



Jesuit Refugee Service Europe



Annual Report 2006

to accompany - to serve - to advocate

Jesuit Refugee Service Europe
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Introduction by the Regional Director for Europe

Migration Debate

Last year, the migration debate was front-page news in Europe reflecting its significance in local and national elections. The number of asylum seekers continued to fall in most EU states, revealing not reductions in the causes of forced migration, but difficulties accessing the European asylum procedures. Border fences are higher, patrols on the Mediterranean Sea and near the Canary Islands have been intensified, and EU-state coordination — on matters such as visa applications, fingerprinting of asylum seekers and their return to the EU state to which they first arrived — have been strengthened. While these policies were aimed at discouraging arrivals, a distressing expression of public xenophobia in Malta emerged. Attacks, widely condemned, were made on the cars and the private property of personnel of JRS.

Refugees and Asylum seekers

In this climate, refugee recognition rates have fallen substantially. As a result of restrictive migration practices, asylum seekers find it harder to access the asylum procedures and arbitrary detention is used as a general deterrent. The number of migrants in administrative detention is a great cause for concern, and a major obstacle to change remains the inaccessibility of reliable data on the number of people in detention, on the places where they are being held and on the conditions under which they will be either removed or released.

Many rejected asylum applicants, still in need of protection, would fear serious human rights abuses if they returned to their countries of origin. Without any economic and social rights, these former asylum seekers find themselves in a state of destitution in a legal 'no mans land'.

Developments

Nevertheless there is growing recognition of the economic and demographic benefits of migration. While most media attention is directed to efforts, airports controls and sea patrols, to reduce irregular entry to the EU, measures have been taken to facilitate the entry of highly educated migrants into the EU. In turn, restrictions are stepped up on migrants with fewer skills. In fact a great number of migrants legally enter the EU as tourists or students and subsequently take up employment without a work-permit. Employment is the major pull factor.

Migrants, both forced and voluntary, continue coming to Europe. The main destination of migrants to Europe is Russia, while Chechen Russians comprise the largest group of Eastern European migrants trying to get to Western Europe. Others, resident in the EU for more than 12 years, principally Bosnians, are encouraged by governments to return to their country of origin.

Old situations are evolving and new circumstances are developing. In Kosovo and its neighbours in the west Balkans region, there is a real risk of further ethnic conflict in the near future. States which until recently were countries of emigration and transit — like Poland, Ukraine and Croatia — have now become countries of destination and migrants remaining in these countries need assistance. Christians are leaving Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and neighbouring areas in bigger numbers than before, and the war in Lebanon has created many civilian victims, on top of the persons, migrants and refugees, of concern to JRS in Beirut.

In the search for durable solutions for refugees throughout the world, many have begun advocating for increased resettlement quotas in the EU. However this has yet to lead to significantly higher numbers of refugees being resettled in Europe.

JRS Europe response

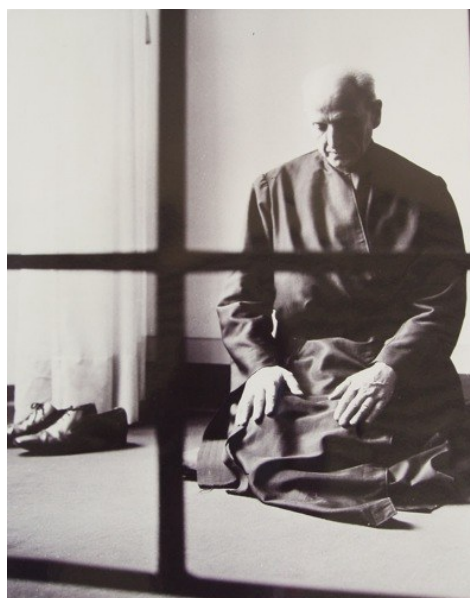
The eleven national offices of JRS continue their work of accompaniment, direct service and advocacy in European countries. Direct services reach large numbers of clients in Italy, where Centro Astalli celebrated its 25 years of existence, and in Portugal. Advocacy is especially well developed in the United Kingdom, Malta and Germany. New contact persons started activities in France and in Sweden. The area of West Balkans (until last year the independent JRS Region of South East Europe, countries of the former Yugoslavia) was reshaped and now resides under the JRS Europe office in Brussels.

The national offices and the regional office in Brussels are cooperating on several common projects: (a) administrative detention, a major focus of JRS Europe over the past four years, (b) destitution among forced migrants and (c) awareness raising by projects aimed at a wider audience, such as a prize for young journalists and the Pedro Arrupe Award for Jesuit schools and other schools linked to the JRS network. The regional office is developing policy positions on Migration and Development and contributes to the debate on the role of faith communities in the field of integration of migrants.

In total there are 116 staff members working for JRS in Europe, the largest teams being in Italy, Portugal, Romania and the Regional Office. Many more invaluable volunteers contribute to the work, with a great majority in Italy.

The work of JRS is made possible by generous donors, most of whom prefer not be mentioned. Among those that we gladly name are the European Commission and the Conference of European Jesuit Provincials.

Jan Stuyt SJ
JRS Europe Director



Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ, founder of
The Jesuit Refugee Service

The Work of the JRS Regional Office

The work of the JRS Europe office in Brussels can be divided into four areas:

- Coordination
- EU policy and JRS advocacy
- Project Development
- Media and Communications

Coordination

Coordination within JRS Europe is enhanced by the Annual General Meeting in October, the meeting of national coordinators in March and country visits by the directors.

The Annual General Meeting is an important event where contact persons and staff from each of the eleven country offices get together. The meeting of 2006 took place in Rodizio, Portugal. At the request of the participants, two days were used for exercises in team building, facilitated by a professional trainer. The national directors used the opportunity for a full day of planning on common projects. JRS Portugal offered several opportunities to get the know its activities in Lisbon and in Porto, including a meeting with representatives of the Portuguese government and IOM (International Organisation for Migration).

Several JRS offices in Europe were in operation for numerous years prior to the establishment of the JRS office in Brussels. This explains the varying styles of work conducted by each national office, and the different kinds of insertion in the social apostolate where they operate. JRS Europe begun investing in projects that take place in several countries only three years ago. This is indicative of the transformation taking place within JRS in Europe, a progression from a loosely connected network to an organisation that makes efforts to take up common policy positions and to have a coordinated approach in the assistance for forced migrants. These common projects are mentioned in the section 'Project Development' below.

The positions of Regional Director and the Assistant Regional Director were filled, as last year, by Fr Jan Stuyt SJ and Br Michael Schöpf SJ respectively. Other staff in Brussels include Isabelle de Sazilly, administrator, Carola Jimenez-Asenjo, project officer and Sr Cornelia Bührle RSCJ, policy officer. This year report was prepared by Ben Holbourn. Volunteers and interns, some of whom are with us for more than one year, offer invaluable assistance and make it possible to explore new fields of research, to administer the accounts, to prepare publications in a timely fashion and ensure that computers keep working. The long term volunteers are: Rik de Gendt SJ, Joseph Poncin, Kupa Mavambu, Lukas Kratochvil, Tvrtko Barun SJ, and Gianluigi Campogrande. The interns in 2006 were Franziska Ebershagen, Nikolaus von Hessler, Anne Klär and Marc Valadao. Two researchers joined JRS Europe in September for the research project on destitute forced migrants: Anne Weernink and Isabel Eitzinger.

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EU Policy and JRS Europe Advocacy

EU asylum and immigration policy and legislation

Asylum and immigration

Under the EU Presidencies of Austria (January – June 2006) and Finland (July – December 2006), EU harmonisation did not advance as far as planned under the Hague Program and its implementing Action Plan (2005 – 2010). While some administrative measures were taken at the level of practical cooperation and technical innovation, the implementation of legislative projects considerably slowed down, either because studies took longer than expected or, as EU officials noted, many EU Member States were and still are behind in the transposition of existing EU Directives. More EU legislation would only add to building up transposition deficits.

In particular the 2005 EU Commission Proposal for a Directive on “Common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals” is still under negotiation between the EU Parliament, the EU Council and the EU Commission. The EU Parliament stresses human rights concerns, including those referring to detention for the purpose of removal, whereas the EU Council maintains a high interest in common procedures facilitating forced return.

Driven by media reports of dramatic arrivals on EU territory in the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands, principally of Africans, the EU and its Member States focused strongly on irregular immigration and the external dimension of asylum and immigration. The EU Commission issued, inter alia, a “Thematic programme for the cooperation with third-countries in the areas of migration and asylum”, a Communication on “Policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals”, a Communication on “The Global approach to migration one year on: Towards a comprehensive European migration policy” and a Communication on “Reinforcing the management of the European Union’s Southern Maritime Border”. All policy efforts are aimed at discouraging new arrivals at EU territory.

Migration and development

At the same time, EU officials at all EU levels, in particular the EU Council, have become fully aware that merely a repressive approach to asylum and immigration is limited in scope and efficiency. Against that background, the EU actively engaged in activities in the newly evolving area labelled “migration and development”, and has begun to seriously consider opening up the European Union’s labour market to temporary guest workers.

Integration

Following the 2005 EU Commission Communication “A common agenda for integration - Framework for the integration of third country nationals in the European Union”, the EU Commission delivered its Second Annual Report on Migration and Integration.

