoother integration into Moldovan society.

Training and Workshops

Objective: To provide Ukrainian refugees with essential training and workshops that enhance their employability in the Moldovan job market.

Rationale: Refugees often require additional training to align their skills with the local job market demands or to update their existing skills.

Key Components:

- **Skill Assessment and Customized Training:** Assess the existing skills of refugees and design training programs that fill the gaps.
- **Language and Cultural Orientation Workshops:** Essential for helping refugees integrate into Moldova both socially and professionally.
- **Job Readiness Workshops:** Covering topics like resume writing, interview preparation, and workplace norms in Moldova.
- **Online and Offline Accessibility:** Ensuring training is accessible through both online platforms and physical workshops.
- **Collaboration with Local Training Providers:** Partnering with vocational schools and training centers to offer relevant courses.

Expected Outcomes: Enhanced skill sets among refugees, leading to increased employability and smoother integration into the workforce.

Job Contract Flexibility

Objective: To promote flexible job contracts that cater to the unique circumstances of Ukrainian refugees.

Rationale: Flexible job contracts can accommodate the often-changing situations of refugees, such as legal status adjustments, family responsibilities, and integration challenges.

Key Components:

- **Education for Employers:** Inform employers about the benefits and feasibility of flexible contracts.
- **Legal Assistance:** Provide legal support to both employers and refugees in drafting and understanding flexible contracts.
- **Part-time and Freelance Opportunities:** Encourage the creation of part-time, freelance, or remote working options.
- **Adjustable Work Hours:** Implement work schedules that can be adjusted according to the needs of the refugees.
- **Job-Sharing Schemes:** Introduce job-sharing options where feasible.

Expected Outcomes: Greater employment opportunities for refugees and increased adaptability for employers to hire refugees.

Soft Skills Workshops

Objective: To develop and enhance the soft skills of Ukrainian refugees, crucial for successful employment and integration.

Rationale: Soft skills are essential for effective communication, teamwork, and adapting to new work environments.

Key Components:

- **Communication Skills Training:** Workshops focusing on effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Programs that encourage working in diverse teams.
- **Problem-Solving Workshops:** Teaching approaches to tackle workplace challenges.
- **Cultural Adaptation Sessions:** Understanding and adapting to the cultural nuances of the Moldovan workplace.
- **Stress Management:** Techniques to manage work-related stress and adapt to new environments.

Expected Outcomes: Refugees with enhanced soft skills, leading to better workplace integration and higher job satisfaction.

Technical Skills Courses

Objective: To provide refugees with technical skills training aligned with the demands of the Moldovan job market.

Rationale: Technical skills are often specific to the job market and region, and refugees may need updated training to meet local demands.

Key Components:

- **Industry-Specific Training:** Courses tailored to sectors with high employment potential.
- **Certification Programs:** Offering certifications that are recognized by local industries.
- **Hands-On Training:** Practical, on-the-job training opportunities.
- **Partnerships with Technical Schools:** Collaborating with technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions.
- **Technology and IT Skills:** Focusing on digital literacy and IT skills, given their increasing demand.

Expected Outcomes: Refugees equipped with up-to-date technical skills, increasing their employability in specific sectors.

Mentorship Programs

Objective: To connect Ukrainian refugees with mentors who can guide them through the nuances of the Moldovan labor market and society.

Rationale: Mentorship can provide refugees with insights, networking opportunities, and personal development guidance.

Key Components:

- Pairing with Industry Professionals: Matching refugees with mentors in their desired employment sectors.
- Regular One-on-One Sessions: Ensuring consistent interaction and guidance.
- Integration Guidance: Mentors helping refugees understand Moldovan workplace culture and societal norms.
- Career Planning: Assisting in setting realistic career goals and paths.
- Networking Opportunities: Facilitating connections with professionals and communities.

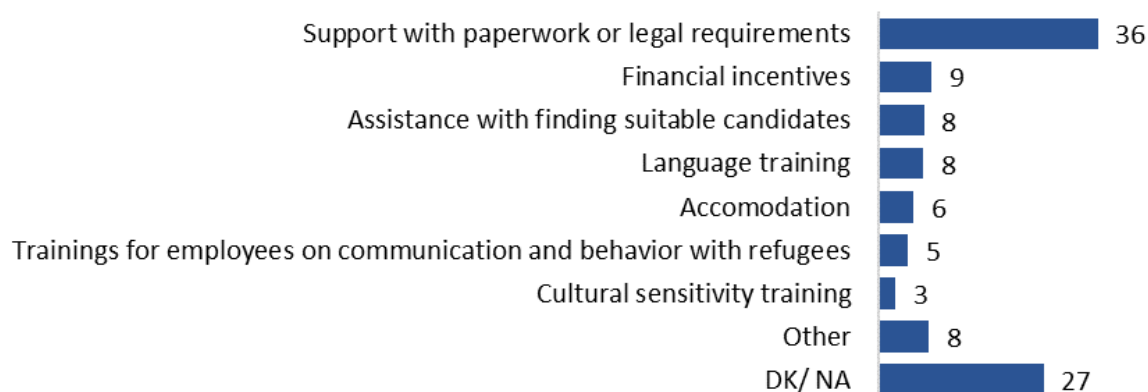
Expected Outcomes: Refugees with a better understanding of the local job market, access to professional networks, and personalized guidance for career development.

Both these action points, when implemented effectively, can play a crucial role in easing the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Moldova, providing them with the tools and knowledge they need for successful integration.

6.2 Labor Market and Refugees Motivations

More than a third of the surveyed companies (36%) believe that the state or NGOs could support them with paperwork or legal requirements to successfully integrate refugees into their company. Approximately one in ten companies mention they could receive help through financial incentives (9%), assistance in finding suitable candidates (8%), and language training (8%).

Graph 74. How can the state or NGOs contribute to successfully integrate refugees into your company? (open-ended), N=54, %



Overall, aside from need for legal information trainings for employers, support with offering refugees accommodation/relocation and Romanian language training for refugees, qualitative study respondents mentioned aspects that could be done to facilitate the employment of refugees that were different from the ones mentioned during the survey:

- Funding for organizations that can carry out support activities dedicated to refugees. One respondent states that few funders have been able to provide the necessary resources for organizing support, and the number of available volunteers is decreasing;
- Increasing the willingness of employers to hire individuals who do not speak Romanian;
- Increasing part-time work opportunities;
- Hiring Ukrainian entrepreneurs as consultants in production/service companies;
- Providing information and consultation on the labor market;
- Resuming programs implemented in 2022;
- Increasing the number of refugees who turn to the employment agencies;
- Ensuring the inclusion of Moldovan citizens in support activities (e.g., courses, job offers) provided to refugees;
- Respondents reported a lack of information about the socio-economic profile of refugees, their educational backgrounds, and other relevant data, highlighting the need for a study to determine this information;
- Employers publishing more detailed information about vacant positions and candidate requirements;
- Establishing training courses in the fields of health and education;
- Creating job fairs with the involvement of RACs;
- Increasing labor force mobility.

Regarding the support from the state or NGOs that companies need in hiring refugees, several have expressed not needing any.

