

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF MOLDOVAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL FUNDS IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT*

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Introduction and context

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a military aggression against Ukraine. Since then, millions of people have fled the war, seeking refuge in EU countries and the Republic of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova has experienced one of the largest per capita influxes of refugees in Europe since the war in Ukraine began in February 2022. Approx. 200,000 refugees arrived in Moldova in the first three months of the war, with 600,000 more people entering the country since. While the majority decided to return to Ukraine or move further to other countries, more than 110,000 refugees decided to remain in Moldova, approx. 4% of the population with usual residence (UNDP 2023). Since the onset of the refugee influx, national and local civil society organizations (CSOs) have played an important role in the refugee response, supporting and complementing the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the UN, and international NGOs, as well as the private sector and private citizens. CSOs including refugee-led organizations and initiative groups have operated across the country, including at border reception points, in main urban centers, and increasingly, in regions around Moldova (Brie 2021). Their collective efforts have been instrumental in addressing the needs and promoting the rights of refugees from Ukraine seeking protection in Moldova (Operational Data Portal 2024).

Despite the involvement of many CSOs in supporting the refugee response in Moldova, there was no country-wide overview of how many CSOs there are, what services they offer, where they operate, what populations they target, what their capacity is, or what their support and funding needs are.



This has left a coordination and synergy gap critical for an effective humanitarian response. Besides all these challenging events, the Republic of Moldova has set a global example in receiving, protecting, and supporting refugees from Ukraine. In the context of the Ukrainian conflict, one of the great challenges of contemporary Europe and its eastern neighborhood is related to migration and refugee management, and the need for European integration of minority communities, including refugees and immigrants (Polgár 2023).

The dispute and the controversies that concern the phenomena of migration and management of the refugees, represent two of the key elements of modern society, bringing benefits and conflicts both to the receiving places and the place of origin and raising issues of security, social measurements, and multiculturalism in our globalized world. In recent years, the discourse on migration and refugee management has become increasingly negative. It is more and more obvious that the complex, transnational migration challenge cannot be handled or managed anymore only by the state. Especially because the states are no longer the most important actors in the migration process (Newland 2010). As a consequence, there is an increasing tendency to advocate for closing the borders and trying to stop migration. If we are trying to figure out how to manage migration, or how to elaborate comprehensive and sustainable migration policies, the issue of integration of migrants and refugees must be considered.

Usually, the question of integration, or the method of integration is a very sensitive subject. When it is already difficult to discuss whether and how the migratory trajectory should happen, it is even harder to discuss how and whether immigrants and refugees should be helped to integrate (Polgár 2023). There is a different perception between countries about the definitions of the terms: migrant, refugee, national minority, and ethnic minority. In some cases, EU Member States treat migrants and minorities like their own citizens, and in other cases like non-citizens - their migration or minority background is viewed as irrelevant in statistical terms (Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services 2011). There are also differences in the way these people are viewed as having an ethnic minority background irrespective of how long they have been in a certain country (Polgár 2016).

Moldova has experienced a tumultuous more than 30 years of independence, filled with difficult and complex issues. Over the Transnistrian conflict, there are other structural problems (Brie 2021). Moldova still has an agriculturally-based economy, still dependent on Eastern markets, a political tradition of strong central power, and a lack of governmental experience and capacity. All these factors shaped Moldova's reality (Putină–Brie 2023). Moldova faces significant challenges in its transition to a democratic society, including large gaps in its ability to effectively manage multi-ethnicity and integrate ethnic minorities. These gaps have a profound effect on social cohesion, political stability, and the shared vision of the elites and citizens regarding the geopolitical vector and development of the state. All these have greatly affected the quality and capacity of the governing act and the consolidation of the civil sector (Putină–Brie 2023). Civil society organizations,



including human rights groups, environmental groups, and advocacy groups, have been instrumental in promoting democratic values. These organizations have worked to increase transparency and accountability in government, to protect human rights.