Destitution

However, policy efforts to strengthen the integration of third-country nationals did not prevent the increasing phenomenon of “destitution”. JRS in Europe identified and began to research this new challenge affecting a growing number of third-country nationals who find themselves destitute on the street, often with limited or no right to social support. (See “JRS Europe Projects”).

Personnel and networking

Staff

In order to cope with various issues and challenges in these policy areas, JRS Europe was staffed by one senior advocacy and policy officer, aided to a large extent by the Assistant Regional Director. Seven others worked on a project basis or as interns.

Networking at JRS level

- JRS Europe is a member of the JRS International Advocacy Network, which met in Rome in March 2006 in order to strengthen inter-regional and global cooperation among JRS around the world;
- JRS in Europe held two Regional Coordination meetings, one in Brussels in March and another one at the JRS Europe Annual General Meeting in Portugal (Rodizio) in October;
- JRS Europe fostered and expanded its overseas contacts with JRS offices in Africa.

Networking at external levels

JRS Europe is

- a member of the so-called "Christian Group" in Brussels¹
- a member of the "EU NGO Platform" hosted by the EU Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)²
- a paying member of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE);
- a paying member of the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM).
- a member of the "EU subgroup on asylum" hosted by ECRE
- a member of the "EU subgroup on migration" hosted by Caritas Europa
- a member of an international network "International Coalition on Detention of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants" (www.idcoalition.org)
- a member of a European network "No Minors in Detention" (www.nominorsindetention.org).

JRS Europe fostered existing and created new contacts with

- NGOs operating at national level, in particular in the ten new EU Member States
- Academic institutions
- Research institutes.

JRS Europe staff member Cornelia Bührle is a member of the ComECE working group on migration, a member of the Board of the Association of Catholic development cooperation agencies in Germany (KZE), a member of the Advisory Council of MISEREOR as well as a Councillor of the Governing Committee of the International Catholic Migration Commission and of the German Episcopal Commission for Migration.

JRS Europe advocacy priorities

Administrative detention of asylum seekers and irregular immigrants

Administrative detention, the prison-like deprivation of the liberty of movement of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, was the focus of JRS Europe over the last year. This priority has been particularly relevant in the context of the 2005 EU Commission Proposal for a Directive on "Common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals", which deals with administrative detention of irregular migrants ("temporary custody for the purpose of removal"). The JRS Europe website www.detention-in-europe.org is the only one of its kind in Europe, well known and appreciated all over Europe and beyond.

JRS Europe has developed positions and recommendations, among which:

¹ consisting of Caritas Europa, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (ComECE), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

² *inter alia*: Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

- It urges European countries to avoid the use of detention, or at least to
 - provide for a time limit of detention and
 - ensure a minimum of rights of people being detained, concerning, for example, the right to be visited, the right to health care and the protection of minors and families.
- It asks the EU to set up an EU body, which monitors and periodically reports on the development of national legislation on detention and detention practices in the EU Member States as well as in the EU Candidate Countries and their non-EU neighbouring countries.

EU return policy

In the overall context of the 2005 EU Commission Proposal for a Directive on “Common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals”, JRS Europe focused on

- the scope of this future Directive, in particular its applicability in transit and waiting zones
- the priority of voluntary return over forced removal
- conditions of return.

Migration and development

In the context of evolving political discourses on “migration and development”, JRS Europe developed and advocated the following policy recommendations:

- A rights-based approach to managing migration should ensure respect for each individual’s right to development and human rights, specifically economic and social rights. At the same time a rights-based approach should be viewed as a means of enabling people to contribute to development in host societies and return societies.
- Forcibly displaced populations should be included in national development plans, and development assistance to countries should target host areas. The development needs of host communities, as well as of return communities, should also be taken into account.
- Development assistance for forcibly displaced populations prepare people for one of the three durable solutions and should include access to education and vocational training that give people the necessary skills to rebuild their livelihoods and communities.
- Earlier and more targeted development assistance to post-conflict areas that would help rebuild infrastructure and ensure that returnees are returning with the necessary skills and resources to rebuild their livelihoods, and thus contribute to the development of the area.

JRS Europe policy and advocacy activities

Administrative detention of asylum seekers and irregular immigrants

JRS Europe fostered its contacts with political decision-makers at EU level and established new contacts, in particular with the upcoming EU Presidencies of

- Germany (January – June 2007) and Portugal (July – December 2007).

Looking towards the German EU Presidency (2007), JRS Europe conducted comparative research on the rights of detained irregular migrants and convicted criminals in Germany, which turned out to be very helpful within the frame of the 2005 EU Commission Proposal for a Directive on “Common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals”.

JRS Europe staff delivered a number of speeches all over Europe, in particular on administrative detention.

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, JRS Europe organised a Matinee on EU asylum and

return policy for journalists, which was also attended by EU officials. The event took place in the Brussels international press centre “Residence Palace” on the eve of World Refugee Day. Two former detainees spoke, alongside Professor Dr. Anton van Kalmthout from Tilburg University and member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture/CPT (Council of Europe) and Dr. Daphné Bouteillet-Paquet from the EU Office of Amnesty International. The Matinee focused on the question “How much does administrative detention (forcible return) cost?”

EU return policy

JRS Europe was consulted by several EU Parliament rapporteurs for the 2005 EU Commission Proposal for a Directive on “Common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals” and could make highly appreciated policy and legal input.

Supported by Jesuits in Spain, and in the context of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, JRS Europe made a visit to Morocco.

Migration and development

JRS Europe

- prepared and delivered a researched JRS statement at the interactive NGO-hearing of the United Nations High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in New York in September 2006
- created and deepened personal contacts with
 - relevant actors at EU level, in particular with Members of the European Parliament, Representatives of the EU Commission, Permanent Representations of the EU Member States and staff of high level think-tanks based in Brussels
 - catholic development cooperation agencies
 - specialised research institutes.

JRS Europe established an informal partnership with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and MISEREOR, a large German development cooperation agency.

JRS Europe contributed to a number of joint letters and comments, *inter alia*:

- Comments on the EU Commission Communication presenting “A common agenda for integration framework for the integration of third-country nationals in the EU”
- Comments on the EU Commission Proposal for a “Directive on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals”
- Comments on the EU Commission Communication “Migration and Development: Some concrete orientations”
- Comments on the EU Commission Communication on “Policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals”, COM (2006) 402 final.

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Project Development

Advocacy oriented projects

The focus of JRS Europe's advocacy projects remained on the administration detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants.

Foreign prisoners in European penitentiary institutions

JRS Europe finalised its research on administrative detention at EU policy and EU legislative level. This was part of a legal research project led by the Law Faculty of the University of Tilburg (The Netherlands), funded by the EU Commission and carried out in the 25 EU Member States. The project analysed and compared the situation of criminal detention of foreign criminal prisoners with administrative detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. It covered national legislation as well as living conditions. The outcome of the research project showed that foreign prisoners are legally, physically and psychosocially better off than detained asylum seekers and irregular migrants.

www.foreignersinprison.eu

Actions in support of civil society in the ten new EU Member States

With the support of JRS Europe, and in response to a Call for Proposals from the EU Commission, JRS Malta submitted a project to the EU Commission focusing on detention conditions and national legislation on detention in the ten new (2004) EU Member States. The EU Commission approved the project, which is co-financed by RENOVABIS. It is being implemented in 2007 and involves 13 organisations, including JRS Europe.

www.detention-in-europe.org

This focus was complemented by advocacy work for a new group of persons of concern to JRS Europe: the growing number of third-country nationals connected to the asylum system that live in situations of destitution.

Learning how to integrate destitute migrants who are connected to the asylum system

With the financial support of the Network of European Foundations (NEF) and through their European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM), JRS Europe designed a study to research the link between migration policies and situations of destitution, focusing upon persons who are or were previously connected to the asylum system. The study began in September 2006 and was carried out in 10 European countries. It aimed at discovering comparisons which would help JRS Europe advocate on behalf of one of the neediest and most marginalised groups of forced migrants in Europe. The final results are expected in May 2007.

www.jrseurope.org/EPIM/intro.htm

Professional development project

JRS Europe dedicated the main area of the Regional Coordination Meeting in March 2006 to the development of common projects that serve the policy and advocacy work, but also the needs of staff and volunteers in the JRS country offices in Europe. Besides research for new advocacy work on destitution, country offices suggested a mutual support mechanism for detention visitors.

Detention Visitors Support Group

This project brings together staff and volunteers who regularly visit detainees in closed centres across Europe. The project includes an initial phase of a 4-day seminar with opportunities for professional exchange, reflection, and specialised training. It is complemented by a website and an intranet that will allow on-going support on cases and issues for which confidentiality needs to be assured. JRS Europe completed the design and planning of this project in 2006 and is implementing it in 2007.

Awareness raising projects

JRS Europe runs two awareness raising projects which are initiated alternately every other year.

Pedro Arrupe Award

The Pedro Arrupe Award is an education project for students in European schools. It aims to promote understanding of and tolerance for refugees and forced migrants among young people by engaging them creatively in the issues. Winners come from three age categories. The edition 2006/2007 features a new website and enhanced background materials.

www.jrseurope.org/pedroarrupe-award

Competition for student journalists

JRS Europe completed the first edition of a competition for student journalists that intended to familiarise aspiring journalists to the experiences and the plight of refugees and forced migrants. An award ceremony for the winner and the two runners-up was held in the European Parliament in Brussels on 19 April. For more details see section 'Media and Communications'.