Refugees that participated in Focus groups were also asked to indicate what NGOs, local authorities and international organizations should do to facilitate the employment of Ukrainian refugees, to which respondents recommended:

- adding the period worked in Moldova to the length of service and pension fund;
- signing of an agreement between the governments of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on pension funds, insurance and taxation of wages;
- direct communication between the government and representatives of the refugee community in the form of a round table, communication without intermediaries, to make the individual stories of refugees heard;
- providing clear information and verdicts about the conditions of entrepreneurial activity by refugees;
- facilitating the employment of refugees by offering benefits for companies employing refugees, such as tax exemptions, which is an opinion that was also mentioned by employers during the survey;
- providing part-time jobs for refugees with young children;
- help to obtain higher education in Moldova;
- short professional qualification courses;
- creating institutions / events that will occupy children of refugee women, so that they can get involved in the work;
- organization of Romanian language courses in a physical format;
- legal advice on opening a business (also mentioned during the survey and interviews with employers);
- partial compensation of transportation expenses for those who work in Chisinau but live outside the municipality;
- presence of a mentor at work (also mentioned during the survey with employers);
- providing psychological assistance;
- income tax reduction;
- creating more courses outside of Chisinau for refugees who are not near the capital.

The inclusion of refugees into the Moldovan labor market presents a series of challenges and opportunities. One of the primary concerns that companies have is the integration process. The provided data sheds light on how companies perceive the role of the state and NGOs in facilitating this integration.

Companies' Perception on State and NGO Support:

An overwhelming majority of companies (36%) assert that assistance with paperwork or legal requirements would be the most beneficial way the state or NGOs can aid them. This highlights the bureaucratic hurdles that employers might face when hiring refugees. While financial incentives are seen as the second most helpful way to integrate refugees, it is considerably less at 9%. This is followed by assistance with finding suitable candidates and language training at 8% each. The need for language training, in particular, indicates potential communication barriers in the workplace.

It's important to note a significant portion of companies (27%) did not provide an answer, suggesting that they might be unsure about the kind of support they need or haven't considered employing refugees yet.

Insights from Organizations Supporting Refugee Employment:

In-depth interviews with organizations that promote refugee employment revealed a multifaceted approach to the problem. They emphasized the necessity of more funding to carry out dedicated refugee support activities, given that the number of available volunteers is dwindling. They also spotlighted the need for greater willingness to hire those who don't speak Romanian, showcasing the language barrier as a recurrent issue.

Additionally, these organizations highlighted the potential of refugees, suggesting the possibility of hiring Ukrainian entrepreneurs as consultants, thus leveraging their expertise for the local market. They also stressed the importance of making Moldovan citizens part of the support activities given to refugees, thereby fostering a sense of unity and mutual growth.

Interestingly, there was a marked emphasis on the lack of detailed information about the refugees' socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Such information is crucial for employers to understand the potential and qualifications of the refugee workforce.

Employers' Efforts and Views on Integration:

While some employers indicated they didn't require any support, others saw the potential in financial aid for training refugees in their respective fields. Some suggested the need for state or NGO-organized training on the legal aspects of employing refugees.

A few employers also recognized the importance of proximity between work and living quarters, suggesting that the state or NGOs could help in relocating refugees closer to their places of work.

Furthermore, employers demonstrated a commitment to supporting refugee integration by offering vocational training courses. Some even extended psycho-emotional support to employees whose families were still in conflict zones.

Refugees' Perspective on Employment and Support:

When refugees were asked about their needs and suggestions, they highlighted the significance of recognizing their work experience in Moldova for pension and insurance purposes. They also emphasized the need for direct communication with the government to make their individual stories heard.

Moreover, the refugees expressed a need for clear guidelines about entrepreneurial activities and suggested benefits for companies employing them, such as tax exemptions. Their insights also revolved around the necessity for legal advice on starting a business in Moldova and financial aid for business operations.

In summary, the data and insights provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in integrating refugees into the Moldovan labor market. It's evident that both the state and NGOs have a crucial role in facilitating this process, with the potential to harness the skills and expertise of the refugee population for the benefit of the Moldovan economy and society at large.

6.3 Training Areas for Refugees

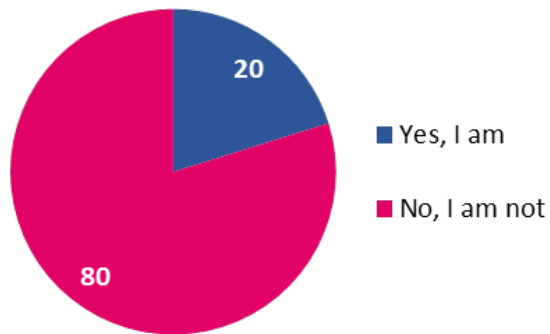
The next subchapter focuses on identifying training needs for refugees, as well as the ability of employers to provide training for them.

6.3.1 Refugee needs for trainings

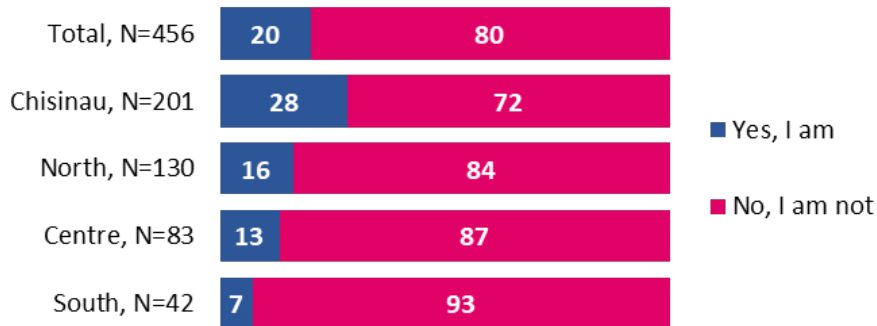
According to the results of the survey, 20% of interviewed refugees are currently enrolled in skill development training programs or courses, while 80% do not currently participate in such programs.

It is noticed that a larger share of respondents living in Chisinau are enrolled in certain trainings (28%), than those living in the North (16%), Center (13%) or South of the country (6%) .

Graph 78. Are you currently enrolled in any job training or skills development programs, courses? (one answer possible), N=456, %



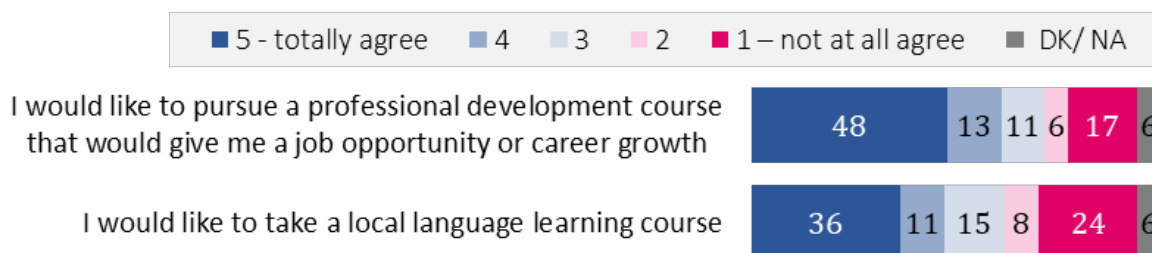
Graph 79. Disaggregated by region. Are you currently enrolled in any job training or skills development programs, courses? (one answer possible), N=456, %



It is noticed that 61% of the respondents would like to pass a development course that will offer them the possibility of employment or professional growth.

At the same time, 47% of those surveyed express the desire to pass Romanian language courses. However, almost every third would not want to get involved in learning the Romanian language.

