



Jesuit Refugee Service Europe

Annual Report 2011





cover photo

A family in the Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara, Romania, preparing for resettlement to a new country.
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The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation established in 1980 by Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ. Its mission is to accompany, serve and defend the cause of forcibly displaced people.

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Acronyms & abbreviations used more than once in this report:

ANDES	Advocacy Network on Destitute Migrants
DEVAS	Detention of Vulnerable Asylum Seekers
DIASP	Dublin's Impact on Asylum Seekers' Protection
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	EU external border agency
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
EPIM	European Programme for Integration and Migration
NEF	Network of European Foundations
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
SAM	Service Accueil Migrants
SJM	Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Keeping Refugee Protection Front and Centre

Michael Schöpf SJ, Regional Director, JRS Europe

“Gradually, they just disappeared, and we realised that they were not replying to our distress calls”. This is what Ghirma Halefom said to Dutch parliamentarian Tineke Strik, who launched a Council of Europe investigation into the deaths of sub-Saharan African refugees in the Mediterranean Sea in early 2011. Fleeing from war and persecution in Libya, they headed to Europe for safety. Ghirma describes how, on the tenth day of drifting on the high seas, a military vessel approached the boat he and other men, women and children were in, and sailed away without attempting a rescue. By the time Ghirma’s boat washed up on Libya’s shores, 63 of the 72 passengers had died on the open seas.

The year 2011 was marked by EU inaction on the most pressing refugee issues. Tens of thousands fled to Lampedusa and Malta, but capacity-stricken countries in North Africa dealt with the vast majority – many hundreds of thousands – of the displaced. Filling in the leadership gap were the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights, who identified the most egregious abuses and issued rulings that boosted refugee protection in Europe.

In the face of such crises, JRS published several media statements calling for EU states to resettle refugees to Europe. Country offices joined local partners to lobby their national authorities to provide access to asylum protection. In particular we advocated for the resettlement of sub-Saharan African refugees stranded in Libya during the conflict, who were at risk of persecution and had no safe place to turn to. In addition to this, we contributed legal and field-based input to a new law for Frontex, the EU border agency, who has an important role in ensuring that people who enter the EU can apply for refugee protection if they need to.

Eritrean refugees arriving at an emergency transit centre in Romania, after fleeing Libya and spending weeks in a crowded camp in Tunisia.



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THE YEAR’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the year we published reports on the situations of asylum seekers and migrants in Morocco, Algeria and Ukraine. Refugee protection is meagre in these countries, and the onward journey to the EU totally blocked. We used their experiences to advocate for EU policies that prioritise protection at the borders, and to remind decision makers of their obligations to uphold the principals and measures enshrined in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.

The three years spent building a civil society network to address migrant destitution in Europe culminated in a successful conference in Brussels. Experts from the fields of education, labour, health, housing and social welfare joined with colleagues from refugee and migration organisations to develop common solutions to alleviate destitution. Refugees were invited to the conference to speak for themselves, a practice we have found to be rewarding for refugees and decision makers alike.

We interviewed migrants participating in alternative-to-detention programmes in Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom. On the face of it, simply keeping people out of detention is a good step, but not the only one. People must also have help with meeting their basic needs, being informed about their asylum and migration case, and being empowered to challenge decisions they feel are unfair.

Refugees, asylum seekers and the forcibly displaced are human persons, first and foremost. Their needs are great, but their wishes and aspirations are no different than anybody else’s: to stay safe, to be able to provide for themselves and their loved ones, and to do whatever possible to make our world hospitable for everyone.

The work of the regional office

The work of the regional office is split into four distinct areas: coordination, project development, EU policy and advocacy, media and communications.

Regional Coordination

- In April, JRS country directors developed a new regional strategic plan for 2011-2014. The directors reaffirmed their commitment to a strategic focus on detention, destitution and access to protection at Europe's borders, while adding two new strategic goals, *communications* and *forced return*.
- At an October meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, country directors agreed to take part in a new one to research how migrants' human rights are impacted by forced return procedures. This meeting was held in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting, where participants received a media-skills training by Terry Prone, from the Communications Clinic in Dublin, Ireland. The training was an important first step towards a regional communications strategy.

Project development

- The ANDES project concluded with a large conference held in Brussels at the end of March, with nearly 100 in attendance. Representatives from European migration and refugee NGOs, trade unions, health associations and educational networks, among others, took part in developing new strategies for reducing forced migrant destitution in Europe. Ms Jean Lambert, MEP (Greens/UK), and the director of the Amnesty International EU office, Mr Nicholas Beger, made keynote speeches.
- The research methodology for an 18-month project on the Dublin Regulation's impact on asylum seekers' protection (DIASP) was planned with the assistance of an academic research expert from the University of Göttingen.

EU policy and advocacy

- Booklets were published on the experiences of forced migrants in Ukraine, Algeria and Morocco. Another booklet analysed EU policies that hinder refugee arrivals to Europe.
- Research on alternatives-to-detention in Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom was published in a report.
- Technical input was made into the EU legislative process for a recast Reception Conditions Directive and Dublin Regulation.