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Media and Communications

In 2006 JRS Europe continued to draw attention to the plight of refugees and asylum seekers with press events, competitions, publications and improving its online media. Using its 'bottom-up' approach, JRS based much of its media work on the information and expertise gained from its 11 national offices and 12 national contacts throughout Europe.

In 2006 Media Officers were Alice Kennedy until May and Ben Holbourn thereafter. They were assisted in their work part-time by Rik de Gendt SJ (journalist) and Lukas Kratochvil (web designer), and from September by Tvrtko Barun SJ.

This year saw the completion of the first edition of one new awareness-raising project – the competition for student journalists – and the initiation of the second edition of another – the Pedro Arrupe Award 2006-07. Both of these projects focus on challenging young people to investigate and draw attention to the frequently overlooked issues concerning refugees and asylum seekers in Europe.

With particular support from ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), IFJ (International Federation of Journalists) and Online/More Colours in the Media, the competition for student journalists culminated in an award ceremony at the European Parliament, Brussels, 19th April. The award had invited aspiring journalists to investigate and report on the reality behind the headlines in European-wide media. The competition received coverage in British, Italian, German, Belgian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Zimbabwean press, online and in print.

The launch of the Pedro Arrupe Award 2006-07 (see 'Projects', above) was accompanied by a new website, posters, brochures, information leaflets and a DVD school resource, all designed to bring refugee stories into the classroom, so that pupils could design projects demonstrating the importance of tolerance and understanding.

In cooperation with Amnesty International and Tilburg University, JRS held an event in Brussels on the eve of World Refugee Day about detention. Ex-detainees were invited to speak to journalists about the realities of being detained in centres in Europe, and shared their experiences alongside factual presentations on detention costs. It was a rare chance for direct engagement between the press and individuals with a personal experience of detention, and as such generated press coverage in *De Standaard*, *Europolitics*, *Radio Nederland Wereldomroep*, and German Press Agency (DPA). Additionally it helped JRS Europe to establish new press contacts.

JRS Europe's ongoing Detention in Europe campaign continued to provide a platform for awareness raising. Sr. Cornelia Bührle, JRS' specialist on detention in Europe, was invited to assist in the creation of a series of articles in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In September a Czech television crew visited the office and interviewed Sr. Bührle for a documentary on 'Solidarity' among refugees and asylum seekers.

The bi-monthly newsletter gave friends and donors an overview of JRS' work in Europe, and of the challenges facing refugees and asylum seekers. The monthly internal bulletin *Progrès* helped to encourage information- and good practice-sharing among JRS workers.

Finally a consolidation of JRS' online media was undertaken, aiming to provide a more consistent image of JRS' work. The new Accompany Detainees website – a mini website for the Accompany Detainees Project (see Annual Report 2005) – was added to the main website and then this was aligned more closely with JRS International's website. Towards the end of the year, the development of a new Detention in Europe website began. Helping to maintain the momentum of JRS' focus on detention, it also incorporated a new project providing support for persons visiting detention centres (see 'Project Development', above).

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Country Reports

National Offices and Contact Persons



Image from http://europa.eu/abc/maps/index_en.htm.

Belgium



- Number of asylum applications: 10,534 (2005: 15,957; 2003: 16,940; 2002: 18,805; 2001: 24,549; 2000: 42,691)
- Top 5 countries of origin: Russia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Serbia, Iraq and Iran.

Political developments

The detention of children was a growing issue in Belgium: more than 70 children (mostly accompanied) were detained on a daily basis during the year. At the end of May the government announced an end to this, and in December a new law was voted on creating an “observation and orientation” centre. Unaccompanied minors should be placed in a new open centre for a maximum of 5 weeks to determine their status. Meanwhile, the Minister of Internal Affairs ordered an independent study to find alternatives to the detention of families with children.

Particularly important in this respect was the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling against Belgium for the illegal detention and removal of one child from Belgium to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Tabitha arrived in Belgium in 2002, aged five, was detained upon arrival and held for two months in a detention centre with adults. Subsequently refused asylum, she was removed two months later, despite a court decision ordering her immediate release. The court found the Belgian government in breach of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman treatment) and Article 8 (right to respect of private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights. It awarded the applicant just under 50,000 euros compensation.

Based on this landmark decision, three organisations lodged a complaint in December against ‘X’ concerning the detention of minors in detention centres in Belgium. Specifically it was against arbitrary detention, disrespect for children, disrespect for the obligation of school attendance, inflicting inhuman or degrading treatment, and interference in private and family life.

In May, the Minister of Interior presented his project for reform of the immigration law in the Parliament. This reform included positive points such as simplification of the asylum procedure and introduction of a subsidiary protection status, but also worrying proposals such as the introduction of new possibilities to detain asylum seekers from the very beginning of their procedure.

JRS Activities

Detention

JRS Belgium’s priority remained the accompaniment of and advocacy for asylum seekers and migrants detained in closed centres. In 2006, five persons were involved in regular visits to detainees in the five detention centres in the country. The main tasks were listening, giving

moral support and legal counselling and making contact with lawyers and family. This regular presence made it possible to monitor the global situation and to advocate for the detainees at various levels, including that of political decision makers. The work was done in close partnership with other NGOs.

In 2006 JRS in particular:

- Took part in the writing of a report on the problems of detention in Belgium. The report was written together with other NGOs active in the field of detention and was based on the information received during visits to detention centres. It focused on two topics: health problems (physical as well as mental problems) and violence during removal, and it received wide media attention.
- Together with other NGOs there was a national public awareness raising campaign on detention: (www.ouvrons-les-yeux.be, www.open-je-ogen.be).
- JRS Belgium took part in the Refugee Stories Project organised by ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles) which aimed to give a voice to asylum seekers. JRS Belgium focused on detention, and collected several stories.

Unaccompanied Minors

Although the staff member who worked in 2005 as a guardian for three unaccompanied minors stopped his activities, JRS Belgium remained active as a member of the NGO platform "*Mineurs en Exil*" that works as a watchdog and a think-tank on all policies and practices relating to unaccompanied minors.

Staff news

The JRS Belgium office in Brussels was staffed by three persons. Along with a person responsible for the detention project and an administrator, Marc-André Peltzer replaced Christophe Renders SJ as director, who left temporarily. Two Jesuits visited closed centres once a week as volunteers. Other volunteers helped with office work and individual visits to detainees.



Photograph by Alexandre Dimitrov and CIRE
(Coordination et Initiatives pour et avec les Réfugiés et Étrangers)

Germany



Political developments

For some years there has been a discussion about immigrants who are neither granted a residence permit nor can be removed. Approximately 100,000 people have been living up to ten years in Germany with only a temporary suspension of removal ("Duldung"). The Residence Act, which came into force in January 2005, did not solve this problem. In November 2006 the Conference of the Home Secretaries of the German "Länder" and the Federal Minister for Home Affairs published a decision concerning a small number of those who had lived in Germany for a long time. Subsequently they may receive a residence permit, but strict criteria include a duration of stay of at least eight years (for individuals and spouses without children) or six years (for families with children), non-dependence on social benefits, and knowledge of the German language. Experts predict only a minority will be able to meet these requirements.

JRS Activities

Detention

After ten years campaigning, JRS managed to obtain a room specifically as a chapel for detainees in the Berlin-Köpenick detention centre. In the detention centre in Brandenburg, JRS continued to provide pastoral care for a diminishing number of detainees.

Approximately 20,000 Euros were raised for a legal aid fund to provide for lawyers to take on 61 cases. By the end of the year, half of these detainees had been released.

At a press conference in May, JRS published a report on the measures of improvement in the situation of detainees awaiting removal, together with an action group comprised of the archbishop of Berlin, church institutions and secular organisations. The report advised that many improvements were needed, despite some positive developments.

On 18th of May, JRS co-organised a study day on detention for people pending removal at the Catholic University for Applied Science (Social Work) in Munich. It focused on the massive increase in restrictions of liberty in Bavarian detention centres, including a potential 18-month pre-removal period, no phone access to lawyers or families, visiting times of two hours per month, and a lack of legal help; there is no institutionalised public legal assistance and detainees themselves cannot normally afford assistance. 170 participants attended the day, as well as high-level presenters of NGOs including Barbara Lochbihler, Secretary General of Amnesty International Germany.

Wolfgang Kreissl-Doerfler, Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on the Asylum Procedure Directive, visited the prison in Munich Stadelheim. His assistant made a visit to the Berlin-Köpenick detention centre. Both visits were facilitated by JRS Germany.

Undocumented migration

On 19th of February, the JRS Germany director reported to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Mr. Vernor Muñoz, about the right to education for undocumented young people. Access to the education system for undocumented migrants remains an ongoing issue. The Grand Coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats on federal level requested the federal government review the situation of undocumented migrants in Germany. In Hamburg a central register was set up with data on all pupils attending school there, which can be accessed by immigration services. In Hessen the Ministry for Education sent a letter to all public schools informing them that undocumented children did not have a right to go to school.

Hardship commission

The commission for hardship cases in Berlin, of which the JRS Germany Director was appointed a member, decided on 403 cases. The JRS team filed 41 applications. In 273 cases the commission recommended that the Berlin Home Secretary issue a humanitarian residence status. This was granted in 157 cases. Out of 50 applications filed by representatives of the Church, 15 cases were decided in favour of the applicants.