Graph 80. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding employment opportunities for refugees in Moldova? N=456, %

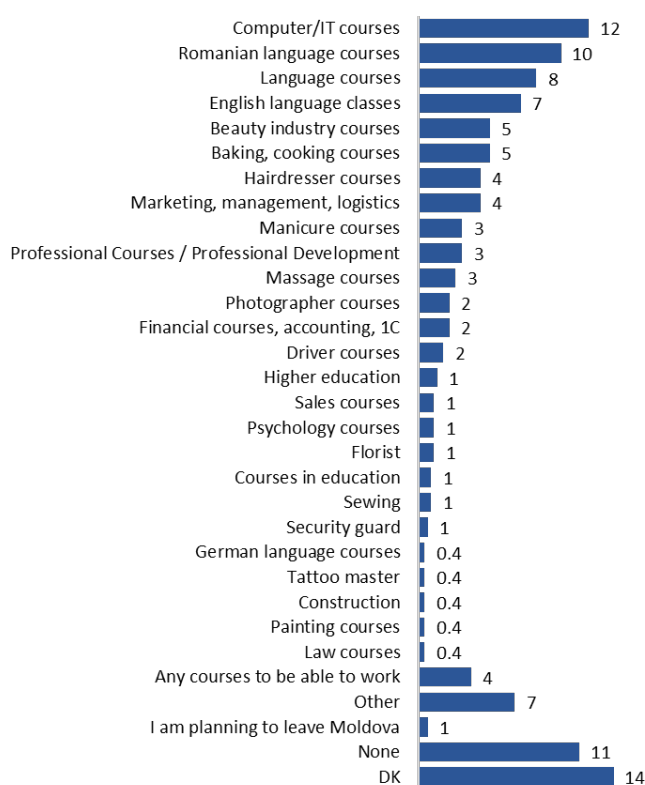


The survey reflects a preference for Computer Science and Information Technology training programs, with 12% of interviewed refugees wanting to receive such training.

Romanian and foreign language courses (10% and 8% respectively) are also options requested by the study participants.

Various fields such as beauty, baking/cooking courses were mentioned by a smaller share of respondents - 5%.

Graph 81. What kind of training would you like to receive in the future in Moldova to get a job? (open-ended), N=456, %



Similar to the survey, Focus Group participants expressed interest in involvement with trainings in the following areas: language learning trainings (Romanian/ English), beauty (make up, massage, manicure, pedicure, etc.), accounting, use of the 1C syllabus, courses in the field of work with children.

Focus Group participants also mentioned being interested in trainings that were not indicated by survey participants:

- trainings on opening a business in Moldova;
- beadwork, drawing, pottery and other craft courses;

- medical first aid courses;
- personal development courses;
- project management.

Challenges or barriers to training:

- Not needed

Some interviewees say that they do not have certain impediments to enrolling in different training courses, but they do not have the desire nor do not see their usefulness at the moment. On the other hand, one of the major impediments for some refugees is that they do not know exactly what direction to go with: *"To go to certain courses, you have to firmly understand what your direction is"*. At the same time, another barrier is lack of time for training, especially for refugees who care for dependents.

- Language barriers

Another challenge to enrolling into courses is not knowing the language of the course and, respectively, the material taught: *"If something interests me, but the courses are only in Romanian language, I do not have the possibility to understand and teach myself in Romanian language"*.

- Cost, location and different target

Among other barriers for enrolling in trainings, refugees listed a limited budget, few training proposals, lack of trainings outside of Chisinau and having access to Romanian language courses mainly for children and not adults.

- Perceived value

Some of the focus-group participants expressed that they did not see the value of certificates confirming that they had passed certain courses in Moldova, because the employer's decision, the behavior of potential employee during interview and experience in the field were the factors that influenced obtaining a job. At the same time, the interviewees say that some courses and trainings organized by NGOs are not to be carried out to the end or are of unsatisfactory quality, but rather as a formality to show the donors that the money has been invested.

- Delivery mode

Looking at how to organize trainings, interviewees would prefer that they take place in a physical format in order to easily ask questions of lecturers, and with a frequency of once a week or less often.

The survey results indicate that refugees are keen in developing language and technological skills. 22% of respondents enrolled in English language classes, 13% - in Romanian language classes, and 20% - are in Computer Science/IT courses.

Areas such as beauty and personal development, accounting and finance, were selected by a smaller share of participants, by 9% or 8%, respectively.

Graph 82. What type of training or skills development program are you enrolled in? (open-ended), N=92, % of those who are enrolled in trainings



During the **focus groups with refugees**, the interviewees mention that at the moment there are a lot of trainings available for both refugees and Moldovans. Among the attended trainings in Moldova some mentioned the employment courses organized by the Professional Training and Development Center, which turned out to be useless, because they did not help with access to employment, according to the interviewees. At the same time, some interviewees claim that it employment workshops are aimed at physical, unskilled labor, while people there is no information on how people with higher qualifications can be hired. There was also an opinion that the proposed jobs are irrelevant to the interests and qualifications of refugees.

On the other hand, the interviewed refugees said that they managed to attend trainings in various fields that were also mentioned by surveyed refugees: IT courses on the COURSERA online platform, course in foreign languages and Romanian, nanny course, cooking course, basics of accounting and taxation, massage course, hairdressing course

Some other courses that were not indicated by survey participants have been attended by focus group participants:

- trainings in the field of economics, finance, and Business Administration;
- trainings dedicated to volunteer development;
- painting;
- bartender course;
- protecting the rights of Refugee women;
- temporary protection;
- social assistance;
- inclusion and protection of children;
- entrepreneurship for women (organized by CCF Moldova);
- developing digital and entrepreneurial skills (organized by Women Digital Center);

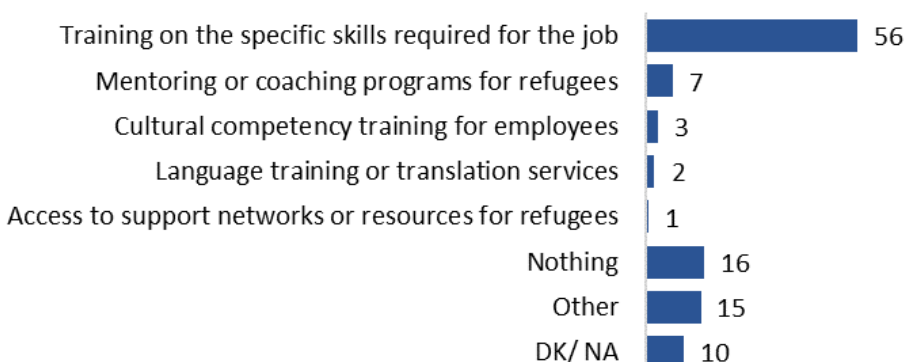
Some interviewees say that they managed to learn a different profession in Moldova than the one they had been previously trained in. Thus, the refugees that attended hairdressing courses would like to open a small salon and continue attending specialized trainings in this field (coloring, evening hairstyles, wedding hairstyles, etc.).

Some interviewees attended business opening trainings in Moldova. During the course, information was offered on how to open a business correctly, how to calculate all costs and how to write a business plan. However, those who have passed certain business development courses in the past claim that the provided course were not universal for any type of business, but were directed towards large businesses, such as opening a restaurant, factory, etc. At the same time, interviewees who had a business in Ukraine say that the courses were less useful because they already had a large experience of business development. In any case, interviewees expressed that the courses were interesting.

6.3.2 Employers' ability to provide trainings

Most of surveyed companies (56%) state that they could provide training on the specific skills required for the job for the successful integration of refugees into their company, in the case of their employment.