Media and communications

- The three booklets about refugees at Europe's borders, and the ANDES conference, were widely covered by the media; press events were held in Brussels.
- JRS Europe staff were interviewed on *Vatican Radio* and *Radio Chretienne Francophone*.
- JRS Europe staff gave keynote speeches and made panel presentations at a variety of conferences around Europe.

Staff and volunteers from JRS in Europe at the Annual General Meeting in Uppsala, Sweden.



Promoting refugee protection

DETENTION

Negotiating common rules on the detention of asylum seekers were one of the biggest obstacles to EU political agreement on a new *Reception Conditions Directive*. The legal grounds for detaining asylum seekers, the kind of conditions in detention facilities and the provision of legal assistance to detained asylum seekers have been some of the hardest issues to resolve. In June, the European Commission issued a modified proposal that insisted on keeping strict and clear rules on detention, to ensure that it is used in the last resort and in respect of fundamental rights. However, they also proposed that member states could relax these standards at the borders, or that administrative, and not just judicial, authorities could order detention. Member states were unable to come to a common position by the end of the year. The European Parliament, meanwhile, worked to develop a position on the Commission's new proposal for early 2012.

JRS Europe met with MEPs to ensure that their positions on the *Reception Conditions Directive* kept asylum seeker detention as a last resort, and with strong safeguards. In particular, we advocated for the retainment of measures that would promote alternatives-to-detention and better care for vulnerable persons.

Several member states adjusted their rules on detaining irregular migrants as they implemented the *EU Return Directive* into their national laws. The directive, which lays down common standards for returning irregular migrants to their countries of origin, contains several legal provisions on detention, including a maximum time limit of six months. Several states, including the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Greece, Austria, Finland and Luxembourg increased their maximum time period for detention to six months, and some now permit detention up to 18 months in certain cases. During the year, JRS Europe worked with the country offices to monitor national transposition of the directive, laying the foundation for a more systematic monitoring project to take place in 2012.

EUROPEAN ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLITICS

The European Court of Human Rights strongly exerted its influence on EU asylum and migration policies during the year. In January, the Court ruled in *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* that Belgium's transfer of an Afghan asylum seeker to Greece under the

Dublin Regulation exposed him to harmful detention conditions in Greece, and denied him from accessing the asylum procedure. The ruling effectively ceased Dublin transfers to Greece, forcing member states to reconsider transferring asylum seekers to states with deficient asylum systems. The Court also heard arguments in the case of *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*, which concerns a migrant boat that was pushed back to Libya by the Italian authorities operating in the Mediterranean Sea. A decision on this landmark case was expected for early 2012.

In another case involving Greece, the advocate general of the Court of Justice of the European Union said in September that a member state must examine a person's asylum application if returning him or her to the first country of entry would expose the person to human rights violations. This opinion, taken together with the judgment from *M.S.S.*, called into serious question the fundamental presumption underlying the Dublin Regulation: that asylum systems in all member states are one in the same.

The tumult from the "Arab Spring" in North Africa led to the displacement of thousands to Lampedusa and Malta, putting considerable pressure on the capacities of these two small islands. In particular, the military conflict in Libya forced many people – especially sub-Saharan Africans facing persecution – to risk their lives and cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. While EU leaders publicly expressed their concern at the number of arrivals to European shores, the vast majority of refugees from Libya fled to neighbouring countries such as Tunisia, Chad, Niger and Egypt. Calls from JRS Europe, numerous other civil society organisations, UNHCR and even the European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström, for EU governments to resettle more refugees from North Africa went mostly unheard. In the end, EU countries resettled a tiny fraction of the more than one million displaced from Libya.

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly launched an official inquiry into migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, focusing specifically on allegations that European and NATO ships ignored distress calls from a migrant boat fleeing Libya in March, leading to the deaths of 63 persons.

In June, the Commission published a modified proposal for the *Asylum Procedures Directive*. Yet just as with the *Reception Conditions Directive*, member states could not agree on a common position for this proposal, which deals with how member states organise procedures for obtaining

refugee protection. A controversial aspect of the proposal would permit governments to analyse certain asylum applications in an accelerated manner. While the aim is to enable governments to process applications more quickly, in practice, ‘fast-track’ procedures make it more difficult for asylum seekers to know what is happening and to challenge negative decisions.

DESTITUTION

At the EU-level little progress was made with regard to policies tackling migrant destitution. There were a few positive developments within some member states. In Germany, for instance, changes to the Residence Law removed the obligation for schools and other educational institutions to report irregular migrants to the authorities. This is a remarkable improvement of the access to education for migrants without a legal status.

In July, Romania passed a new law dealing with foreigners. One of the most positive changes will enable migrants with a ‘tolerated’ status to work. Improvements on the rules for family reunification, granting migrants access to basic services and encouraging their integration by enabling migrants to enrol in school and vocational training are also in this new law.