Staff news

In May director Br Dieter Müller SJ left after 7 years service. He was replaced by another Jesuit. Two Jesuits and a policy officer work full-time for the JRS Germany Berlin office, and two other Jesuits work part-time in Munich. Several volunteers visit detention centres in Berlin and Munich.



The inauguration of a new chapel for detainees at Berlin-Köpenick

Ireland



Political Developments

During 2006, the number of asylum applications levelled out, following a significant reduction in asylum claims over the previous three years. Having peaked in 2002 at 11,634, there were 4,314 applications for this year, and 4,323 in 2005. The Government continued policies of detaining and removing asylum seekers whose application had failed. By the end of December, 302 people had been removed (although 1,566 removal orders had been signed in the year) and there had been 227 voluntary repatriations.

Figures for the total number of people detained in the year under immigration provisions were not yet available. In 2005, 860 people were detained, compared to 946 in 2004. Noteworthy is the decrease in the average duration of detention which occurred, with 19 people detained for longer than 50 days in 2005, compared to 70 in 2004.

In September the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform published the proposal for the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill. The proposed Bill set out comprehensive statutory procedures for the various stages of the immigration process: visas, entry to the State, protection, residence permits and their terms and conditions, and the process of removal. It proposed a single streamlined asylum and pre-removal examinations process.

JRS Activities

In August a fulltime Country Director was appointed to JRS Ireland. A new head office is being located in Limerick, and JRS applied to be established as a charitable trust.

Integration and outreach

JRS continued to develop its integration project, Community Links, aimed at refugees and individuals in inner city Dublin with leave to remain. More than 600 people were supported through the project in 2006, and it was significantly boosted by a successful application for multi-annual funding from the European Refugee Fund 2005-07.

A School Integration programme dealt with queries, provided translations for refugee and migrant parents, engaged parents in Community Links activities and raised awareness in ten schools, 15 adult community centres in Dublin and 23 Sister of Charity schools throughout the country.

JRS continued its outreach and psychosocial support service to women detained under immigration provisions in Mountjoy Women's Prison. A follow-up service for women after their release from detention was provided. A project worker visited reception and accommodation centres for asylum seekers in Dublin.

Capacity building and education

Under the Capacity Building programme a new series of training courses were run throughout the year, including Positive Parenting, CV Preparation, Interview Skills and Intercultural Communication. A training course on the Roles and Responsibilities of Board / Management Committee Members was designed and implemented for refugee-led community groups.

JRS expanded its language services: three initiatives were started involving one-to-one tutoring in the English language for asylum seekers and refugees with teenage students in Belvedere College, Dublin, and in the Hatch Hall reception centre. Additionally it developed a school resource folder containing country data on the main migrant countries of origin and letter templates in ten languages for communication between parents and teachers.

Intercultural activities and awareness raising

JRS held a series of intercultural events and activities intended to lessen the isolation of asylum and refugee families, facilitate interaction and bonding between participants and enable them to learn more about different cultures and communities living in Dublin. These included a World Refugee Day Open Forum and a film forum entitled 'Understanding Ireland'. There was an enhanced summer programme of sports activities and outings, well attended by both migrant and local families. An Intercultural and Interfaith Calendar for 2007 was published and is being circulated widely.

Awareness raising activities in schools included a 'Linking Communities' Story, a picture competition in primary and secondary schools, support to Jesuit schools in Ireland entering the JRS Pedro Arrupe Award and presentations on refugee issues.



Community Links staff at a forum for International Women's Day 2006

Italy - Centro Astalli



Political developments

Throughout 2006 the right to asylum in Italy was regulated by the so-called “Bossi-Fini” Law, implemented as of April 2005. The most important change in the system was the establishment of seven territorial Commissions, replacing the Central Commission once located in Rome. Consequently the time needed for the examination of an application was reduced from 15-18 months to around 1-2 months.

However there was also the creation of some closed centres (called Identification Centres), where asylum seekers have to stay during the period needed for examination of their application by the territorial Commission. These centres were supposed to be different from the Detention Centres for irregular immigrants (CPT - Centri di Permanenza Temporanea), but in fact the Identification Centres are sometimes placed in the same area (or within) the CPT. From summer 2006, on request of the Interior Ministry, a process of inspection and monitoring the conditions of irregular migrants in detention began. A commission of experts, representatives of NGOs and journalists visited all the CPTs and Identification Centres, and a report was made.

JRS activities

JRS in Italy comprises of 39 staff, mainly in Rome with smaller offices in Catania and Palermo, and around 500 volunteers who work in the numerous projects.

Public awareness

The Centro Astalli Foundation, the name under which JRS operates in Italy, keeps working to promote public awareness on the topics of immigration and asylum right. Two school projects were offered to students in several Italian towns: “Finestre - Storie di Rifugiati”, on asylum rights and integration and “Incontri”, on the knowledge of different religions and interfaith dialogue. A training course for volunteers on the rights of migrants in Italy (“I diritti non sono stranieri”) in Rome was attended by more than 120 people between March and May.

In December JRS Italy celebrated 25 years of activity with a public conference on migration in The Gregorian University, Rome and a concert in the Church of Sant’Ignazio. A video was produced for the occasion, where the most significant steps of Centro Astalli’s story were recalled.

Assistance and integration

JRS works with other associations on the assistance and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in several Italian towns. In 2006 a new building called “Casetta Bianca” (Little White House) was created in Trento in collaboration with the Sant’Ignazio cooperative. It welcomes 18 people (families and individuals) and it is directed by a refugee who has worked for several years for JRS Italy in Rome. This centre offers a place of shelter and rest, as well as social assistance to help begin integration into society.

An important agreement was signed between Centro Astalli and the Local Public Health Office in Rome. From 2007 Centro Astalli staff will be present every morning in the office of the Sanitary

District to facilitate the access of asylum seekers and refugees to public services. The objective of the project is to help the public service staff (doctors, reception, administration) to become familiar with the need of this specific target group.

In Palermo, different kinds of services were offered to immigrants, mostly irregular migrants: health assistance (including screening service and orientation) and legal assistance are offered on a regular base. There was also a school for Italian language learning and other training courses.

Legal staff from Centro Astalli Rome were present once a week in the detention centre of Ponte Galeria to offer advice to detainees, in agreement with the Red Cross, which is running the structure.

Child fostering

In Rome, a new project was started in the same building of the Pedro Arrupe Centre. "La casa di Marco" is a small building for child fostering, run in collaboration with the local Social Service. The focus group is foreign children aged 0 – 10 who cannot live with their own family. They stay in the house for a certain time before moving to their permanent residence. Thus they have the opportunity to live in a small community, formed by Centro Astalli staff and supported by a team of experts.

Office expansion

Centro Astalli Catania is growing very quickly with projects and services answering to the needs of many migrants in Sicily, and a new accommodation structure was created there. The Social and Health Counter offers primary health assistance and helps the users to access the different structures of the territory. This project was created in collaboration with Centro Astalli Palermo and financed by the Sicily Region.



Photograph by Claudio Lombardi

Malta



Political developments

This year saw no significant changes in the political situation. On the contrary, one could notice a growing acceptance of the current situation, and a certain weariness to discuss it further. The two main political parties were in basic agreement on migration and detention policy.

During the year, the Maltese government tried its best to bring migration and the plight of Malta to the centre stage of the EU political discussion. As a result, some EU states accepted some migrants from Malta to resettle in their countries, but the numbers involved, ranging from ten to 30, suggested that these were little more than token gestures rather than the effective burden sharing that Malta is seeking.

Another important event on this level was the visit by the Civil Liberties Committee of the European Parliament. Their report on the migration situation and the detention policy in Malta was discussed by the whole Parliament, and the ensuing motion expressed understanding of the difficult situation Malta is facing, even calling for Malta to be granted a derogation from the obligations of Dublin II. But it went on to say that the European Parliament “deplores, nevertheless, the unacceptable living conditions of the migrants and asylum seekers in Malta’s administrative detention centres, and calls on the Maltese authorities to reduce substantially the length of time migrants are held”. Unfortunately, no such changes seem in sight.

On the domestic front, the anti-immigrant lobby became more vociferous and organised, although an anti-immigrant demonstration held in June in the capital city was considered to have been a failure. Yet this year was unfortunately characterised by various serious acts of violence against people clearly linked to the pro-immigrant and anti-racist camp: seven cars of the Jesuit college community, where the JRS offices are housed, were set on fire in March, and early in April the car and the door of the house of the JRS Assistant Director were burnt during the night. Two prominent journalists were targeted during the following months. There was universal condemnation of this violence, but no one to date has been charged with these crimes.

JRS activities

Legal assistance

JRS is the only NGO offering services to people in detention. Other church NGOs focus mostly on those who have been released.

Through ERF (European Refugee Fund) II part-funding for the legal assistance project, a second full-time lawyer and two part-time legal assistants were added to the staff. As a result, JRS could offer legal assistance to a greater number of asylum seekers, besides more training opportunities to law practitioners and students. During the year the office developed its team approach, with regular meetings to elaborate methodology and to discuss particular cases.

Awareness raising

An awareness raising campaign in schools and other community centres went into its third year, and 46 schools and other groups were visited during the academic year. Moreover, at the beginning of this academic year, the Director General of the Education Division wrote a circular to all schools encouraging them to participate in the campaign.

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, with the help of other organisations, JRS published a full page advert in the widest circulating national newspaper on 'The plight of migrants, a challenge to our faith and hope'. Together with a local foundation for the education of journalists, a three day seminar was organised in October on migration issues and the media.