Graph 83. What kind of training or resources could your company offer refugees or employees to integrate refugees into the company, in the case of their employment? N=54, %



Similar to the survey findings, **the employers interviewed** during the qualitative study were asked about the support they offer to employed refugees for a better integration into the company. Thus, some interviewed employees state that they made available the possibility to choose the vocational training courses that are interesting and suitable for the position occupied, paid for by the employer. At the same time, some employers are willing to provide refugees with training in the essence of their job, even from scratch – for example, in the field of wine tourism.

During the interviews with employers, the subject of the probationary period, which is offered to newly arrived employees, was discussed. The discussion participants state that a probationary period is offered if the employee needs training in the occupied position. Employers say that employees, including refugees, receive training before starting work even if they do not have the studies and experience, and are supervised by a mentor/ superior in the respective department. The training period varies from one week to six months, in accordance with the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova.

Although mentioned to a lesser degree during the survey, some employers that participated in the interviews mention they are willing to offer refugees support in learning the minimum phrases in Romanian language that are necessary for interaction with the beneficiaries of the services they provide.

On the other hand, one of the interviewees says that they had an employee whose family remained in Ukraine, and who needed psycho-emotional support, which was offered with the help of the employer's partner organization.

At the same time as employers and employment support agencies mentioned the support needed from the state or NGOs, institutions that provide employment support to refugees mentioned that they are implementing or planning to implement the **following measures to improve the support provided to refugees in employment:**

- Collecting feedback from beneficiaries;
- Continuously adjusting the courses offered;
- Planning to offer new courses;
- Providing information to refugees through various sources (in-person, at RACs, social media, posters, etc.);
- Conducting courses in an online format.

6.3.3 Trainings Gap Analysis

The integration of refugees into a new societal and work environment is a multi-faceted process that often encompasses challenges for both the refugees and the host country. The Republic of Moldova has been experiencing an influx of Ukrainian refugees who are actively seeking employment opportunities and a chance to rebuild their lives. As they navigate this new terrain, various training and skills development programs emerge as pivotal tools for their successful integration.

The data gathered through surveys reveals a clear inclination of refugees towards specific training courses, with a prominent focus on language proficiency and technology-related skills. English and Romanian language courses stand out as the most sought-after, followed by computer science and IT training. This indicates the refugees' cognizance of the importance of effective communication and technological literacy in the modern workspace. It's worth noting that while there's a plethora of training opportunities available, the effectiveness and relevance of these programs vary. Some programs, although well-intentioned, may not lead directly to employment opportunities or may not be tailored to the unique needs and existing qualifications of the refugees.

Furthermore, the feedback from the focus groups paints a detailed picture of the refugees' experiences with the available training programs in Moldova. It highlights the gaps in the system, with some refugees pointing out the inefficacy of certain courses in aiding their job search, especially for those with higher qualifications. Nonetheless, it's evident that many refugees are adaptive, with some even venturing into professions different from their original training. Business development courses, in particular, sparked interest but were met with mixed reviews regarding their applicability to various business scales and the previous experience of the attendees.

While the aspirations and interests of the refugees are varied, ranging from business and beauty courses to crafts and personal development, the common thread is the quest for relevant, high-quality training that can pave the way for successful employment and integration. The challenges they face, such as language barriers and the quality of some training programs, underscore the

need for a more targeted and comprehensive approach to training and skills development for refugees in Moldova.

Key Insights:

Prominence of Skill and Language Training: The survey results highlight the emphasis refugees place on language and technological skill development. This is evident from the enrollment rates in English and Romanian language classes and Computer Science/IT courses.

Mismatch Between Training and Employment Opportunities: Despite the availability of training opportunities, refugees find it challenging to secure employment aligned with their skill sets. They find some training programs do not lead to job placements, or they lead to low-skilled jobs not matching their qualifications or interests.

Diverse Training Interests: Refugees have shown interest in a broad range of training courses. This includes courses in economics, finance, language training, IT, beauty, personal development, among others. This demonstrates the heterogeneous nature of the refugee population, where different individuals have diverse interests and aspirations.

Training Needs: Refugees express interest in practical trainings that cater to immediate needs, such as language training, opening a business in Moldova, personal development, and work-related courses.

Barriers to Enrollment: Several barriers hinder refugees from enrolling in training programs. These include uncertainty about their long-term plans, lack of time due to caregiving responsibilities, language barriers, financial constraints, and limited availability of courses outside of Chisinau.

Perspective on Training Certifications: While certificates from training courses may be useful, refugees place greater emphasis on job interviews and actual work experience as determinants for employment. They also express concerns about the quality and authenticity of some NGO-led training programs.

Employer Perspective: A majority of surveyed companies indicate a willingness to provide specific skill training to refugees. This is a positive sign for the potential integration of refugees into the Moldovan workforce.

Suggested Approach:

Tailored Training Programs: Develop more targeted and practical training programs based on the interests and needs of refugees. Given the diversity of the refugee population, offering a variety of courses that cater to different interests will be beneficial.

Bridging the Gap: Establish partnerships between training providers and employers. This will ensure that the training programs align with the needs of the job market, thereby increasing the chances of refugees securing relevant employment upon completion.

Addressing Barriers: Focus on removing barriers to training enrollment. This includes offering more courses in multiple languages, providing financial support or subsidies, and expanding training availability beyond Chisinau.

Emphasizing Practical Experience: Given the emphasis refugees place on work experience and interviews, consider developing internship or apprenticeship programs. This will allow refugees to gain practical experience, enhancing their employability.

Engage Employers: Encourage more employers to offer specific skill training for refugees. Sharing success stories and best practices can inspire more companies to play an active role in refugee integration.

Continuous Feedback: Establish feedback mechanisms where refugees can share their experiences and provide suggestions for training program improvements. This will ensure that the trainings remain relevant and effective.

In conclusion, while challenges exist, there are clear opportunities to enhance the training and integration of refugees in Moldova. By addressing the needs and barriers faced by refugees and fostering collaborations between training providers and employers, there's potential for more effective integration and positive outcomes for both refugees and the wider Moldovan community.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Refugee profile

Demographics. According to UNHCR data, there are around 111,000 Ukrainian refugees and 8000 third country nationals (TCN) currently residing in Moldova. 82% of refugees from Ukraine in Moldova are women and children. 13% have an infant or young children aged 0-4 and 38% have children aged 5-17 years. Most **refugees participating in the survey are female – 72%** and they are primarily **concentrated in urban areas – 89%**, predominantly in Chisinau Municipality.

Legal status. The temporary protection (TP) status was instituted in March 2023 and there are currently 22,058 individuals benefiting from TP, meaning 1 in 5 refugees residing in Moldova have a legal status. Among **adults, 1 in 4 people have a TP status** which provides access to several rights and services including access to employment, temporary accommodation, medical assistance, public education and social assistance.

Length of stay and future intentions. UNHCR intention surveys consistently show that around 95% of refugees intend to return to Ukraine as soon as the situation in Ukraine has stabilized. Despite that, currently half of survey respondents **(54%) have stayed in Moldova for over 12 months**, indicating a significant proportion of refugees opting for longer-term stays. A quarter of the respondents have been in Moldova for less than 7 months and are still uncertain about their plans for future.

Education status. UNHCR data indicate that Ukrainian refugees are well-educated – 70% of refugees with higher education or university. Similar data is shown in the refugees taking part in the study – **45% have higher education**, with Economics being the most common field of specialization (14%).

Employment expectation. Before coming to Moldova, 59% of refugees were employed in Ukraine and 12% having care-giving responsibilities, 14% in retirement and 16% unemployed. From the refugees residing in Moldova, 27% are currently employed, either in Moldova (15%), remotely (11%) or self-employed (1%). More than half of the interviewed respondents (55%) are available to work in Moldova in accordance with their respective specialization.