The collective efforts of Moldovan civil society organizations have been instrumental in addressing the needs and promoting the rights of refugees from Ukraine who have sought protection in Moldova since the escalation of the conflict in February 2022. One of our research hypotheses is represented by the fact that civil society organizations play an important role in migrant management. Moldovan CSOs are playing an important role in supporting and complementing the efforts of the government, agencies, and international NGOs, as well as the private sector and private citizens, to provide protection and services to refugees including at border reception points, in main urban centers and throughout the country. These carry out valuable work assisting or even substituting public authorities and governments by providing guidance and support in this process. Civil society and social partners operate at different levels. Some organizations are active at the EU level, others at national level, and others at regional or local level.

A second hypothesis that we want to test starts from the idea that despite their involvement and critical role in the refugee response, there was no comprehensive overview of the CSO ecosystem and its financial sources in Moldova, which left a gap in coordination and synergies critical for an effective operation and humanitarian response.

Framework of analysis

The emergence of civil society has been a major feature in many areas of everyday life. While a large amount of work has been developed on its significance for the legitimacy of a democratic regime, the question of its relationship with the European values and integration processes on one hand and conservative, or illiberal political systems on the other has been answered in limited ways (Polgar 2023). Moldovan CSOs were engaged in the refugee response from the very onset, making maximum efforts to provide critical humanitarian assistance to refugees fleeing the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine. The large numbers of refugees crossing the border from Ukraine into Moldova initially left many CSOs, as well as other stakeholders unprepared. The activation of the humanitarian coordination system, and related reporting requirements, further added to the intense workload of CSOs and other humanitarian actors. The emergency response put a significant strain on the institutional and programmatic capacities of local CSOs, impacting their ongoing programs, as well as the work-life balance and emotional well-being of their staff. However, as the response evolved, CSOs were able to adapt and respond.



The levels of analysis that we propose from a methodological perspective include a. analysis of the refugee situation in the Republic of Moldova and the general framework of civil society evolution; b. mapping the capacities and degree of sustainability of civil society in the Republic of Moldova; c. drawing up conclusions based on the research carried out.

To analyze the development of civil society in the Republic of Moldova, we will use various methodological approaches. Firstly, we will examine relevant scientific publications and analytical reports to establish a framework for our research. The institutional-legal method will be employed to analyze the normative framework for civil society organizations (CSOs) and their relationship with the state, as well as the impact of state policies on the development of a favorable environment for CSOs.

Literature review

Civic society's involvement in public governance today is evolving against a backdrop of several worldwide developments that are transforming the socioeconomic dynamics of countries with both opportunities and challenges (Cartwright 2018). Indeed, the recent commitments to the sustainable development agenda made by world leaders at the global level reflect a shared vision of development and an effort by the international community to devise strategies that will simultaneously help minimize challenges and maximize opportunities (Brie–Putină 2023).

The involvement of civil society in public governance may well be a key strategy for serving these twin goals (UN 2008). According to the thesis developed by other researchers, like Giddens (1998), civil society has the potential to correct the failures of both states and the market and would therefore constitute the way forward for democratic progress. (Polgar 2023). The use of new communication tools in accessing information has formidable potential for accelerating citizen connectivity and civic participation but has so far been used to this end in relatively few places. The rise of civil society and its demand for a greater role in the migration management process have amplified the need for greater civic engagement (UN 2008).

A common meaning of the term civil society leads us to the idea that this represents a society of the citizens. In parallel with the concept of civil society, a series of related concepts were born and were used, such as social pacts, civil order, or civic culture. The expression 'civil society' bears the imprint of a particular historical legacy, loaded with imprecision and contradictions. The reasons are several, one of these can be that the term received a double and successive understanding as it was used to name distinct realities (Tămaș 1993). Defining the concept of 'civil society' itself has proven to be a challenging task in both applied and academic circles, so much so that the use of the term has become essentially stipulative and its meaning has to be declared in any particular context. In most cases, civil society is perceived as an entity that performs two basic functions, the so-called service delivery and advocacy.



Despite their different backgrounds and general differences among the civil society organizations from the EU and civil society organizations from across Europe seem to be becoming more and more alike in the way these react to major societal trends such as demographic changes, migration, economic crisis, populism, shrinking civic space and integration (Divjak–Goran 2017).

If we want to define civil society in the specific context of migration, we use the term civil society to mean a diverse range of nonstate entities, which can influence formal and informal migration-related rules, practices, and processes (Banulescu–Bogdan 2011). However, the nature, culture, and dynamics of civil society, Provide the government actors with numerous points of co-optation or capture of civil society. Civil society has its own organizational culture and dynamics and tends to accommodate or remain receptive to new demands of the government.