In March, the centre-right Swedish Government Coalition and the Green Party reached an agreement to diminish the influence of the Sweden Democrats Party, considered to be “anti-immigration”. The agreement includes the right to education for children of asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected, provision of health care for

undocumented migrants and better judicial oversight for asylum application decisions. The new measures would also allow undocumented migrants to set up businesses.

EXTERNALISATION OF ASYLUM AND BORDER POLICIES

According to UNHCR estimates, more than 1,500 people drowned or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe in 2011, making it the deadliest year on record for this region. JRS Europe, in discussions with European Parliamentarians, lobbied for the inclusion of detailed human rights safeguards in a new law governing the work of the EU border agency, FRONTEX. The agency is now required to develop a human rights strategy, appoint a fundamental rights officer and establish a forum for consultation with NGOs.

JRS Europe and other NGOs met the director of the newly founded EU agency, European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Dr Robert Visser. The agency held its first NGO consultative forum in November, which was met with criticism from NGOs for its bureaucratic hurdles and registration difficulties.

In February, the European Commission presented an evaluation of the 13 readmission agreements it has made with other countries since 2002. A readmission agreement with Turkey received political support at a Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in February, but has still to be presented to Parliament and Council for ratification. Agreements with Morocco and Cape Verde are still being negotiated. The Commission received a mandate for negotiating readmission agreements with China and Algeria.

Ibrahim Mohammed Banaytu, a refugee living in Belgium, speaks at a JRS Europe event in Brussels.



Major projects

The Dublin Regulation's Impact on Asylum Seekers' Fundamental Rights (DIASP)

JRS Europe newest project, DIASP, will research how the Dublin Regulation impacts asylum seekers' fundamental human rights. The project is funded by the European Commission's European Refugee Fund, and includes the partnership of JRS offices in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Malta, Romania, Sweden and the UK; other partners include the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Forum réfugiés (France) and the Halina Niec Legal Aid Centre (Poland). The main objective is to interview between 300-400 asylum seekers, systematically analyse their experiences with the Dublin Regulation, and to develop policy recommendations in order to ensure that the Regulation respects the fundamental rights of asylum seekers. The project will be implemented until spring 2013.

The Advocacy Network on Migrant Destitution in Europe (ANDES)

This project came to a conclusion with a large public conference in Brussels at the end of March. The Invisible Borders conference attracted nearly 100 participants from refugee and migration NGOs, trade unions, educational and medical associations and homelessness organisations. Ms Jean Lambert, MEP (Greens/UK), and the director of Amnesty International's EU office, Mr Nicholas Beger, were the keynote speakers. The conference was chaired by Ms Gabriele Erpenbeck, who is responsible for migrant integration policies in the government of the German federal state of Lower Saxony. Participants had the opportunity to attend workshops to plot strategies and identify good practices on improving migrants' access to housing, work, healthcare, social welfare and education. In all, the plenary agreed that migrant destitution is a pan-European problem that can only be solved by strengthened networks in civil society, and improved connections with local government as well as EU institutions.

Detention Visitors Support Group (DVSG) V

JRS Europe organised a fifth Detention Visitors Support Group seminar. Every year this project brings together around 30 staff and volunteers who regularly visit detention centres across Europe. For the first time, two non-JRS organisations from the United Kingdom were invited to take part. The training theme for this edition focused on the human rights of detainees. Led by David Rhys-Jones, a British lawyer and human rights trainer from the Helen Bamber Foundation, participants learned how to identify human rights abuses in detention, and how to report them to monitoring authorities, governments and civil society organisations. The training was complemented by a session on EU advocacy, giving participants the chance to learn how they could impact EU asylum laws using their day-to-day detention-visiting experiences.

Pedro Arrupe Award

Students from Belgium and Poland were awarded for their projects on refugee issues in the fourth edition of the Pedro Arrupe Award. Former Belgian prime minister – and current MEP – Mr Jean-Luc Dehaene, and Polish MEP Mr Jan Kozłowski attended the award ceremony, which was held at the European Parliament. The under-16 award was given to students from Jan van Ruusbroeck College in Laeken, Belgium, for a visual art and video project called "The Luggage". For this project, students packed a suitcase with items that a refugee might take with him or her in their journey to safety. In the under-19 category, students from a Jesuit high school in Gdynia, Poland, were awarded for their short film, "Life in Jeopardy", in which they played roles as refugees and explained the reasons for their flight and their need for protection in Europe. A honourable mention was awarded to three other students from the same high school in Gdynia.

Communicating our work to others

In preparation for the destitution conference in March, JRS worked with the project partners in advance to plan the conference's main messages and the target audiences to be reached. Key journalists in Brussels and around Europe were targeted with information prior to the conference. A media leaflet was specially printed for the event, and a pre-conference press briefing organised with a refugee speaker and the director of JRS UK. The efforts were a success, as the conference received coverage by media outlets in Germany, Italy and France. One of the main Brussels-based news organisations, *EU Observer*, interviewed two refugees that JRS Europe invited to the event. In December, JRS Europe received good media coverage on its report, *Safe and Secure*, from Reuters Alertnet, Italian agency ANSA, French and Spanish news outlets, and radio interviews with *Vatican Radio* and *Radio Chrétienne Francophone*.