Key takeaways

- A majority of adult refugee population residing in Moldova are females that have care-giving responsibilities. As a result, intervention that aim at economic and social integration need to have a strong gender dimension that include job preferences, skill and competencies matchnig as well as flexible work hours to accomodate child or elderly care.

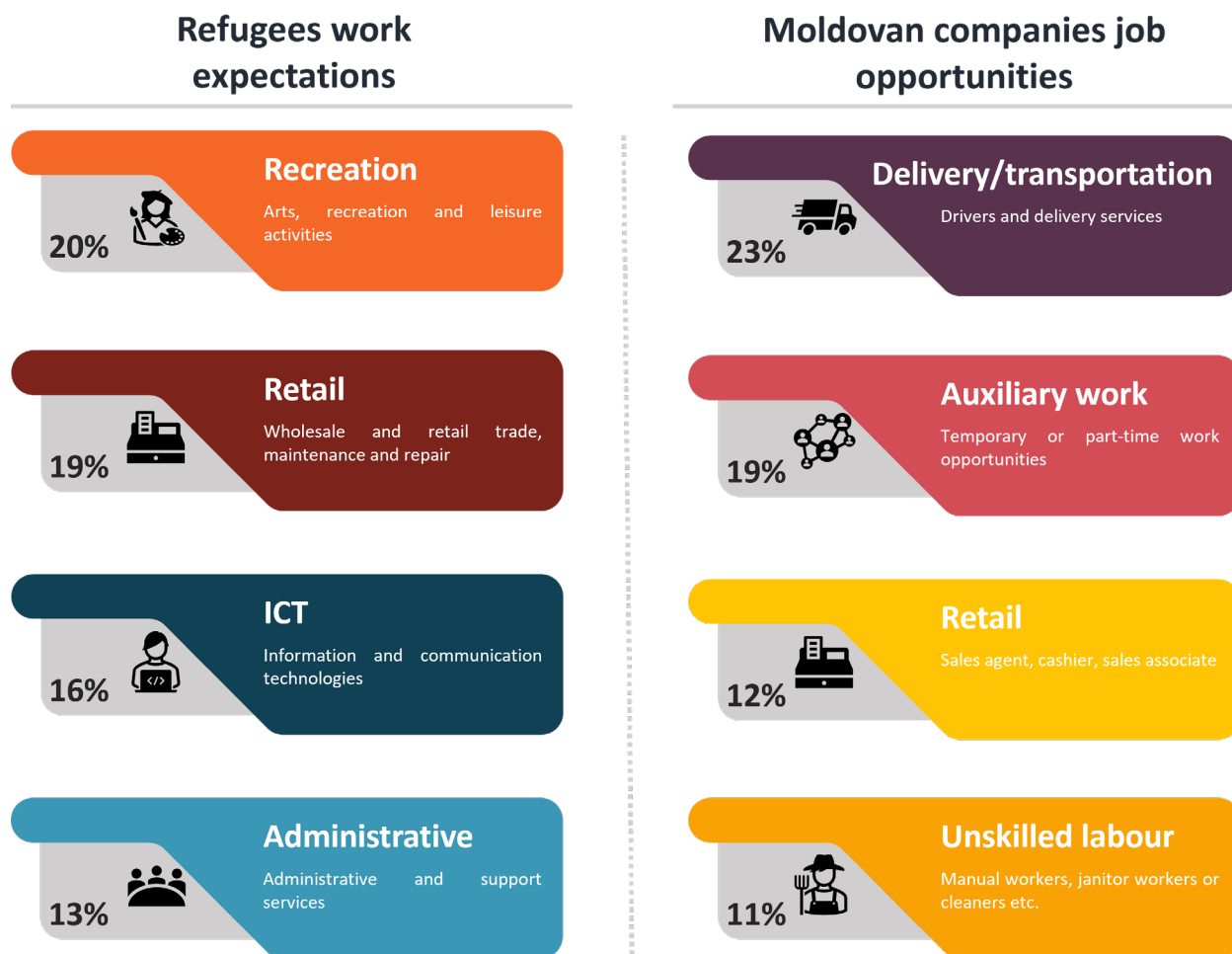
- Only 1 in 4 refugees have a temporary protection status, that is a major limiting factor restricting potential job-seekers to access economic, financial and social benefits in Moldova.
- Ukrainian refugees are, in general, highly educated, which generates a mismatch between their skills and the largely low-level, unskilled jobs available in the Moldovan labour market. This however is contrasted with the fact that more than 50% are still willing to seek employment in Moldova.
- Despite the fact that a large proportion of refugees have resided in Moldova for over 12 months, long-term intention surveys indicate that they still plan to return to Ukraine after the war. This situation creates an uncertainty both among refugees seeking long-term employment as well as among employers willing to hire refugees.

7.2 Expectations and Opportunities Gap

There are several gaps in the expectation and opportunities between refugees seeking job and Moldova companies offering employment opportunities.

Language gap. Language gap is a substantial obstacle both for the refugees as well as Moldovan employers. From the refugee's perspective, Romanian language is often cited as an important requirement to obtain a job. Mastery of Romanian however is relatively poor and there is a lack of affordable language courses. Furthermore, lack of language mastery also prevents refugees from accessing information about job opportunities and other legal requirements associated with job-seeking. Challenges associated with language are also reported by Moldovan companies offering employment to refugees. It is encountered at all stages of employment – starting from outlining job requirements, conducting job interviews, translating employment contracts and onboarding for the new staff.

Job expectations. A significant part of refugees seeking jobs in Moldova are well-educated and high skill labor looking for “*white collar jobs*” that center around professional services, desk, managerial, or administrative work. On the other hand, employers in Moldova offer more “*blue collar jobs*” which focuses on manual or unskilled labor. This represents a mismatch between refugees skills and unskilled jobs available in the Moldovan labor market. The graph below highlights the work preferences of the refugees contrasted with the job opportunities offered by the employers in Moldova. Aside from the retail sector, there is a major discrepancy between the job preferences and available opportunities.



Salary expectation. Another mismatch between job-seeking refugees and employers is the salary expectations. Wages in Moldova are much lower than in other countries and in relation to the cost of living, particularly in rural areas. Ukrainians are used to earning higher salaries, especially coming from urban areas such as Odessa. Furthermore, when contrasting humanitarian cash assistance with the wages offered in Moldova it covers basic needs that disincentivizes job-seeking. Below there is a comparative analysis between minimal, acceptable and desired wages compared to the average monthly salary offered in Moldova.

Long-term vs. short-term employment. The data from the study indicate that the Ukrainian refugees are willing to stay in Moldova for the next 6 to 12 months, however the long-term intention studies indicate that over 90% of refugees plan to return to Ukraine as soon as the war is over. This prevents refugees from seeking a long-term career and employment in Moldova and limit themselves primarily to short-term and service contracts. The same sentiment is mirrored by the employers' hiring refugees, they prefer either informal employment arrangements or short-term contracts to accommodate the one year period offered in the temporary protection status.

Full-time vs. part-time employment. Refugees participating in the survey indicate a significant preference for part-time and remote employment or at least flexible work hours to accommodate care-giving responsibilities for children and/or elderly. In contrast, employers prefer a full-time employment schedule as it indicates more reliability and dependability. This fact is due to Moldova not having a strong culture of part time work and job-sharing in comparison to Ukraine, where independent contracting and gig work is much more prevalent. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity here as is experiencing job culture shift for remote work and job sharing in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic.