Within our research, we aimed to review previous literature that can articulate and sustain the conceptual and theoretical framework as well as the possible contributions in sustaining our findings and arguments. In the same perspective, we are focusing on the understanding of the post-Soviet transformations and particularly the evolutions of the civil society in the Republic of Moldova. About the specific experience of the Republic of Moldova, analyzed by Moldavian authors, there are both historical and socio-political analyses of the evolution of Moldavian state and society. The studies note the close connection between the phenomenon of migration, refugee management, and the role of the citizen, as a basic element of civil society (Diamond 1997; Howard 2003). In Moldova, civil society was born after the fall of communism but still was affected by the lack of financial support and a proper legislative framework. Civil society has played a critical role in the democratization process in Moldova. Civil society organizations, including human rights groups, environmental groups, and advocacy groups, have been instrumental in promoting democratic values and holding the government accountable. (Putină–Brie 2023). Civil society becomes relevant in the Republic of Moldova with sovereignty and independence, it develops simultaneously with the public sector and the private sector, and it grows in importance according to the modernization and structural reforms that the Moldovan society has undertaken (Linz–Stepan 2004). With the beginning of the process of democratization of the Moldovan society, interest in the problem of the formation of both civil society in general and its structural elements, in particular, has increased (Brie–Putină 2023). The characteristics of Moldovan civil society are typical for post-communist societies: fragmentation and weak civic participation. Transnational civil society, through NGOs, tried to revive the civic participation of citizens (Varzari–Tăbîrță 2010).

The first stage started with the disintegration of the Soviet empire and was characterized by an implicit pluralism that determined the emergence of the first popular movements, mostly concerned with national emancipation and the definition of the state (Țugui 2013). The first NGOs were established at the beginning of the '90s, with the predominant financial support from public and private donors from the West (Putină–Brie 2023).



The consolidation of the civil society was determined by the European path of the Republic of Moldova, although in a cyclical evolution, and the establishment of a national framework regarding the OCSs, further raised the support of external development partners, implicitly the support for the consolidation of the Moldovan civil society (Brie 2021). From a structural point of view, civil society today has evolved. NGOs are a characteristic space for the expression of civil society, whose requirements for co-decision and co-participation within the traditional centers of power represent a positive development in the consolidation of new forms of governance at the local, national, and supranational levels (Brie–Putină 2023).

The evolution and development of civil society in the Republic of Moldova has been in direct relationship with the evolution of the state and the processes of transition. While civil society is analytically distinct from the state, the economy, and political society, in reality, the boundaries are blurred. A lack of autonomy curtails their ability to act as democratic watchdogs by ensuring accountability and controlling the power abuses of political elites. There is important and relevant statistical data about the current functioning of the civil society in Moldova which is very valuable for understanding the evolution of this sector. For instance, the CSO Sustainability Index for Moldova provides a great amount of quantitative information but there is a lack of qualitative information regarding the motivation and initiative, agenda setting, communication strategies, specific actions and narratives, societal influence, and the overall impact of the civil society sector in Moldova (Brie–Costea–Petriță 2023).

Civil society funding and refugee management in the Republic of Moldova

The European Union's Eastern border region and bordering countries are nowadays one of the so-called epicenters of the migration process, in terms of refugees. Since the Ukrainian conflict started, it became one of the main routes, used by thousands of migrants and refugees on their way to the EU member states. (Polgar 2023). This region can be characterized also through its specific features, context, and trends in the fields of economy, demography, socio-politic environment, and migration. (International Organization for Migration 2020). The history of Europe's Eastern neighborhood, with a population consisting of different ethnic groups that overlap national borders, makes it challenging to define and measure migration. Nowadays the region is experiencing an unprecedented influx of migrants and refugees, making this route the most frequented migratory track (Brie–Horga 2014).

Usually, the civil society and its organizations are the first responders in humanitarian settings, including community leaders, volunteers, and local CSOs and faith-based organizations present in the affected area. CSOs supplement government efforts and often address needs that might have been overlooked by the government. Collaboration among CSOs and other stakeholders creates synergy in planning and implementation and ensures there is no duplication in activities aimed at assisting those in need (UNHCR 2023).