Pastoral work

An important aspect of JRS' work in Malta is the pastoral work for around 1400 people in the detention centres: with the help of a small group of dedicated Jesuits, weekly masses were held for the different groups of detainees. The high point was reached on Christmas night and Christmas Day, when it was possible to have mass for all the Christians detained.



Training seminar on the European Convention of Human Rights and the protection of asylum seekers, December 2006

Portugal



Political Developments

Previously an emigration country, Portugal has recently become an immigration country. This shift is a huge challenge to its ability to welcome and integrate those who choose to live there.

Several important political changes in respect of the immigration population occurred in Portugal in the last quarter of 2006. The amendments to the Nationality Law permitted any immigrant who has lived legally in Portugal for the last six years to have access to Portuguese nationality. A new Immigration Act and an integration plan for immigrants is under preparation to put an end to the existing flaws and to build means of promoting better integration of immigrants into Portuguese society.

JRS Activities

In 2006 JRS supported around 5,200 people. As in 2005, the majority of JRS' beneficiaries were immigrants from Eastern Europe, namely Ukrainian, Moldovan and Russian, from Portuguese-speaking African Countries (Angola, Guinea, etc.) and from Brazil. The JRS team was composed of around 80 people, 16 of which worked within JRS projects, with others contributing as volunteers and trainees.

Practical assistance

After years of negotiations, the Pedro Arrupe Centre opened in Lisbon in May. The centre hosts up to 18 men and 7 women who are in humanitarian need. By the end of the year around 60 people had been supported by this centre, mostly with housing, food, employment support, medical aid, occupational activities, and Portuguese language courses.

The social aid office assisted around 200 immigrants with various problems such as alcohol abuse, homelessness and health, and occasionally provided support in other areas: voluntary repatriations and visits to imprisoned and hospitalised immigrants. It also helped to establish a partnership between JRS and the refectory of The Sisters of S. Vicente de Paulo, which provided simple food for around 110 immigrants on a daily basis.

Legal advice was available either through one volunteer lawyer, who made around 140 consultations, or through the Local Centre for Immigrant Support (C.L.A.I.) which JRS set up through a partnership with a government agency. This centre gave advice to around 800 people.

84 patients attended the medical aid office during the year. This office intends not to substitute the Portuguese Health System, but rather to support those immigrants whose access to the health system is more difficult, such as the destitute.

Integration

JRS ran several programmes aimed at the smooth integration of immigrants and refugees into Portuguese life. Around 1,500 interviews were conducted with immigrants searching for work. Volunteers and trainees in the office served as intermediaries between employers and immigrants in search of work. Over 45 migrant nurses successfully participated in the recognition of qualifications for nurses project. These migrants, who saw their qualifications recognised in 2005, were placed in hospitals or health community centres. Another 140 students studied in the Portuguese and citizenship courses provided by JRS.

Assistance at the temporary installation centre

UHSA (Unidade Habitacional de Santo António) is a temporary installation centre in Porto, managed by the Border and Alien Service, for irregular migrants who receive a removal order from Portuguese territory. In a Memorandum of Understanding signed in February between the Interior Ministry, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and JRS, a commission of monitoring and evaluation was formed.

Through this agreement JRS Portugal provides the social follow-up of immigrant citizens during their stay in the UHSA Porto, identifies later vulnerable cases and maintains the social team which provides varying support during the period of stay in the centre. A chaplain and a group of visitors, including cultural mediators, make regular visits.

Awareness Raising

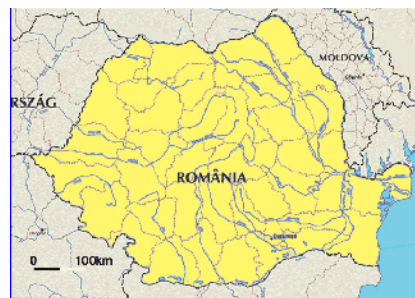
During the school year (2006/2007), the project 'Welcome to our country' was implemented in around 20 schools. The main objectives of the project were to encourage positive attitudes and community building in order to support better integration, to raise awareness of migrant issues and encourage reflection about them within the school community.

JRS also participated in several debates and conferences and occasionally in events promoted by the printed media, radio and television. A quarterly newsletter was distributed to about 1,800 people.



Immigrant nurses on an integration project successfully placed in employment

Romania



Political developments

The Romanian Government continued to adopt new standards and good practices in order to harmonise the asylum and immigration system with the EU recommendations and guidelines. In the final report on the Romania accession to the EU, the EU Commission requested special attention to the reform of the Justice System regarding anti-corruption measures, the monitoring of borders, the reform of public administration and measures to ensure economic competition.

Regarding Migration and Asylum policy, the Romanian Government adopted the following measures:

- i) A new law for the Asylum procedure and system, establishing the protection of people who can prove they are threatened with serious persecution in their home country;
- ii) Updating the national strategy on migration, including the integrated management of borders for 2006-2009 and the implementation of criteria of the Schengen Accord (border control, removal to country of origin and readmission to Romanian territory);
- iii) The refugee authority published a first report on the social and professional integration of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection in local society (June 2006). The period covered by this report was 1995-2005;
- iv) Improved capacity and quality of conditions in the reception centres and a new centre opened at the Romania / Ukraine border.

JRS Activities

The number of refugees, asylum seekers and other forced migrants in Romania decreased over the past year. There were around 560 beneficiaries of JRS projects in the country, both families and individuals.

JRS Romania obtained the Accreditation certificate for NGOs providing social services in Romania, which is required by the State.

JRS Romania went through a needs-assessment process in spring 2006, for which beneficiaries and staff members were consulted. Sister Maeve Shannon FCJ stepped down as team leader after more than two years of devoted service.

Social and Psychosocial Projects

The JRS Psychosocial Project accompanied and counselled people in the detention and reception centres, as well as those housed in the Pedro Arrupe Centre, JRS protected Apartments and in private houses. With support from Renovabis and the Irish Jesuit Province, a support programme in these centres was run to offer basic provisions to the least privileged,

including food, clothing, medicine and means of communication with family or close friends. 381 people benefited from the project (with over 1,000 individual and small group counselling sessions and over 700 basic practical assistance kits distributed).

Accommodation

JRS Romania focused on providing the basis for individual self-sufficiency, by helping migrants take responsibility for their future rather than becoming dependent on JRS services. The JRS Social Accommodation Centre is unique in Romania, since it deals with the most vulnerable of migrants: 'rejected' asylum seekers and 'tolerated' persons, who would otherwise be on the streets.

The social accommodation project with its social dormitory enhanced its role. Thanks to adding funding, improvements were made to the dormitory, with the result that it could offer temporary accommodation for a maximum period of six months to 16 men. 64 people used this as shelter this year. The Social Apartments, part of the same project, can house 16 people. 29 persons in total (families and single women) were housed here in 2006.

Education and cultural integration

The Education and Integration Project continued to offer Romanian and English language courses given by volunteers, and computer courses taught by staff. Approximately 250 persons attended in total, the majority being men. Additionally scholarships for university studies were offered to three students.

A number of cultural events were held, including an exhibition of sculpture and JRS photos to illustrate the ten years experience of JRS Romania, and a picnic organised to mark World Refugee Day, at which about 100 people took part. At the end of the year, JRS Romania started to implement a small project on African percussion music training, with the intention of promoting the values of African culture and dispelling negative feelings accumulated through exile.

As a common activity with the JRS Europe network, JRS Romania in December translated and published in Romanian the JRS Europe training manual for visitors to Detention and Reception Centres.



Sharing in diversity – football team from JRS Romania

Slovenia



Political developments

Slovenia became a full member of the EU in 2004 and on the 1st of January 2007 accepted the Euro currency. It will enter the 'Schengen' zone by the end of 2007. For many, Slovenia is no longer just a transition country on the way to other parts of the EU. These socio-economic and political changes now make it a country where many refugees, migrants and asylum seekers would like to stay permanently. This is especially true for many asylum seekers from the former ex-Yugoslavia, who are still the majority.

There are other significant situations in the region: the status of Kosovo is not yet resolved – hopefully it will be in 2007; Montenegro received independence in 2006; the countries in the West Balkans entered into partnership with NATO. This will greatly contribute to stability in the region on the way to integrating these countries into the EU, and result in fewer people wishing to leave the region.

According to official government figures for 2005, there were 1,674 asylum seekers in Slovenia. By the end of October 2006 the number had fallen to 441. Refugee status was granted to eight people, and by the end of the year there were 119 refugees (74 men, 45 women) in Slovenia. 65 refugees were from the (old) state of Serbia and Montenegro (mainly from Kosovo), nine from Bosnia and Herzegovina, seven from Iran and The Russian Federation, five from Sierra Leone, four from Iraq and Gruzia (Georgia), and three from Macedonia.

The Slovenian government accepted a new asylum law which harmonised with certain EU minimum standards. A coalition of NGOs, of which JRS is part, attempted to influence the debate on this law, considering it to be too stringent. However in January 2007 it was announced that a new asylum law will be framed to encompass all the EU directives.

JRS activities

Social and volunteer work

JRS put much emphasis on training volunteers; 15 persons completed the training programme. In the academic year September 2005 to June 2006 four seminars were organised for volunteers working in the open centre (Ljubljana) and the detention centre (Postojna). Besides these seminars, the volunteers had regular monthly meetings dealing with different issues encountered in their work.