A key reason for this success is that JRS Europe has put a strategic emphasis in reaching out to its audiences. These newly developed networks and skills have laid the basis for planning a regional communications strategy with the country offices. In addition, JRS staff and volunteers took part in a media skills training by Terry Prone of the Communications Clinic, based in Ireland, which helped to strengthen the communications skills of the entire region. All of these efforts have put the JRS Europe region on a solid footing for putting a coordinated communication strategy into place in 2012.

PUBLICATIONS

Editions of JRS Europe's newsletter, *The Refuge*, were published in June (a double issue), October and December, and covered JRS networks in Spain, mental health services in Portugal and refugee protection in Europe. Our monthly internal bulletin, *Progrès*, underwent extensive changes in order to present country offices with news in a more dynamic format.

In June, a booklet about asylum seekers in Ukraine, *No Other Option*, was released at a press briefing in Brussels, which featured a pre-recorded video testimony from a refugee. A booklet on the experiences of refugees living in Morocco and Algeria, *I Don't Know Where to Go*, was re-published in September. A report to

commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, *Safe and Secure*, was released in December, with a guest chapter written by Guy Goodwin-Gill, a refugee scholar from Oxford University. At the end of December, JRS Europe released its study on alternatives-to-detention, *From Deprivation to Liberty*, at a briefing held at the European Parliament hosted by MEP Antonio Masip Hidalgo (Social Democrats/Spain).

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

JRS received several invitations to speak at public events and at meetings with policymakers, journalists, NGOs and the broader public. These engagements offered JRS Europe the opportunity to express its core positions and its key advocacy recommendations. Some examples during the year include:

- An intervention on the effects of detention on undocumented children at a Council of Europe hearing in Brussels.
- A panel presentation on vulnerability and detention at the Global Alternatives to Detention Roundtable, held in Geneva, and attended by nearly 100 government and civil society representations from all over the world.
- A speech on the impact of the Dublin Regulation on asylum seekers at a *Forum réfugiés* conference in Brussels.
- A presentation on alternatives-to-detention at a public hearing organised by the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.
- Remarks at an Amnesty International conference in Aachen, Germany, on EU external borders policies.
- A panel presentation at a forum on asylum politics organised by a coalition of organisations in Germany, including UNHCR.
- A talk at a seminar organised by German Catholic Foundation *Cusanuswerk* on asylum and migration politics.

Overview of JRS country offices

Refugees are at the heart of the JRS mission, and we strive to maintain as close proximity as possible to their day-to-day lives. In 2011, JRS offices in 14 countries worked to meet the basic needs of refugees, asylum seekers and other forcibly displaced persons. Staff and volunteers met with them to provide services such as social and legal assistance, spiritual companionship, integration support, language lessons and psychosocial care.

Apart from direct services, JRS offices carried out awareness raising and advocacy initiatives to highlight the plight of forced migrants, the shortcomings of national and EU asylum and migration policies, and ways to improve protection standards.

The work undertaken by JRS offices reflects the region's three strategic priorities: detention, destitution and externalisation of asylum and border policies. None of the national offices are dedicated to solely one or the other issue. JRS teams carry out a variety of activities in support of refugees that cannot all be reported here.

The country profiles in the following pages, each containing a testimony from a refugee, aim to answer two key questions: In 2011, what have been the most notable issues in the area of asylum and migration? What has been the local JRS response?

Staff from JRS in Europe: (Clockwise from left) Vera Marques, Assistant Director, and André Costa Jorge, Director of JRS Portugal; Fr Robin Schweiger SJ, Director of JRS Slovenia, and Sr Majella Dennehy, of JRS Ireland; Josip Divkovic, Director of JRS Southeast Europe; Louise Zanré, Director of JRS UK, and Fr Jean-Marie Carrière SJ, Director of JRS France.



DETENTION: Visiting refugees and migrants in detention across Belgium; informing detained migrants of administrative and legal procedures.

ADVOCACY: Published a report on detention in Belgium; co-authored a report on pilot-project alternatives to detention for families, leading to implementation of pilot-project as Belgian policy.

AWARENESS RAISING: Giving presentations about refugee issues to local schools.

CHOOSING THE LESSER EVIL

Nurbiika, a Chechan mother of six, had been living in government-provided housing in a small Belgian town when JRS had met her. The housing is part of an alternative-to-detention programme implemented by the national immigration authority. Rather than being in a detention centre, families with children live in residential areas and are accompanied by a caseworker.

Nurbiika's asylum application in Belgium was transferred to Poland, where she had first entered into the EU, and where she and her family had first asked for asylum. Her husband was already in Poland, having been granted a 'toleration' status by the Polish authorities. However, Poland rarely grants refugee status to Chechens, and this family was no exception.