Collaboration ensures there is proper coordination and optimal use of resources, thereby making humanitarian efforts efficient and timely. Enabling CSOs to participate in refugee coordination structures, and to define the response agenda, ensures that vital sections of the society, especially at the grassroots level, are consulted and contribute with their unique expertise harnessed in response to a refugee influx (UNHCR 2023). To be efficient and raise the CSO's institutional capacity, internal structures, procedures, operational, human resources and financial resources must be well managed. This type of organized management system helps an organization effectively and efficiently achieve its mission and objectives.

Since the start of the armed conflict, migration has been an issue, especially in the states of Central and Eastern Europe. These states, like the Republic of Moldova, became a target country or a transit country for most of the Ukrainian refugees. The main issue is that in these countries, due to the migration wave political conflict has become very accentuated, and because of this shrinking civic spaces have become particularly visible.

After the start of the incoming refugee wave, it could be observed that the Moldavian Government has enacted restrictive migration policies in their attempt to cater to a growing so-called sovereignist electorate.

These measures put migrant mobility under pressure, but also the practices of those offering support. Civil society actors and media outlets have spurred suspicion regarding migrant solidarity. The conflicts around civil society actors organizing activities that supported refugees and migrants increased. (Della Porta – Steinhilper 2021)

Strong institutional capacity enables CSOs to build trust and credibility with their stakeholders, respond to the needs of their beneficiaries and communities, adapt their approaches, and ensure sustainability and long-term impact. Ultimately, strong institutional capacities are essential for CSOs to make a positive impact on society (Brie–Jusufi–Polgar 2023). Another important aspect is connected to the financing of the activities. Funding is crucial for CSOs to carry out their activities, programs, and projects, and to achieve their mission and objectives. It enables CSOs to provide essential services, advocate for their causes effectively, and innovate in their approaches to addressing social issues. Funding also provides financial stability and sustainability, helps to build partnerships and networks, and allows CSOs to plan and execute long-term strategies that produce a lasting impact. Based on the data given by the survey conducted by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in the Republic of Moldova, the capacity of CSOs to substantially contribute to the refugee response is highly dependent and directly proportional to donor support. Over half of CSOs (61%) reported receiving funding from INGOs (International non-governmental Organizations) and around one-third of organizations reported them as their sources (34%). 20% of CSOs received funding from UN agencies, while 26% reported other funding sources, such as local businesses and private donations. 1% of organizations reported receiving state funding through the Ministries of Education and Research, and Culture. (UNHCR 2023).



Regarding funding coming from the Moldavian Government, the situation is close to the European standards. The legal background offers several possibilities and mechanisms for CSOs to access funding from the government (UNHCR 2023). In 2016, the government of Moldova adopted the 2% Mechanism, an indirect state support mechanism, to support civil society organizations, allowing taxpayers to allocate 2% of their income tax to CSOs to mobilize domestic resources and diversify their income base. (Fiscal Code 2023). In 2017, Moldova developed a Small Grants Program for CSOs to support and promote senior participation and active aging in Moldova. (Regulation 2023). The Law on Youth allows for financial grants to support CSOs in provision of the community-specific youth services, the development of youth services infrastructure, and the provision of spaces and equipment to youth organizations (Law on Youth 2016). Under the Law on Inclusion of People with Disabilities, the state provides tax relief for specialized organizations partially subsidizes the procurement of equipment and job creation for people with disabilities, as well as partially compensates the social insurance contributions to organizations making part of the Society of Invalids, the Society of the Blind and the Association of the Deaf in the Republic of Moldova (Law on Inclusion 2012). Moreover, according to the Law on Non-Commercial Organizations, in case a CSO is attributed with the status of public benefit, it is entitled to support from the central and local public authorities, including tax reliefs, right to use public property free of charge or on preferential terms, non-reimbursable financing, special-purpose financing, and social procurement. (Law on Non-Commercial Organizations 2020).