JRS visited the detention centre once a week with volunteers until June, then twice a week from October onwards. The number of detainees varied, but there were approximately 50 people present. Accompaniment was the focus: talking to detainees, socialising and playing with the children.

A social worker, together with volunteers, visited people living in the open centre, organising different workshops and programmes for families, women and children three times per week. She led a creative workshop for 10-15 people, and a cultural activities workshop which included

watching and discussing a film. The volunteers, with the social worker, helped eight children in their education process for schools. Workshops for men were equally well attended. On 5th of December, a ceremony was prepared where gifts for 50 children were given, trying to ease the burden of being in the open centre.

JRS also led a week-long holiday in August in Portorož for 25 women and children from the open centre. For many of them it was their first visit to the sea and they were thrilled with the chance to be outside the centre.

Awareness raising

JRS broadcast a radio programme every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month entitled 'Building a more Open Society'. This takes place at the Catholic radio station Radio Ognjišče, Ljubljana. The radio show emphasises support for refugee and migration issues.

Education

In 2006, JRS Slovenia organised four computer courses with 30 participants in the JRS computer room, based in the St. Joseph Jesuit spiritual center in Ljubljana. These classes were offered for asylum seekers and refugees as an aid to for integration into Slovenian society.



Training seminar for volunteers who visit detainees

United Kingdom



Political Developments

2006 was another period of policy change and hardening of attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. More legislation passed through Parliament: The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 – the sixth major piece of legislation on this issue in 13 years – with the prospect of more legislation during 2007, including increased border controls and greater penalties for illegal working. In addition many policy changes were imminent, including:

Reducing access to legal aid (by reducing public funding for legal advice). Funding for free legal advice for asylum seekers has already been reduced significantly in the past few years, creating legal advice ‘deserts’ in the UK, where it is impossible even to get immigration advice, let alone do so within the time limits stipulated by legislation for submitting asylum applications.

Asylum seekers ineligible for free English language tuition. Free tuition will only be automatically given to those claiming income-based benefits or seeking work. Asylum seekers in the UK are mostly not allowed to work and do not receive income-based benefits.

Projects and Activities

Detainees

Outreach to asylum seekers in detention increased during this year. The JRS outreach worker visiting detainees has been building up a small team of volunteer detention visitors, totalling five by the end of the year, each visiting weekly. A Catholic chaplain is present at Colnbrook and Harmondsworth detention centres. In this way, JRS is able to give support to especially vulnerable detainees by following up with health professionals and legal advisors. The Chaplain has access to between 40 and 60 detainees per week.

Destitute asylum seekers

Increasing numbers of asylum seekers who have received final refusals in their claims come to JRS in the office premises in central London for support and help. They are often completely destitute and some are sleeping on the streets. JRS offers dignity and friendship, a place to meet and weekly bus passes so that they are able to attend medical and immigration appointments and drop in centres, and to have hot meals. Many are left in this situation for months and years, without being removed and without having any access to benefits or being allowed to work. Over the year there were 1,142 visits to the JRS office by asylum seekers and refugees. They came from the following countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabinda, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chechnya, Colombia, Congo-Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Mozambique, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Outreach and Advocacy work

JRS staff and volunteers continued to give talks and lead workshops for church and secular groups in order to raise awareness about the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Requests to provide speakers increased steadily over the year. Along with the National Catholic Refugee Forum, a one-day conference on Refugees and Health was organised. Together with the London School of Economics and The Heythrop Institute of Religion, Ethics and Public Life, JRS organised a lunchtime seminar entitled "Refugee Solutions or Solutions to Refugeehood?" at which Professor James Hathaway, a leading international authority on refugee law, spoke. More than 150 people attended.

JRS regularly participated in UK government and UNHCR stakeholder meetings, primarily focused on international and EU protection issues. It is an active member of the Monitoring Group of Lunar House, which monitors interview conditions for asylum seekers, and it helped set up the Independent Asylum Commission (a people's inquiry into the asylum process in the UK). This will conduct public hearings across the UK in 2007, and the findings will be published in 2008. JRS is also actively engaged in several coalitions working on detention and destitution issues.

Volunteer Programme

Apart from the team of volunteer visitors there is a small team of volunteers who help out with administration tasks, welcoming asylum seekers and refugees, producing publications and event organisation in the office. Without them it would be impossible to undertake as much work or be as effective.



Guests speaking to Professor James Hathaway at the 25th Anniversary celebration of JRS UK

West Balkans

JRS West Balkans started in 1993 as JRS Bosnia-Croatia, and was later made a separate region in the JRS network called JRS South East Europe. In 2006 the region was incorporated under the direction of JRS Europe and renamed JRS West Balkans. The major programmes are operated in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, while there are contact persons with supporting offices in Macedonia and Serbia. Father Stjepan Kušan SJ, who had been the Director from the beginning, stepped down after 13 years of excellent service.

Political Background

In December 2006 NATO welcomed Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia into its pre-membership programme as part of a wider effort to cement peace in the Balkans. In November NATO leaders agreed to bring the three nations into the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme at a summit in Riga, Latvia.

Three other PFP nations in the western Balkans — Croatia, Macedonia and Albania — are expected to join the alliance in 2008. Slovenia became a full NATO member two years ago. The hope is that membership in the alliance — and eventually in the European Union — will permanently defuse nationalist and religious tensions that caused a series of wars in which more than 200,000 people perished.

NATO decided to invite Serbia into the PFP despite resistance from other nations who noted its failure so far to apprehend indicted war crimes suspects from the conflict in Bosnia. It was concerned that isolating Belgrade could encourage hard-line nationalists at a time when tensions are running high over the future of Serbia's Kosovo province. It also said that Bosnia had been remarkable in merging the three ethnically divided Bosnia Serb, Croat and Bosniak forces, previously at war, into a single force. However the uncertain future of Kosovo has the potential to spark conflict in Kosovo itself and in neighbouring regions.

It is estimated that 2,2 million people were forcibly displaced during the war in Bosnia. About half of these refugees and internally displaced people have returned to their pre-war homes and municipalities.

Social and Political Developments

11 years since the end of the war in Croatia, the solution for refugees, displaced persons and returnees has not been satisfactorily resolved. The territories that were previously occupied by Serbian troops were declared by the Croatian Government as the territory of special care of the government. The governments of Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro signed an agreement in December 2005, according to which the problem of refugees and displaced persons should have been solved by the end of 2006. However despite the massive return this year, many decided to remain where they are, actually trying to integrate themselves into the society of refuge. This is the case in Knin, Croatia, where one JRS project is situated.

In Kosovo the population faces many problems: poverty, unemployment, high prices, lack of electricity for 15 hours a day in many villages. Returnees struggle to find employment and children in particular, adapted to better living conditions and education in other countries, face difficulties readjusting. The return of families from European countries is thus a contributing factor to the poverty level of the society.

JRS Activities and Projects

Croatia

Reconciliation through alternative education

In the city of Knin, Croatians, Serbian returnees and Bosnian settlers now live together. The JRS project aims to promote peaceful living together. JRS has been present in this territory since the end of the war 1995, promoting peace and reconciliation.

At the beginning of the programme, JRS collaborated with a Serbian Orthodox NGO based in Switzerland and the Serbian Orthodox Monastery Krka. JRS is welcomed by the local government and the Serbian Orthodox Church and enjoys their support.

A kindergarten, organised and supported by JRS, helps children and their parents to learn how to live together in a tolerant and peaceful atmosphere, to explore ways of shared learning between Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim children, and to prepare them for primary school. At the end of 2006 there were 55 children attending.

Kosovo

Landmine survivors support

JRS Kosovo continued the project which helps children who are landmine victims and their families. This has been a focus since the office's inception. The project now has many different components which enable JRS to work with these traumatised children, and this year assistance could be provided for 64 children. The need for support continues; in October there was a new victim in Kosovo: a fourteen year-old boy who lost his right hand.



A new chance for a young landmine victim in Kosovo

The project continued in the areas of :

Upper limb prosthesis (arm prosthesis)
Low limb prosthesis
Eye prosthesis and eye operations, with follow-up support
Medical follow-up support
Monthly bus tickets
Accommodation and food for university students
Minor refurbishing work on victims' houses

22 children attended a summer camp held in Ohrid, Macedonia. This was the third such camp in the last three years.

Reintegration of children returning from Luxembourg

2006 began with the voluntary and forced returns of Albanian families from Luxembourg. The Luxembourg Government also returned families of the Gorany Minority. According to an agreement with Caritas Luxembourg, JRS Kosovo throughout the year visited returned families to gather information, particularly regarding school-age children, and to assess reintegration needs. One such need was for children who had spent a number of years abroad to take Albanian language courses, and subsequently three language groups were set up.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Elderly home care

This project began in 1996, when JRS was officially registered as a recognised NGO, after four years of JRS de facto presence in Bosnia. It assists those who remained alone in Sarajevo or were returning or locally displaced. Support is of a medical and psychosocial nature. As important as providing medicine and facilitating visits to the doctor, psychosocial support is crucial; ensuring that people are not left alone and unaccompanied. Seven staff supported a total of 78 elderly persons during the year.

Other Activities in the Area

Several projects, which had been initiated by JRS staff over the past years, are now implemented by other social bodies, with support from JRS staff and ex-JRS staff. These other projects include:

- Seminars for Social and Pastoral Ministry and Reconciliation, and a programme for Elderly Home Care in Croatia
- language courses and support for handicapped children in Macedonia;
- the distribution of food parcels in Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia.