The family had two options: to be returned to Poland under the Dublin Regulation, or to agree to voluntary return to Chechnya, aided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Faced with these options, Nurbiika chose to return voluntarily to Chechnya. A few days before their scheduled flight, however, the family fled their accommodation. They did not have faith in either of the two options. In the end, their voluntary return to Chechnya was only chosen as a 'lesser evil' compared to going back to Poland, where there was no real prospect of recognition as refugee, nor to receive social assistance.

Unfortunately, JRS Belgium encounters several similar stories of people who do not trust the legal asylum procedures of other European countries; faced with return under the Dublin Regulation, some families opt to either go back to their country of origin or to leave undetected. For families, the choices they make are those that offer them the best protection.

MAINTAINING ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION

Since 2008, the Belgian authorities have kept irregularly staying and asylum-seeking families out of detention and in community housing instead. This alternative to detention has received significant attention from other European governments and civil society organisations because it has worked very well. Around 80% of migrants who participate fully comply with the outcomes they get, whether it is legal stay in Belgium or a return to their home country.

In 2011, JRS Belgium and its partner organisations jointly evaluated this alternative to detention. JRS was well placed to take part in this process, as they have been one of the few NGOs in Belgium to regularly visit families taking part in the programme.

Overall, JRS and its partners are happy with the outcomes of this alternative. Families do not experience as much stress as they would in a detention centre, children can go to local schools, and individual cases receive a lot of attention, which in some instances enable families to find protection or legal residence in Belgium. Nevertheless, JRS and its partners highlighted certain aspects that could be improved: better training for caseworkers, the involvement of more child welfare agencies, and more information for lawyers so they are better prepared to work with families.

Having started as a pilot project, this alternative to detention is now established in national law, giving it a level of permanence needed to ensure that families stay out of detention.

Community housing for asylum-seeking families, and families in return procedures, Tubize, Belgium.



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FRANCE

ACCOMPANIMENT: 76 asylum seekers accommodated by 38 families and communities for a total of 3650 days; The ‘Welcome’ network, with over 100 persons participating, is expanding to Lille, Nantes, Le Mans, Rennes, Lyon, Marseille.

INTEGRATION: Professional formation for refugees with legal status and acquisition of an apartment in Saint Etienne.

ADVOCACY: Calling for better reception conditions for asylum seekers; helping asylum seekers prepare for interviews with the French asylum authorities (OFPRA).

KEEPING AN OPEN DOOR

The reception conditions for asylum seekers are in need of improvement – not only the asylum procedures, but also options for housing provided for under national law. JRS France engages in legal advocacy to help asylum seekers get access to normal reception conditions in a short amount of time, including: provision of a resident permit, a monetary allowance and public transportation pass. Together with other associations coordinating the right to asylum in France, JRS challenges the all too frequent administrative decision to put asylum cases into a ‘priority procedure’, which accelerates the entire asylum procedure, making it very difficult for an asylum seeker to follow.

Currently there are few possibilities to house asylum seekers in France, due to an insufficient number of spaces. In response, JRS France has developed the “Welcome” network: families and religious communities willing to temporarily house asylum seekers. Little by little, this network has developed new and enriching possibilities. Legal support is provided, as well as courses in French language. This simple initiative to “open one’s door to a stranger” calls into question recurring suspicions against asylum seekers, and the politics of numbers, which are aimed at rejecting requests for asylum. Opening one’s door is a way of finding oneself in both the French and Christian tradition of hospitality. Regular meetings allow for all members of the “Welcome” network – the welcomed, the hosts, tutors and organisers – to spend rewarding moments of conviviality together.

These experiences have enabled JRS France to become involved in advocating for policies that improve housing for asylum seekers. With the help of volunteers, JRS is now making concrete recommendations to stakeholders in the public sector, to parliamentary deputies, senators and mayors who are concerned with this issue.

‘OH LA, LA. YOU ARE A PRINCE!’

My name is Jawad. I am a native of Afghanistan and 26 years of age. I spent months wandering about, travelling through seven countries, even spending time in prison before arriving to Paris in March 2010, at the *Gare de l’Est*. I asked for asylum here.

At first, I used to sleep and eat in the street. It was difficult. I would find a place to sleep, but then someone would call the police and tell me to move on. I had to find other places.

I had a sleeping bag that I always carried in my back pack. I felt like a snail – that little animal that carries its house on its back.

Then I met JRS France, who introduced me to the Welcome network. A family from Versailles came to pick me up at the JRS office. That evening, the lady of the house cooked a chicken. It was so good! I was eating with a French family for the first time. That night, in my *en suite* bedroom, I said to myself: ‘Oh la, la. You are a prince!’ It’s true. I AM someone.

If I get asylum in France, I would like to learn to cook, since I enjoy it very much, and so I can work in a restaurant.

Asylum seekers from Afghanistan with a Jesuit during a social event at JRS France



DETENTION: Visiting detainees in Berlin, Eisenhüttenstadt and Munich. On average, 20-30 detainees were visited every week in Berlin and Eisenhüttenstadt; in Munich 40-60 persons per week.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE: Providing legal assistance to 3-5 migrants without residence permit per week.