In September 2022, the government of Moldova drafted a Framework Regulation on the Mechanism of Non-reimbursable Funding for Projects of Noncommercial Organizations to financially support projects of national, regional, or local public interest in different development areas and that according to the State Chancellery will soon become functional (UNHCR 2023). Even though the legislative background is getting favorable CSOs face several funding challenges including a lack of information about funding opportunities, not being able to meet the funding eligibility criteria, complicated application procedures with short deadlines, time-consuming reporting requirements, and limited access to flexible and long-term funding. Strict donor requirements also meant that it was difficult to change the content of services after an agreement was signed, making it challenging to respond to evolving refugee needs. CSOs highlighted the pressure of stringent reporting requirements and “an impressive degree of bureaucracy” that came with international funding (UNHCR 2023).

Based on the information presented above, the situation can be difficult in terms of funding. CSOs in Moldova are relatively small and may not have the experience or capacity to meet the requirements of donors to obtain funding or support. Thus, larger CSOs, with relevant experience and human resources, can more easily access these funds and other related opportunities. As funding is often allocated to larger organizations, this effectively marginalizes small, grassroots organizations.

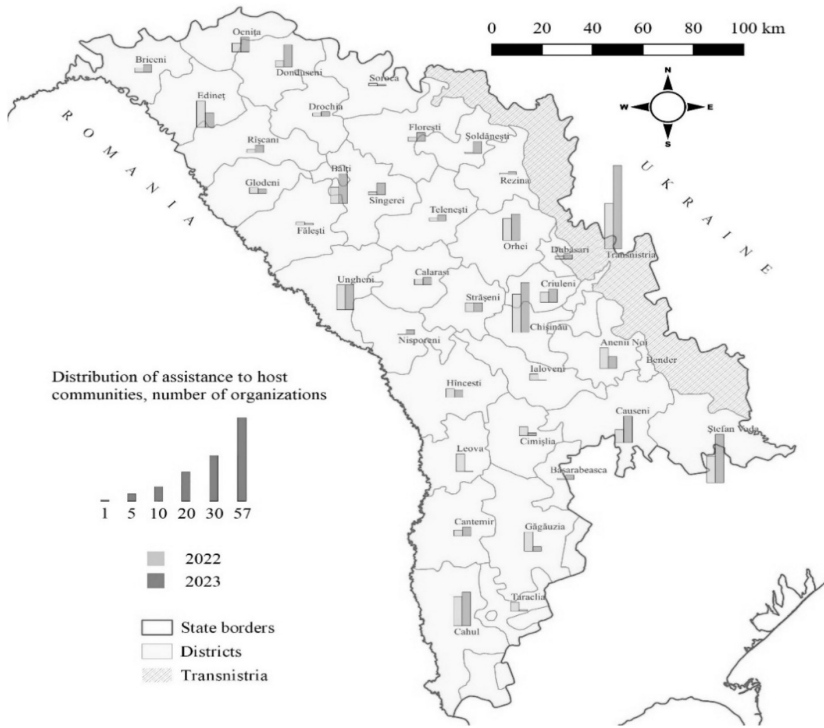


Assistance and distribution

Ukrainians have been displaced from their country at an outstanding pace and in significant numbers since the Russian invasion triggered in February 2022. Some have become internally displaced persons, but most have fled to Poland, Romania, and Moldova and this migration affects the entire European continent (De Coninck 2023). This migration – due to its age structure and sex ratio – is accompanied by a high level of economic dependency and a high need for temporary protection. Migrants from Ukraine require primarily cash, employment, accommodation, medical, and material assistance (Kapinus et al. 2023). According to the most recent data from the UNHCR (end of January 2024) more than 116,000 refugees are in Moldova, of which 44 percent are children and 37 percent are women. More than 30,000 individuals benefit from Temporary Protection (UNHCR 2024). The Moldovan national and local civil society organizations (CSOs) have had a significant part in responding to the sudden arose wave of refugees since the first days of the escalation. This reaction could support and complement the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the United Nations, and international NGOs besides the steps of private individuals (UN WOMEN and UNHCR 2023). The role of CSOs in the response to the refugee crisis in 2022 is demonstrated by the fact that 89 percent out of the 197 CSOs surveyed assisted the refugee population (the referred UN survey covered 98 percent of the legally registered CSOs) (UN WOMEN and UNHCR 2023). The assistance provided was geographically concentrated and larger cities were especially highlighted (Chişinău municipality (35%) Bălţi (20%), Cahul (17%), Stefan Voda (17%), and Tiraspol (10%)) due to their spatial representation and to the distribution of the refugee population.

