

EU Assistance for Managing Ukrainian Refugees: The Case of Moldova
Dr Steven D. Roper, Florida Atlantic University

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, approximately 515,000 Ukrainian refugees have entered Moldova (UNHCR 2022). On a *per capita* basis, Moldova has one of the highest number of Ukrainian refugee settlements among European countries (1 for every 3.3 citizens). There are three separate EU-based institutions functioning on the Moldovan border tasked with assisting Ukrainian refugees (EUBAM, EUBAM Ukraine and Frontex) while at the same time monitoring for various forms of smuggling. Therefore, this research project sought to identify whether the EU border infrastructure in Moldova created overlapping jurisdictions and operational problems.

In this research project, I relied upon EU reports on attempts at coordinating refugee and anti-smuggling issues among the various EU bodies to examine operational problems. The EU now recognizes that while intertwined, refugee and smuggling efforts need to have different operational foci, and thus the EU launched in July 2022 the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova. The objective of the EU Support Hub is to coordinate support, provide a one-stop-shop for Moldovan authorities, support information sharing and analysis among the EU bodies and identify further needs for border management. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, stated that “[t]he hub will enhance our joint operational action with Moldova to address the challenges posed by organized crime, including the trafficking of firearms or trafficking in human beings.” The interim Executive Director of Frontex, Aija Kalnaja, stated that Moldova was chosen for the Hub “because this is where the trafficking of weapons can come mostly.” Thus, the EU has to some extent separated out these trafficking and smuggling issues from refugee processing and settlement. This is a new EU structure and recognition that organizational mandates needed to be streamlined and centralized. This research will be presented at a human security conference in Sibiu, Romania in October 2022.