DESTITUTION: 71% of the cases brought to the *Hardship Commission* by JRS were successful.

STRENGTHENING OUR PRESENCE AT THE AIRPORTS

JRS Germany took a strong stance against the implementation of a “fast-track airport asylum procedure” at the new airport in Berlin, scheduled to open in June 2012. This procedure, which was heavily criticised by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, is already used at some German airports.

According to this procedure, asylum seekers who arrive by airplane must stay within the transit zone of the airport until the national authorities check their case. A private security firm will guard the special accommodation facility within the transit zone, which is designed to hold 300 asylum seekers. Asylum seekers who are found to have “manifestly unfounded” cases will have just three days to appeal to a German court against their prompt deportation. For JRS, that deadline is much too short for a fair asylum procedure, especially for traumatised people or unaccompanied minors. JRS also fears that restricting people to the airport will make it even harder to secure legal advice and medical care for asylum seekers.

In response, JRS Germany joined the Archbishop of Berlin and 70 other organisations to urge the national authorities to refrain from installing a fast-track procedure, and to instead guarantee a fair asylum procedure in non-custodial conditions.

Meanwhile, JRS Germany reached an agreement with the governments of the federal states Berlin and Brandenburg to establish an independent deportation monitoring system. Berlin and Brandenburg will pay for the employment of a deportation monitor, who will take up his or her role in 2012. Deportations from the new Berlin airport will also be monitored.

“YOUR CHURCH HAS SAVED MY LIFE”

Sr Dagmar Plum, a JRS volunteer, met a young woman named Mariam, from North Africa, at the Eisenhüttenstadt detention centre. She was awaiting her deportation to Norway. At first, Mariam couldn’t stop crying, and Sr Dagmar noticed plenty of scars that covered her arms. Eventually, Mariam told Sr Dagmar the story of her life.

At the age of 12, her parents sold her to a brothel, where she was chained to a wall and regularly raped. After five years, she was sold to a brothel in a foreign country. The police found her, briefly imprisoned her, and then told her to go home. But Mariam was afraid to return to her country of origin and feared the family that had sold her into slavery and abuse. After a long journey she came to Norway and sought asylum. Being too ashamed of her story, she only told the authorities about “problems with her Muslim family”. Her asylum case was rejected. Mariam went to Italy and purchased false documents in order to return to Norway, but she was arrested in Germany.

Before Mariam was sent back to Norway, Sr Dagmar urged her to tell her true story to the Norwegian authorities. Then she called a women’s rights organisation in Oslo and asked them to bring her case to court once more. Months passed without notice. One day, Sr Dagmar got a call from Mariam, who was ecstatic: this time, she had been granted asylum. “*Allahu akbar*, God is great”, the young Muslim said, “Your church has saved my life.”



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Corridor of the Berlin Köpeneck detention centre.

IRELAND

THE 'HOSTEL KIDS'

Direct provision was introduced by the government as a pilot scheme in 1999 and became official Irish government policy in 2000. JRS Ireland regularly meets with asylum seekers in direct provision, and provides homework assistance and activities to children.

Among the issues identified in the course of JRS Ireland's work with children and families living in direct provision centres are parental concerns about child safety, the suitability of accommodation for families and fears of social exclusion. Parents are especially anxious about their children's welfare and protection in the direct provision environment. In case studies carried out by JRS Ireland, the children interviewed were aware of and witnessed regular and sometimes violent arguments, and their parents confined them to their own rooms to protect them from other negative or inappropriate influences in the centre. Interviewed parents have raised concerns about the inadequate living space and the obvious problems that arise from children and parents having to share a bedroom over a long period.

Life in direct provision can lead to social exclusion by limiting opportunities for children of asylum seekers to meet and interact with other children. A father in a centre outside Dublin noted that his children and others from the centre were known as the 'hostel kids' in school. He feels that his children are stigmatised in the community and at school.

ACCOMPANIMENT: Weekly visits to 8-10 female immigration detainees in the Dóchas Centre; visits to male detainees in Cloverhill Prison on a case-by-case basis; three life skills and sporting activities each week, crèche and after school services for 60 children in Knockalisheen Direct Provision Centre.

ASYLUM: Outreach to 20-30 asylum seekers in seven Direct Provision Centres in Dublin and Limerick each week.

INTEGRATION: English language classes for 30 asylum seekers and 10 migrants each week; organisation of intercultural activities, including the Integration Support Group and Summer Programme; assisted in two major integration initiatives, the inaugural *Limerick Intercultural Week* and *Limerick Language Alive Week*.

ADVOCACY: Disseminated 1,000 copies of its 2011 Intercultural and Interfaith Calendar; contributed an article to Working Notes, journal of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, to mark 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention; co-chair of Limerick Integration Working Group.

WISHING FOR A REAL HOME

Djamila is a 16-year-old girl from Afghanistan who has been living in direct provision for four years. She shares a room with her mother and 19-year-old sister.