The assistance provided by CSOs included mostly the priority humanitarian needs in the 2022 multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA) – food, accommodation, and health care. Occasional mismatch was reported by the CSOs between provided assistance and the required needs of refugees. The lack of communication between the CSOs and the refugees (partly caused by language barriers and sensitivities regarding Russian speaking), and the inelastic program conditions caused these problems which were significantly higher in the rural territories (outside Chişinău and other larger towns). Employment and educational opportunities were also limited in the rural territories (UN WOMEN and UNHCR 2023). The mentioned composition of the Ukrainian refugees explained the main target groups of CSO services (women with 88 percent and children under the age of 12 years with more than 75 percent). However, the specific needs of diverse refugee groups were also important to identify (older persons, persons with disabilities, and Roma refugees, as well as male refugees) with special services to ensure (UN WOMEN and UNHCR 2023).

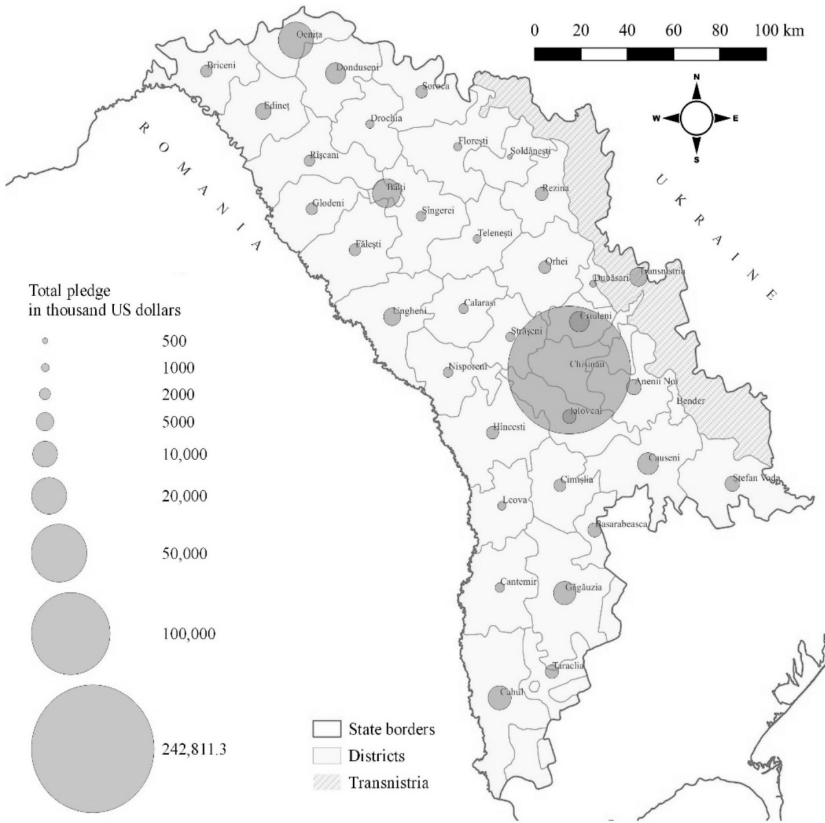
Figure 1. Distribution of assistance to host communities realized in 2022 and planned in 2023 by districts (number of organizations)



Sources: author's preparation based on data collected and published by the UN WOMEN and UNHCR 2023 <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/104247> Accessed 27. 01. 2024.

Over one-quarter of CSOs (27%) assisted between 301 and 3,000 persons each in 2022, while 44% of CSOs assisting refugees also assisted host communities (Figure 1). Most CSOs (33%) assisted up to 50 members of the host community each, while 31 percent of CSOs in Chişinău municipality assisted more than 300 beneficiaries each. According to the results of the survey, the percentage of CSOs planned to assist host communities had risen to 63% in 2023 (as compared to 44% in 2022) (UN WOMEN and UNHCR 2023).

Figure 2. Total budget requirements by districts (in thousand US dollars)



Sources: The author's preparation is based on data collected and published by the UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency – Operation Data Portal. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/248?sv=0&geo=680>. Accessed 27. 01. 2024.