Activities in other countries

Austria

At the beginning of 2006 new and more strict asylum laws entered into force. 18% more persons were detained, many under the Dublin II regulation, where asylum applicants are returned from other EU countries. Around 30,000 persons were returned to the borders and another more than 15,000 were removed or left the country freely.

For fifteen years JRS has been present in Traiskirchen, the largest open centre in the country. Pastoral care is offered to people of all religions, especially to women and children. Activities include liturgies and a regular newsletters for friends. Assistance such as clothing and school materials was provided for new arrivals, along with counseling and language courses.

With the help of about 500 friends and donors, funds were raised for projects in Bosnia, Africa and Latin America.

France

Asylum request figures for 2005 (not available for 2006) show that France received 50,000 applicants, compared with 59,000 in 2004 and 54,000 in 2001. Nevertheless it remains one of the main receiving countries in Europe. The decrease in the number of applications was the result of severely restricted border access to the country, and from refusals to register requests. In 2005, only 6% of asylum seekers obtained refugee status. The regularising of persons to whom status had been refused is only on a case by case basis. Consequently persons having a right to remain are left as 'irregular', although they cannot be removed according to the law. The state now perceives asylum as a migratory pattern which needs to be controlled, not that it is a 'right'.

This year a French Jesuit was designated to focus several days a week on work for JRS. JRS conducted research on destitution in Europe with interviews and the help of existing associations: Forum-Réfugiés, Gisti, Secours Catholique / Caritas France, and Comede (medical assistance to migrants).

A modest involvement with refugees and forced migrants, such as legal assistance against removals in a detention centre, was began. This was under the guidance of Cimade, an NGO with a strong presence in detention centres.

Greece

The Greek archipelagos offer many opportunities for traffickers based in Turkey to bring people into the European Union. The JRS contact person has had contact for many years with migrants in need through his work among international students. A particular development this year was medical and legal assistance offered by volunteers to young Afghans.

Lebanon

During the 34-days war and blockade in the summer of 2006, around 1000 Lebanese civilians were killed, along with a number of migrants from Asia and Africa who were domestic helpers. The damage to civilian infrastructure was extensive, and about 25,000 migrants of many nationalities were evacuated. JRS concentrated on the repatriation of Afro-Asian migrants and continues its presence and assistance to Asian migrant workers and Sudanese Christian refugees.

Luxembourg

JRS in Luxembourg collaborates with an umbrella network of NGOs, "Collectif Réfugiés". Meeting monthly, the network aims to raise public awareness about the situations asylum seekers face, for example by publishing stories of asylum seekers in Luxembourg and elsewhere in Europe.

This year there was a particular need for awareness raising after the Schrassig/Sandweiler detention centre was set on fire on 30th January. JRS in Luxembourg helped to draw attention to the despair and anger of the detainees at the conditions of their detention, in particular the lack of privacy and length of time waiting for necessary documents.

Collectif Réfugiés intensified their negotiations with the Government, who are determined to build a new detention centre. The JRS Europe Policy Officer was invited to speak at a public conference on detention centres in Europe.

On an independent and direct level, the JRS contact person assisted asylum seekers in their search for accommodation, employment, and other specific needs.

Slovakia

From 1992 until the end of January 2007, 51,411 asylum seekers applied for asylum in Slovakia. The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior granted asylum to 597 foreigners. 8 foreigners were granted asylum in 2006. (figures from UNHCR)

In June 2006 the two contact persons published an article in the biggest Catholic journal in Slovakia "Katolicke Noviny". The article detailed information about the work of JRS in Europe and worldwide, information about refugees in Slovakia and photos from the detention centre in Brezova.

JRS persons liaise with refugee-linked NGOs and keep in touch with a number of refugees in the capital, Bratislava.

Spain

JRS Activities and Projects

JRS activity continued under the agreement, signed in 2004, between JRS International and the Jesuit NGOs in Spain. ALBOAN, Entreculturas and IntermonOxfam represent JRS in Spain and focus on fundraising to support JRS programmes in developing countries, promoting JRS among Spanish public opinion and executing advocacy initiatives in Spain on behalf of the JRS International advocacy officer.

Fundraising

JRS in Spain formed an agreement with La Caixa to fund a project in Liberia and enable the possibility for a multi-annual agreement to support education programs for refugees.

Support was given for an exploratory mission to Morocco in June to identify potential JRS action in the field.

Public awareness

JRS and its activities were published on the websites and printed newsletters of the three NGOs' magazines. This included some editions of ALBOAN's newsletter to 18,000 recipients and the Entreculturas e-bulletin.

Advocacy

The main activity was the Spanish Coalition against the Use of Child Soldiers. Entreculturas assumed the presidency of the coalition for the year, and an additional organization, "Fundación el Compromiso" entered the coalition. The main activities were:

- Updating of www.menoressoldado.org and e-bulletin.
- Campaigning for ratification of the optional protocol by Russia and China in coordination with the international coalition.
- Designing and editing material on child soldiers for schools.
- Negotiating with a Spanish popular singer to get his support for the coalition.

Sweden

95% of the Swedish church is made up of immigrants, so work with migrants and refugees comes naturally for JRS. A large active group is formed by the recently arrived Chaldeans from Iraq. The appointment of new contact persons promises further activities in the year 2007.

Ukraine

The increasing number of migrants into Ukraine continued to outpace its capacity to handle even a modest flow. The porous Russian-Ukrainian border admits innumerable migrants from countries stretching from Chechnya to Korea to Afghanistan. The Balkan route sees countless Africans en route through Ukraine to the EU.

Most JRS efforts in the past year came from the decision to aid refugee claimants by opening a centre for their care. Four lawyers and a language instructor volunteered their services, and funding was sought. Constant contact was maintained with border guards and Department of Migration officials who are anxious for work to start. Border guards asked for financial help with their detention centre – a strong indication of the need which exists. JRS continues its collaboration with JRS Portugal and other JRS offices in assisting Ukrainian irregular emigrants who wish to return home for reasons of health and poverty.

Other JRS contacts in Europe

JRS also has contact persons in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Hungary, The Netherlands and Poland.

Appendices

Appendix I – Structure of JRS-Europe

JRS-Europe was established in March 1992 as an incorporated "International Association" under Belgian law (AISBL # 452165993), with a Constitution, General Assembly and Governing Council. It is recognized as a refugee-assisting NGO by the EU institutions and by several states both within Europe and beyond (namely Angola and Ethiopia).

Subsequent to a decision of the General Assembly of *Jesuit Refugee Service-Europe AISBL*, as of March 21st, 2006, the members of JRS-Europe Governing Council are: Jan Stuyt SJ, "Administrateur délégué" of JRS-Europe, Lluís Magriña SJ, President of JRS-Europe and International Director of the JRS, Dermot O'Connor SJ, and Louise Zanré, Country director of JRS-UK.

JRS-Europe has country offices or contact persons in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. JRS-Southeast-Europe has just merged with JRS-Europe and forms a unity called Western Balkans, which includes Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. Egypt and Lebanon also belong to the JRS-Europe region.

JRS-Europe is an integral part of the Jesuit Refugee Service worldwide and is one of the JRS Regions dependent on and directly responsible to the JRS International Director. It is a project of the Conference of the Jesuit Provincials in Europe and is part of the inter-provincial apostolic work of the Society in Europe. It currently covers around twenty Jesuit Provinces. National coordinators are responsible to their respective Provincials and, for certain matters, directly to the European Regional Director.

The European Regional Director has a Council of four members: Robin Schweiger SJ, Michael Schöpf SJ, Ms Louise Zanré and Mr Ignacio Eguizabal, which meet up every four months.

Appendix 2 – JRS Contact details

In Europe

§ JRS Europe

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-

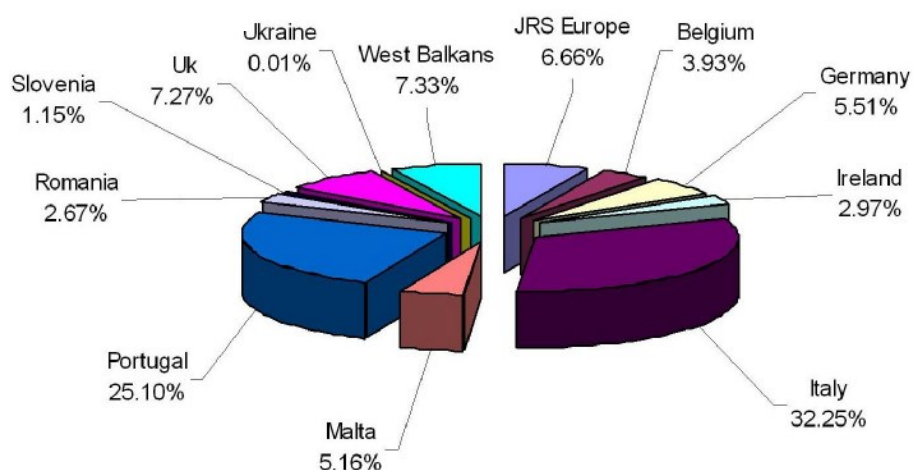
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Appendix 3 – Financial Report