"I want to get a real home", says Djamila. "Here you don't go out of the room all day. You can't go downstairs. There used to be kids in the poolroom, but kids aren't supposed to be there, because there are other people there. There are men there."

Djamila tries to hide from school friends the fact that her family are seeking asylum. She spends most of her time outside school with other children from the centre. "I am friends with hostel people more than school kids. I don't like to bring people back here. I don't tell them [at school] I'm an asylum seeker. I say I'm foreign and that's all. If they ask any more, I say my father was in the war and now I'm here. They say that I'm lucky to live 'in a hotel', and I say 'yeah, it's great I know'. They don't understand."

She doesn't have any money so relies on friends to help her at lunchtime in school. "I have a few friends in school. Every day my friends buy me lunch. Without them I'd have nothing."

Djamila looks forward to having her own home and says that arguments regularly break out in the centre. "When we move into our own house you can get food whenever you want. You can get up whenever you want and have your own food," she says. "Here you always hear people fighting."

Knockalisheen Direct Provision Centre, home to over 200 individuals and families.



ACCOMPANIMENT: Assisted 32,600 asylum seekers and refugees, 21,000 specifically in Rome; soup kitchen services for 400 forced migrants five days a week; 2,422 visits done by doctors of the clinic at JRS Italy.

INTEGRATION: Italian language classes for more than 100 students, many of whom have participated at our professional training courses.

ADVOCACY: Participation in an NGO platform to lobby for the rights of refugees and economic migrants in Italy.

ASYLUM: Social and legal assistance for hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees with particular attention to victims of torture, pregnant women and other vulnerable persons.



© JRS Italy/Centro Astalli

The soup kitchen at JRS Italy.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: VIA DEGLI ASTALLI 14A

Migrants cannot apply for asylum in Italy without having an official place of residence. This is one of the first rules that must be learned by individuals who arrive to Italy fleeing from war and persecution.

Generally, this information is passed on by word-of-mouth. While taking this first step in the bureaucratic process, refugees and asylum seekers arrive to the JRS office at Via degli Astalli 14/A, and learn that they can register their residence here. They can even eat and have a shower. This initial reception is the first interaction with Centro Astalli for all of its clients. For many asylum seekers and refugees, the hallway of Via degli Astalli is the beginning of a process of assistance and integration.

The majority of people arriving in the earlier months of 2011 at the soup kitchen were Tunisians, but the number of new arrivals from Libya also increased. The majority of those arriving from Libya are of Ethiopian, Somali and Eritrean origin. Many had already fled violence in their home country, and also inhumane detention conditions or extreme violence in Libya. Those who arrived from Libya at JRS Italy tell of the threats and the violence they experienced: some were shot, others beaten or have seen their friends die. Others still tell us of horrendous detention conditions there – with 65 people held in one tiny room for a month without water. Others have seen relatives drown as they made the perilous journey by sea to reach Italy. Their arrival to Europe marks a new chapter in their lives, but not yet an end to hardship.

ESCAPE ON A RUBBER DINGHY

My name is M., I am a 26 year old Eritrean. I am one of the many who arrived by sea in July 2011. I spent 30 days in the Accommodation Centre of Lampedusa, where I got help to apply for asylum in Italy. Now I have a permit issued by the Italian authorities for humanitarian reasons and I dream to study and find a good job.

My journey to Italy began on a lorry with 100 others. Each one paid US\$100 for their seat to cross the desert to Libya. It lasted one week; the food wasn't enough and the water was even less.

I spent three months in Tripoli before I left for Italy. The situation was difficult and it was very dangerous to stay there. Ironically, civil war made the possibility to escape from Libya easier for refugees willing to do so. The price for a seat on a rubber dinghy was US\$900.

On 1st July, I was informed that I had to leave the following night. That night another 23 people were waiting: 16 young men, three women and two pregnant women with their husbands. We knew that the travel lasted one day and we had a sandwich for each person and only one bottle of water for everybody. It took seven days to arrive and one of us didn't make it. It was a real nightmare. After 25 hours at sea, the rubber dinghy started to take on water. Suddenly, we saw a big white ship on the horizon, and we started jumping and yelling. As we got closer we asked for help, but the ship moved away. We lost the only chance to save ourselves.

After two days, we were all exhausted; I thought I was going to die. At the first light of the day we saw a Turkish ship, but we were sure they wouldn't help us again. They took the women only – only later I learned that the boat landed in Malta and the pregnant women had their babies. On the sixth day we were sure we wouldn't survive the night. A big wave submerged us for twenty endless seconds. One of us did not resurface. I did not have the courage to open my eyes; there wasn't anything else to do. After this I don't remember anything. I fainted. My next memory is waking up on a ship surrounded by people who were trying to make me drink water.

MALTA

ACCOMPANIMENT: 1579 boat arrivals and other immigration detainees were provided with initial information session on asylum procedure and rules regulating their immigration status; 20 people per week were assisted with social work issues through our drop-in service; 35 awareness-raising activities in 24 schools; legal assistance was provided in 148 cases, mostly protection-related, some related to integration;

DETENTION: 800+ requests for information from individual detainees were followed up through regular visits to Malta's detention centres.