The spatial concentration of the refugee population and the need to ensure is demonstrated by the distribution of the budget requirements detailed in the Refugee Response Plan for the Republic of Moldova (2023) (UNHCR 2024).

Findings and conclusion

Moldovan CSOs responded formidably to the refugee influx, in the face of limited resources, staff, and experience working in humanitarian crises. Local CSOs coordinated together, pooled their resources, and collaborated closely among themselves as well as with central and local government, and international organizations, to respond to the needs of diverse groups of refugees. In the face of constraints, they delivered beyond their capacity and expectations. CSOs, particularly smaller ones, reported facing challenges securing funding for the refugee response, due in part



to complicated eligibility criteria and application procedures. For those who did access funds, they found reporting requirements to be time-consuming and burdensome, especially for CSOs with limited staff. Furthermore, inflexible and short-term grants made it difficult for CSOs to adapt to the changing needs of refugees and to invest in medium to long-term responses. CSO refugee response programs targeted a wide range of groups including women and girls, as well as men, male and female older persons, persons with chronic diseases, and persons with disabilities. Collaboration among CSOs, INGOs, and the UN was productive in enhancing the efficiency of the refugee response in Moldova, leading to strategic partnerships, while collaboration between CSOs and local governments varied across regions with both good practices and areas for improvement depending on the location. Despite efforts to involve local CSOs in refugee coordination structures, only one-quarter of CSOs participated regularly in meetings, with low levels of participation attributed to a limited clarity among CSOs about their role in refugee coordination, their limited ability to influence decisions, and small numbers of staff which limited their capacity to attend many of the meetings (UNHCR 2024).

In 2024, a greater number of CSOs plan to assist a greater number of refugees from Ukraine as well as affected host populations throughout Moldova, with a slightly decreased outreach across regions. Assistance provided by CSOs will shift away from emergency provisions to focus on medium- to long-term assistance that addresses protection as well as social and economic inclusion in line with the broader refugee response priorities (UNHCR 2024). Civil society and its organizations play an important role in migrant and refugee integration in all the target countries. These carry out valuable work assisting or even substituting for governments by providing guidance and support in integration processes. However, their involvement in the design of integration policies and integration activities does not always correspond to the importance of their role. The results of this study confirm H1, which assumes that civil society organizations play an important role in migrant management. Therefore, the Republic of Moldova and other states from the EU's Eastern border should step up their efforts to achieve more structured cooperation between civil society organizations and government authorities to create synergies and make better use of the knowledge and resources available on both sides. The expertise of the civil sector should be much more used and capitalized when designing integration strategies and measures to increase their efficiency (Brie–Jusufović–Polgar 2022).

A second hypothesis is also confirmed, since despite their involvement and critical role in the refugee response, there is no comprehensive overview of the CSO ecosystem and its financial sources in Moldova, which left a gap in coordination and synergies critical for an effective operation and humanitarian response (EESC 2020). We believe that the main reason for this persisting situation is the so-called political tradition of strong central power and a lack of governmental experience and capacity. Also, it is important to add economic problems, security risks, challenges in ensuring human rights for citizens, and dependence on Moscow's decisions.



All these had a direct impact on civil society development. Civil society working on the ground are monitoring the implementation and impact of new policies and initiatives. However, in addition to impacting political decisions, civil society also exists to deliver services to the people it represents. To be efficient and effective in refuge management it is necessary to enable CSOs to respond to the evolving needs of all refugees and members of the host communities, including underserved, vulnerable, and marginalized groups. Generally speaking, countries facing migration or refugee crises should apply a multi-stakeholder approach involving local and regional authorities, employers, trade unions, and civil society organizations when developing integration policies to ensure that they correspond to actual needs and circumstances and benefit migrants and refugees in an optimal way (Gautier 2018).

Investment and commitment to localization of the response in Moldova is necessary, with more focus on strengthening relationships, partnerships, and collaboration among local, national, and international organizations. At the same time, the civil society sector is diversifying, with many of the newcomers themselves less open to constructive dialogue and working within the confines of the system. The civil sector remains at the forefront in the defense and promotion of values and refugee management at the EU eastern Border, but its constant and tireless endorsement of values is not without challenges in the present volatile and interdependent national, European, and global contexts.

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