

The Council of Europe and UNHCR - UN Refugee Agency in Romania - organized the Roundtable „Strengthening the protection of children and survivors of gender-based violence in the context of refugee flows in Romania”

Bucharest, November 22, 2023 - The event, organized by the Council of Europe and UNHCR, marks a new stage in asylum, migration, and refugee integration, with solutions and recommendations emerging from efforts at the national, European, and international levels, nearly 2 years after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

The speakers, including representatives from authorities, lawyers, and experts from public institutions, foundations, and international agencies, provided a retrospective on integration, inclusion, and protection measures for refugees, as well as the normative solutions and secondary regulations that have complemented the legislative framework. The subject of strengthening child protection was presented by highlighting national and international standards, the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the practical challenges.

Daniela Zaharia Mănescu, a member of [Lawyers for Refugees](#) project – initiated by the National Association of the Romanian Bars - highlighted the improvements in Romania's asylum legislation concerning unaccompanied minors. She specifically mentioned [Order 119/2023](#), which regulates the responsibilities of legal representatives for unaccompanied foreign minors who seek or obtain a form of international protection.

Additionally, she emphasized a series of aspects that can ensure effective and efficient assistance to minors:

- Access to a lawyer must be guaranteed throughout the asylum procedure, which is possible through a request for legal aid, for judicial and/or extrajudicial public assistance.
- The legal representative, who assists the minors until they reach the age of 18, plays a crucial role because many children arrive in Romania with various traumas and require their rights and obligations to be explained in a language they understand. Therefore, she believes that establishing a national network of interpreters is a worthwhile project to consider.
- Currently, there are no unaccompanied minors placed in public custody. It is important for the Romanian state to maintain this practice.
- Lastly, continuous specialization is needed for all those involved in the field of asylum and migration.

According to UNHCR, the roundtable is a continuation of the mission of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe for Migration and Refugees (SRSG), Leyla Kayacik.

„The [report](#) issued after the fact-finding mission identified several actions to be taken within the framework of the Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025), and in close cooperation with international organizations which could provide know-how and tailor-made expertise to competent entities.”, [press release](#) states.

The UNHCR Representative in Romania, Pablo Zapata, noted that „Resilient systems, able to protect refugee children and GBV survivors in times of crisis and of uncertainty, remain fundamental to uphold human dignity and solidarity. We thank Romania for its unwavering commitment.”