Skill and competencies matching. Matching jobseekers' skill with the employer's expectation is crucial for productive work relations. The study shows that there is a relatively good match in the soft skills, both refugees and job providers valuing communication, adaptability, creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. In terms of mis-matching soft skills, employers value responsibility while refugees participating in the study put more emphasis on flexibility and independent thinking. In terms of hard or technical skills, it requires a more in-depth skill analysis for different industries. Nonetheless, there are some universal hard skills that have been noted by both refugees and employers which are related to digital skills which are in high demand especially for IT and administrative jobs.

7.3 Recommendations on Areas of Interventions

Legal status and rights

- It is important to ensure that Ukrainian refugees have a legal status that allows them to work, access healthcare, education, and other social services. The temporary protection mechanism, that entered into force in 2023, is the primary instrument ensuring these rights, however only 1/4 of refugees currently have this status. Among key barriers preventing large scale adoption temporary protection is lack of access to information for both refugees and potential employers.
- Intervention in this area should seek to improve availability and access to information for refugees using various channels of communication. It is recommended to have a point-of-contact strategy to improve access, which anticipates the key services Ukrainian refugees might interact in Moldova and provide an extensive information in these contact points.
- It is also crucial to support help desk service and provide legal advice to potential Moldova employers on the application of temporary protection in the workspace and how it relates to the Moldova labor legislation and regulations. A crucial element that might become more salient in the future, especially if the temporary protection status is scaled up, is management of labor disputes over various employment-related issues. Resolving labor

disputes is crucial to maintaining productive and harmonious labor relations within an organization or industry.

Access to labor markets

- Facilitating access to employment opportunities is crucial. This involves not only the legal right to work but also practical support in finding employment, such as job training, skills matching, and addressing potential employer biases.
- There are several employers' biases that need to be addressed. One of the most salient is the intention gap, where companies are reluctant to offer long-term employment to refugees because of their temporary status in Moldova. Second is the language bias, based on the assumption that the majority of refugees do not know Romanian language, which closes many prospective jobs in retail and service industry. The third bias is related to legislative uncertainty and lack of information on how the newly adopted temporary protection status is applied for the refugee's seeking employment.
- Interventions in this area should also include tailored training programs to help refugees develop specific skills required in the local job market. It includes vocational training in trades, hospitality, healthcare, agriculture and other sectors with high demand for workers. An important stakeholder in designing and providing these vocational training is the National Employment Agency which has a large network of local subsidiaries to facilitate large-scale access.
- Networking events and job fairs are also one instrument to improve access to labor market. Organizing events where refugees can meet potential employers, learn about different industries, and apply for jobs can be an effective way to bridge the gap between refugees and the local labor market.
- For Ukrainian youth seeking to enter the Moldova workforce, internships or apprenticeships programs can provide valuable work experience and facilitate long-term employment. Similarly, mentorship programs can also connect refugees with mentors in their field of interest can provide valuable insights, networking opportunities, and guidance on career development.
- Entrepreneurship support is crucial for refugees interested in starting their own businesses, providing entrepreneurship training, access to microfinance, and business mentorship can be instrumental.
- Supporting self-employment and remote work might also be a potential area of intervention as around 11% of refugees are either already working remotely or would like to pursue this type of career path. This might include small grants programs or equipment lending programs for self-employed professionals.

Social integration and cultural orientation

- Programs that facilitate social integration and cultural understanding help refugees adapt to their new environment. This includes language courses, cultural orientation, and community engagement activities.
- One of the key interventions is to offer language courses and job-related information in the local language to bridge the language gap (particularly focusing on the 32% who lack understanding) and improve employability. Ensure that job-related information is accessible to refugees (16% request accessible formats).
- Besides developing a program to improve language proficiency, it is important to partner with companies develop a referral program – this program would allow employers to recommend language course for their employees thus reducing some of the training and labor integration costs.
- It is also important to support community engagement activities that bring refugees and local community members together and foster mutual understanding. These might include cultural festivals, sports events, or community service projects. Encouraging refugees to volunteer in local organizations or community projects can also help them build a sense of belonging and contribute positively to their new community.
- Family-oriented programs can assist refugee families in adjusting to their new environment together, addressing the unique challenges faced by different family members. A salient issue for parents seeking employment is access to childcare services which 64% of refugees who are not currently employed have stated to be a considerable barrier.
- Insurance Access: Facilitate access to insurance products to help refugees mitigate risks related to health, disasters, or business losses.

7.4 Program Recommendations

7.4.1 Expanding Gig Economy Opportunities for Ukrainian Refugees in Moldova

The potential of Ukrainian refugees for participating in Moldova's gig economy is a topic with significant implications for both the refugees and the local economy. Gig economy jobs, characterized by their flexibility and independence, could offer a suitable employment pathway for refugees, especially considering their unique circumstances and the adaptability required in their situations.

Context and Potential:

- The gig economy, comprising freelance and part-time, is increasingly prominent worldwide, including in Moldova.

- Ukrainian refugees, many of whom possess diverse skill sets and higher education qualifications, are well-positioned to contribute to and benefit from this sector.
- Gig work can provide the needed flexibility for refugees who may have to navigate legal processes, care responsibilities, and cultural adaptation.

Strategies for Integration into the Gig Economy:

1. Skills Mapping and Digital Platform Development:

- Assess the skills and interests of Ukrainian refugees.
- Develop or collaborate with existing digital platforms to connect refugees with gig opportunities in Moldova. These platforms can serve as marketplaces for freelancers and potential employers.

2. Legal Framework and Support:

- Ensure that the legal framework in Moldova supports gig work for refugees, including the ability to legally engage in freelance.
- Provide legal assistance to refugees to navigate the registration and taxation processes associated with gig work.

3. Capacity Building and Training:

- Offer training programs specifically designed for gig work, including digital literacy, online work etiquettes, and financial management as a freelancer.
- Language training, focusing on business communication, can be particularly beneficial.

4. Networking and Community Building:

- Establish support groups or communities for refugee gig workers to share experiences, resources, and best practices.

5. Public Awareness and Employer Engagement:

- Conduct awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of hiring refugees for gig work.
- Engage with local businesses and start-ups to explore how they can integrate refugees into their freelance talent pools.

6. Partnerships with Tech Companies and Startups:

- Collaborate with tech companies and startups to create or provide access to gig work platforms.
- Leverage technology to facilitate remote work opportunities, which can be particularly suitable for refugees.

Expected Outcomes:

- Refugees gain access to flexible and suitable employment opportunities, aligning with their skills and circumstances.
- Moldovan businesses benefit from a diverse and skilled freelance workforce.
- Economic integration of refugees is facilitated, enhancing their self-reliance and contribution to the local economy.

Challenges to Consider:

- The gig economy may lack certain protections and benefits associated with traditional employment, such as health insurance and job security.
- Digital divide issues, such as access to technology and internet connectivity, need to be addressed.
- Ensuring fair work practices and preventing exploitation in gig work.
- Challenge of Childcare for Gig Workers: the irregular and flexible nature of gig work poses a significant challenge for refugee parents who may struggle to find reliable and affordable childcare solutions.