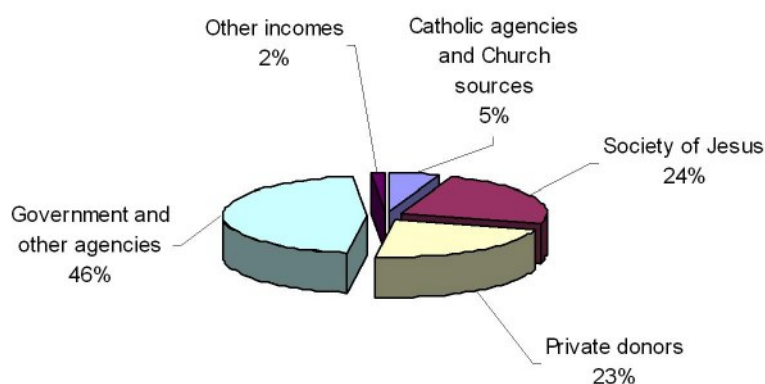
JRS Offices in Europe

Distribution of Expenditure by Country



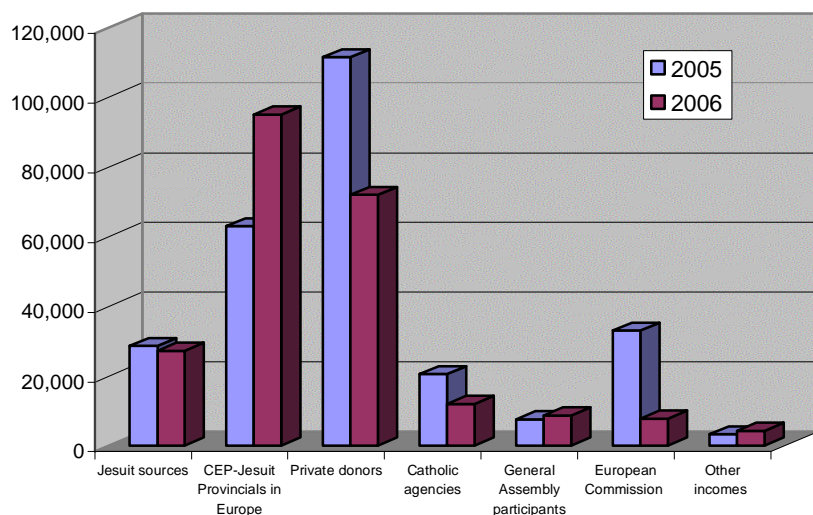
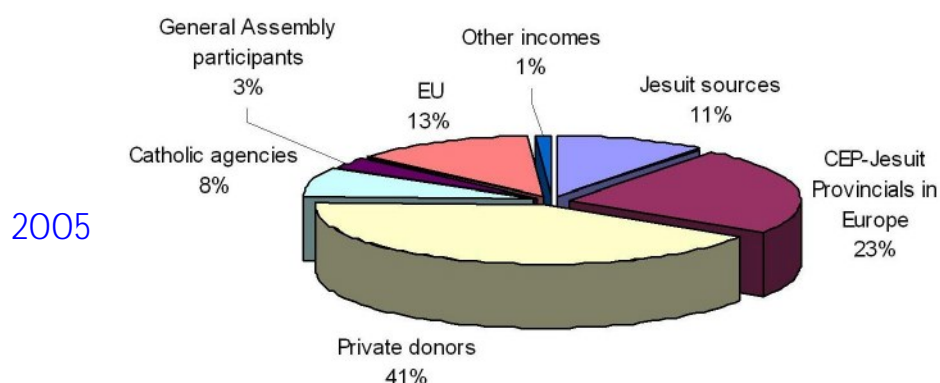
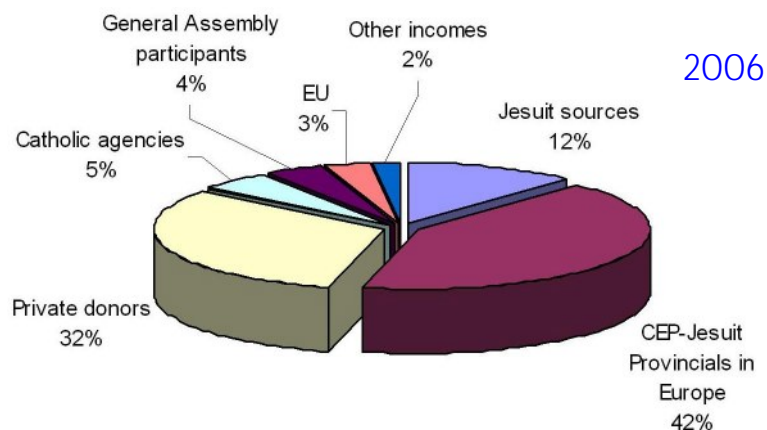
Sources of Income (Euro)

	2006	2005
Catholic agencies and Church sources	184,580	184,140
Society of Jesus	797,728	792,722
Private Donors	772,611	451,571
Government, EU and International Governmental Organisations	1,553,624	1,382,246
Other incomes	53,857	35,563
TOTAL	3,362,401	2,846,242



Source of Income
2005 / 2006 (Euro)

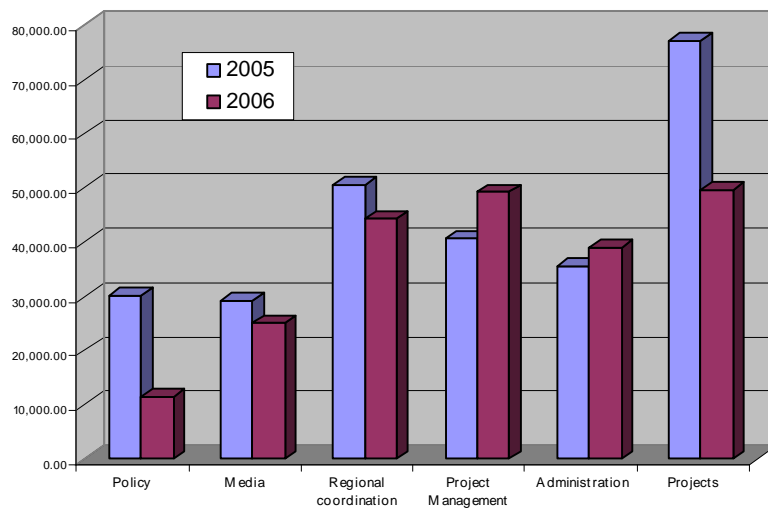
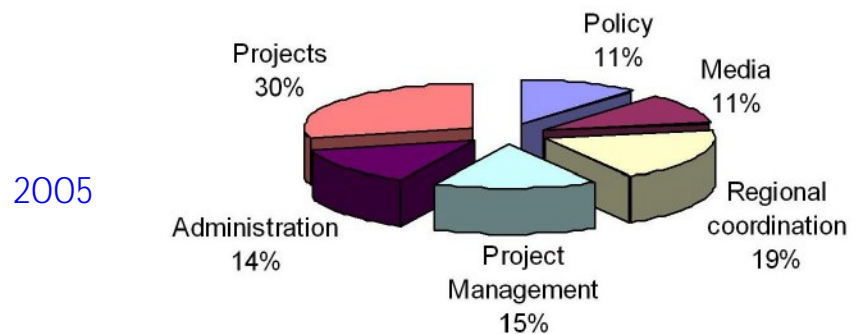
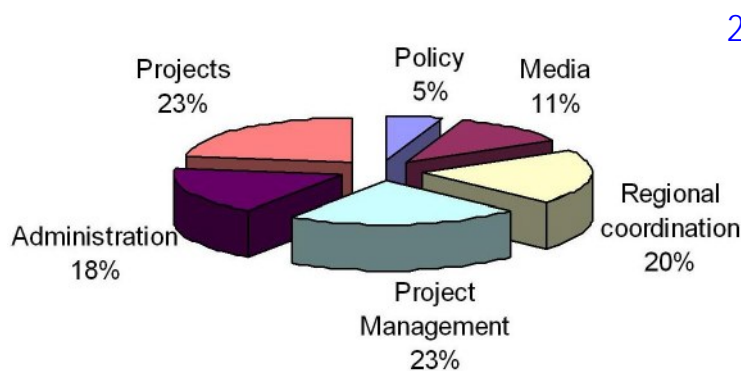
	2006	2005
Jesuit Sources	27,233,00	28,637,91
CEP – Jesuit Provincials in Europe	95,000,00	63,000,00
Private Donors	71,954,95	111,509,73
Catholic Agencies	11,906,48	20,510,00
General Assembly participants	8,655,00	7,514,00
European Commission	7,758,00	32,970,00
Other incomes	4,286,78	3,318,99
TOTAL	226,794,21	267,458,63



JRS Europe Office

Expenditure 2005 / 2006 (Euro)

	2006	2005
Expenditure		
Policy	11,357,76	30,143,88
Media	25,070,65	29,232,88
Regional Coordination	44,255,47	50,562,97
Project Management	49,132,77	40,630,97
Administration	38,829,94	35,525,31
Sub-total Office	168,646,59	186,096,01
Projects		
Pedro Arrupe Award	5,202,94	18,375,99
Journalist's conference: Aliens in the Media	-	7,654,27
Detention Visitors Support Group	758,25	-
Detention Training	12,736,27	50,998,01
Destitute Research Project	30,851,10	-
TOTAL	218,195,15	263,124,28



Cover photo: Claudio Lombardi

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