7.4.2 Gender-Based Interventions for Ukrainian Refugee Integration in Moldova's Labor Market

The integration of Ukrainian refugees, particularly women, into Moldova's labor market presents both unique challenges and significant opportunities. As the majority of these refugees are women, they bring diverse skills and experiences that could greatly enrich the Moldovan workforce. However, women refugees often face distinct challenges, including balancing work with family responsibilities, overcoming language barriers, and navigating a new cultural and professional environment. Gender-based interventions are therefore crucial in acknowledging and addressing these specific needs. Tailoring support to effectively leverage the strengths and address the challenges faced by women refugees can not only aid in their successful integration into the Moldovan labor market but also contribute to the overall economic and social development of the country. By focusing on gender-specific strategies, Moldova has the opportunity to create a more inclusive, equitable, and dynamic workforce, setting a precedent for refugee integration that considers the nuances of gender dynamics.

Strategies for Gender-Based Integration:

1. Skills Assessment and Training Programs:

- **Conduct Skills Mapping:** Identify the unique skills and vocational interests of female refugees to tailor training programs effectively.
- **Develop Gender-Sensitive Training:** Offer vocational training and education programs considering women's schedules and responsibilities, including childcare support.

2. Legal and Social Support:

- **Legal Counseling:** Provide specialized legal assistance on employment rights, protection against discrimination, and harassment in the workplace.
- **Social Counseling Services:** Facilitate access to counseling and support services that address cultural adaptation and societal challenges specific to women.

3. Childcare Solutions:

- **Accessible Childcare Services:** Develop affordable childcare options to enable women to participate in employment and training opportunities.
- **Partner with Local Childcare Providers:** Collaborate with existing childcare facilities to ensure accessibility and affordability for refugee women.
- **Flexible Childcare Programs:** Implement programs that allow for parent-child interaction and flexible childcare schedules. This could include part-time childcare services, parent-led cooperative childcare groups, or childcare options at training and employment sites, enabling refugee parents to balance work and family responsibilities effectively.

4. Networking and Mentorship:

- **Women-Focused Networking Events:** Create platforms for female refugees to connect with potential employers and professional networks.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Implement mentorship schemes linking refugee women with experienced professionals in their fields.

5. Empowerment and Leadership Development:

- **Empowerment Workshops:** Conduct sessions covering rights awareness, self-advocacy, leadership skills, and financial literacy.
- **Encourage Participation in Decision-Making:** Facilitate refugee women's involvement in community and employment-related decision processes.

6. Partnerships with Women's Organizations:

- Collaborate with Women's Advocacy Groups: Leverage the expertise and resources of organizations experienced in supporting women in challenging situations.
- Engage with International Women's Networks: Connect with global networks for broader support and knowledge exchange.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced employability and empowerment of refugee women in Moldova.
- Increased awareness and sensitivity towards gender-specific challenges in the workplace.
- Stronger social and professional networks for refugee women, aiding in their economic integration and personal growth.

Challenges to Consider:

- Addressing cultural barriers and stereotypes that may affect women's employment opportunities.
- Balancing the need for specialized women-focused initiatives with inclusive practices that benefit all refugees.

By implementing these gender-based interventions, Moldova can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Ukrainian refugee women, facilitating their successful integration into the labor force and contributing positively to the country's social and economic fabric.

7.4.3 Empowering Entrepreneurship: Business Incubation and Funding for Ukrainian Refugees in Moldova

Context and Specific Goals:

Aimed at supporting Ukrainian refugees in Moldova who are interested in self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Focuses on providing comprehensive tools and resources for refugees to launch, sustain, and grow their business ventures.

Strategies for Entrepreneurial Empowerment of Refugees:

1. Microfinance and Microcredit Access:

- Implement a microfinance scheme providing small loans to refugee entrepreneurs for business startup or expansion.
- Design the program with easy accessibility and favorable repayment terms suitable for refugee circumstances.

2. Co-Working Spaces for Refugee Entrepreneurs:

- Provide conducive co-working environments for business development, equipped with essential amenities and networking opportunities.

3. Co-Financing Opportunities:

- Establish a co-financing model where partial funding is provided to refugee entrepreneurs, promoting a sense of ownership and commitment.

4. Business Incubators and Accelerators:

- Establish incubators and accelerators specifically designed for refugees, offering guidance in business idea development, mentorship, and access to professional networks.
- Create programs that foster innovation, business model validation, and market strategy development.

5. Grants and Seed Funding:

- Implement grant programs or provide seed funding to help refugee entrepreneurs start their businesses without the burden of repaying loans.
- Offer startup capital, possibly as grants or low-interest loans, to help kickstart refugee-owned businesses.
- Ensure that these financial supports are accessible and tailored to the unique needs of refugee entrepreneurs.

6. Comprehensive Training Programs:

- Offer extensive training in entrepreneurship, including business planning, financial management, digital marketing, and local market dynamics.

7. Legal and Regulatory Guidance:

- Provide workshops and one-on-one counseling sessions on Moldovan business laws, including business registration, taxation, and compliance.

Expected Outcomes:

- An increase in successful refugee-owned businesses contributing to Moldova's economy.
- Refugee entrepreneurs gaining financial independence and sustainable business growth.
- Enhanced integration of refugees into the local business community through entrepreneurship.

Challenges to Consider:

- Providing ongoing support and resources to businesses beyond the initial incubation or acceleration phase.
- Adapting business training and support to the diverse cultural and language backgrounds of refugees.
- Ensuring equitable access to grants and seed funding for a diverse group of refugee entrepreneurs.

By adopting the models of business incubators, accelerators, and offering non-repayable financial support like grants and seed funding, this initiative aims to create a fertile ground for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova to grow their entrepreneurial aspirations into thriving businesses.

7.4.4 Enhancing Employer Engagement for Refugee Workforce Integration in Moldova

Strategies for Employer Engagement:

1. Educational Workshops and Sensitization:

- Conduct workshops for employers to understand the benefits and logistics of hiring refugees.
- Address cultural sensitivity, legal considerations, and dismantle common misconceptions.

2. Refugee Employment Fairs:

- Create networking opportunities for refugees to connect with local businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneur networks.
- Organize job fairs where employers can directly interact with refugee job seekers, facilitating immediate employment opportunities.

3. Promotion of Flexible Employment Programs:

- Advocate for Flexible Work Arrangements: Encourage employers to consider flexible work schedules, part-time roles, and remote working options that can accommodate the unique circumstances of refugees, such as family responsibilities or transitional living situations.

- **Develop Employer Guidelines:** Create guidelines and resources for employers on implementing flexible work programs, demonstrating how such arrangements can be mutually beneficial and contribute to a diverse and adaptable workforce.
- **Case Studies:** Share examples and case studies of successful flexible employment models with refugees to inspire and guide other employers in adopting similar practices.

4. Incentives and Subsidies Information:

- Provide detailed information about government incentives for businesses that hire refugees, including tax breaks and subsidies.

5. Business Partnerships and Collaborations:

- Develop partnerships with local businesses and industry groups to encourage refugee employment.
- Facilitate collaborations that can lead to job placements.

6. Networking and Best Practice Sharing:

- Host networking events and forums for employers to exchange experiences and best practices in refugee employment.

7. Skills Matching and Database Access:

- Create a comprehensive database of refugee skills and backgrounds for employer access.
- Implement a skills-matching system to align refugee capabilities with employer needs.

8. Support and Advisory Services:

- Offer a dedicated support line or advisory services for employers to seek assistance with hiring and integrating refugees.

9. Training and Apprenticeship Programs:

- Encourage and facilitate the creation of internship and apprenticeship programs tailored to refugees.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased awareness and willingness among Moldovan employers to hire refugees.
- More sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities for refugees.
- Stronger social and economic integration of refugees into Moldovan society.

Challenges to Consider:

- Overcoming language and cultural barriers in the workplace.
- Ensuring legal compliance and understanding of refugees' rights among employers.
- Regularly updating and adapting strategies based on feedback and changing needs.

This comprehensive approach aims to create a conducive environment for refugee employment in Moldova, benefitting both the refugees and the local economy through active employer participation and support.

7.4.5 Integrated Approach for Comprehensive Refugee Support

Experience has shown that standalone programs, such as language training, yield limited success in refugee integration. A more comprehensive approach that addresses multiple aspects of refugees' needs – from language proficiency to employment and social integration – is crucial for effective support. This integrated approach ensures that refugees are not only linguistically and professionally prepared but also socially and culturally integrated into their new environment.

Strategies for Integrated Refugee Support:**1. Combined Language and Vocational Training:**

- Offer language training that is contextually integrated with vocational skills development, ensuring that language learning is immediately applicable and relevant to refugees' professional needs.

2. Skills Assessment and Matching Platform:

- Develop or collaborate with a digital platform for skills assessment and job matching. This platform would align refugees' skills with available job opportunities, facilitating more effective employment placement.
- Implement Skill Lab in Moldova for Refugees: Integrate and promote the use of Skill Lab, a proven platform that scans and assesses job seekers' skills profiles. Tailor this platform to the Moldovan context, ensuring it is accessible in Romanian and adapted to the local labor market. Based on its success in Latin America, Skill Lab can be a valuable tool in accurately assessing the skills of refugees and matching them with suitable job opportunities in Moldova.

3. Employment Assistance and Job Placement Services:

- Provide comprehensive employment assistance, including resume building, interview preparation, and job application support.
- Establish partnerships with local businesses and organizations to create a pipeline for employment opportunities.

4. Workplace Integration Support:

- Implement programs to assist refugees in adapting to their new workplace, including understanding workplace culture, rights, and responsibilities.
- Offer support services for both refugees and their employers to address any challenges that arise during the integration process.

5. Cross-Sector Collaboration:

- Collaborate with various sectors, including education, business, and social services, to ensure a multi-faceted support system for refugees.
- Engage local communities in the integration process to foster mutual understanding and support.

Expected Impact:

- Enhanced employment prospects for refugees through a combination of language proficiency, professional training, and job placement.
- Improved social and cultural integration of refugees into the Moldovan society.
- Increased success rates in refugee assistance programs due to the comprehensive nature of support.

Challenges to Address:

- Coordinating multiple program components and stakeholders to ensure a seamless and effective implementation.
- Continuously adapting the program to meet the evolving needs of refugees and the job market.

Conclusion:

An integrated approach to refugee assistance promises a more profound and lasting impact on refugees' lives. By addressing their linguistic, professional, and social integration needs in a cohesive manner, this approach not only empowers refugees but also enriches the broader community.

Annex: Relevant institutions for Economic Inclusion of the Refugees

State Institutions

The National Employment Agency (NEA) is the central body of the specialized public service, empowered to: promote state policies, strategies and programs for the development of the labor market, social protection of job seekers, prevention of unemployment and combating its social effects, implementing labor migration policies, monitoring the activities of private employment agencies.

NEA is present throughout the country through 35 employment agencies. All services are provided free of charge.

The Organization for the Development of Entrepreneurship (ODA) is a public institution subordinate to the Ministry of Economy with the mission of supporting the development of the local entrepreneurial environment, including small and medium-sized enterprises, by promoting the entrepreneurial culture, providing financial and technical assistance to companies, issuing financial guarantees and state, as well as ensuring business support infrastructure.

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) is a legal public body, responsible for quality assurance in the field of education and research. In its areas of activity, the Agency collaborates with central and local public authorities, as well as with international bodies.

General Inspectorate for Migration (IGM) is an administrative authority subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which ensures, under the law, the implementation of state policies in the fields of migration, asylum, statelessness, and integration of foreigners, as well as the legislation relevant to these fields. IGM monitors the migration flow and ensures the records of foreigners entering the Republic of Moldova.

Bureau of Migration and Asylum is a subdivision subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, created for the purpose of promoting and implementing state policy in the field of migration and asylum. The office is assigned the function of control and supervision of legislation in the field of migration, recording and issuing documents of foreign citizens, granting asylum, managing migration, the residence regime of foreign citizens and stateless persons on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, combating the illegal stay of foreigners, carrying out operative actions of investigations, return, expulsion, readmission and detention of foreigners.

The National Social Assistance Agency (ANAS) is an administrative authority subordinate to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, established by Government Decision no. 1263 of 18.11.2016 in order to improve the quality of social assistance offered to the population, through

the correct and unified implementation of the normative framework in the field of social assistance. This institution has a role to play in the creation on management of temporary placement centers for refugees.

International Institutions and local NGOs

The United Nations (UN) has a significant presence in Moldova, with various subsidiary organizations actively engaged in diverse sectors.

- UN Migration (IOM) supports migrants through a variety of resettlement, support and protection activities.
- UNHCR oversees and executes initiatives related to refugees
- UNDP is actively involved in programs concerning livelihoods and the enhancement of inclusive markets.
- UN Women is dedicated to assisting (refugee) women in participating in training programs and provides childcare support to facilitate their access to markets.
- UN ILO: International Labor Organization - the organization covers job creation, conditions of work including formalization, occupational safety and health, and minimum wages, childcare provision as well as vocational training.

HIAS, a Jewish organization, offers essential services to refugees and asylum seekers worldwide while advocating for their fundamental rights, enabling them to rebuild their lives.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) plays a vital role in supporting the delivery of humanitarian aid across three key sectors: Protection, Economic Recovery, and Camp Coordination & Camp Management, primarily through local partners.

GIZ is responsible for implementing extensive projects related to regional and urban economic development, the strengthening of economic development structures, policy initiatives, and vocational education and training (VET) activities.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) collaborates with local partners on various topics, including information dissemination, Camp Management, emergency assistance, education, youth programs, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) initiatives, and Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA).

HELVETAS focuses on humanitarian assistance, particularly for marginalized groups such as youth, returning migrants, and ethnic minorities, especially those residing outside the capital city of Chisinau.

People in Need (PiN) provides developmental support in agriculture, the economy, social inclusion, protection, and the empowerment of civil society.

WorldVision supports refugees in Moldova by supplying essential necessities, ensuring the protection of children and their families, offering cash assistance, and supporting healthcare facilities.

The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) implements initiatives to bolster refugee reception centers, distribute meals and essential goods, and install sanitation facilities.

Action Against Hunger (AAH) provides meals and develops a health and nutrition country strategy, offering support for maternal health and breastfeeding.

National Congress of Ukrainians of Moldova (NCUM) is a non-profit and non-governmental organization that implements its goal of protecting and supporting Ukrainians in Moldova. The NCUM includes the Union of Ukrainians of Moldova, the Women's Community of Ukrainians of Moldova, the Association of Ukrainian Youth of the Republic of Moldova “Zlagoda”, leaders of civil society and Ukrainian communities.

The mission of the NCUM is to preserve the Ukrainian identity, protect the legal rights of Ukrainians in Moldova, promote the effective participation of Ukrainians in the economic, civil and social life of Moldova, and facilitate the contribution of Ukrainians to the development of Moldovan society.

Since February 24, 2022, the NCUM has been playing one of the key roles in responding to the refugee crisis in Moldova. The team implemented 10 projects, of which 6 were dedicated to emergency response and 3 aimed at supporting Ukrainians in the Republic of Moldova. NCUM supports 30,000 Ukrainian refugees throughout its humanitarian activities.

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