SHELTER AND SUPPORT

In 2011, JRS Malta implemented a project providing sheltered accommodation and psychosocial support for vulnerable asylum seekers who otherwise would have been unable to access such services.

A team of outreach and social workers, cultural mediators, a nurse and psychologist assessed and sought to meet the needs of vulnerable detainees as well as asylum seekers, people with protection and refugees in the community.

Sixty-two vulnerable asylum seekers in detention were identified as potentially qualifying for release and referred to the responsible government agency for assessment; more than half were released on grounds of vulnerability, including disability, mental and physical health problems. The JRS team reached another 46 cases in the community, among them families needing intensive support. Some were placed in sheltered accommodation.

One of the specific aims of the project was to set up a network to offer a single coordinated service. A core team was set up, including JRS, representatives of eight other organisations and two consultants, and successfully served as a coordination point for services offered.

In October 2011, JRS conducted a survey of training needs among mainstream social service providers, to plan training that is relevant to needs on the ground.

Kristina Zammit, Assistant Director, giving individual support to refugees in need.



CARING FOR EACH OTHER LIKE FAMILY

I left my country because there were no human rights, no freedom, nothing. When I eventually reached Malta and went to Hal-Far, we were accommodated in containers. I went to the bus terminus and saw many Eritreans gathered there. They told me: "Go to JRS and you will find help." They gave me the number of the bus and told me how to reach the place.

JRS is not an office; it is a family. You feel there is someone taking care of you. I often watch the team at work. At first I thought they were helping me because I have six children, but they are the same with anyone who goes to the office, talking nicely, caring, and helping. When they have clothes to give us, everything is new, neatly folded. They have given me a fan, food, clothes and other things. When they find work for us, they call, even on the weekend. For my asylum application, they took me to the Refugee Commissioner, explained the process and made everything simple.

Once, my one-and-a-half-year-old son was sick, and the nurse, Lora, stayed with us in hospital for more than 12 hours. He was there for four days; people from JRS visited all the time. I wanted to ask them: "Is this my son or yours?"

ACCOMPANIMENT: Provision of food parcels; helping migrants access local public services; visiting migrants' homes and helping to settle disputes.

DESTITUTION: Providing economic support, helping with medical costs; French and English courses, and computer classes for women; sewing workshop; kindergarten and primary schooling for migrant children; support group for pupils in primary school.

AWARENESS RAISING: Study of the migration routes from Africa to Europe and collection of personal stories for publication and lobbying.

EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

During the year, JRS endeavoured to register migrant children in local Moroccan primary schools, but with little success. The reasons for this are diverse. Some mothers do not trust the Moroccan school system, or they do not see the importance for their child to be schooled at all. Families also believe that they will soon leave the country, making school enrollment meaningless for them. As migrant families are often victims of racism, they do not want to expose their children to the same threat in the schools. In addition, some school directors prohibit migrant children from enrolling in their schools because they believe – sometimes erroneously – the children do not know Arabic.

In response, JRS Morocco organised two educational projects in September. The first is an Arabic language course for pupils aged 3-6 years. The second is a support group for older French and English speaking students who have not been enrolled in the local schools. Expatriate volunteers help them on an individual basis. Thus far, we have seen that these children display a high motivation and are keen to progress. The goal of JRS, however, is still to get these persons registered in Moroccan schools.

IN SEARCH OF A SAFE SPACE

The long journey to Morocco is a very dangerous one, according to reports told to JRS Morocco by numerous refugees. Individuals and families who flee from sub-Saharan African countries must often walk in desert conditions, and face risk of robbery and assault by armed groups. Upon arrival to Morocco, refugees find that danger still persists. Many of the women whom JRS Morocco has met have described experiencing violence, sexual abuse and racism. These experiences lead to trauma and poor mental health.

Koukou's story is a case in point. Having fled civil war from her home in Liberia, she traveled to Nigeria, Libya and finally to Morocco, in an effort to find safety for her and her family. Despite having been previously recognised as refugees, the Moroccan authorities treated her, her husband and small child as irregular migrants. They were deported with many others to Oujda, located in the desert at the frontier of Algeria. Having little food and water, Koukou and her family had barely managed to survive. Eventually they made their way back to Casablanca on foot, where they now reside, in continuous fear of the authorities. Koukou relies heavily on JRS Morocco to make ends meet, as do many other women and families who seek out a safe space at JRS.



© JRS Europe

Learning the basics at JRS Morocco.

PORTUGAL

INTEGRATION: Provision of employment support and recognition of qualifications; accommodation for homeless migrants in the *Pedro Arrupe Centre*; general and professional Portuguese language courses.

ACCOMPANIMENT: Provided psychological, medical and legal support to 3133 migrants, especially those living destitute.

DETENTION: Visiting detainees and giving psychosocial support for migrants in the Porto detention centre.

AWARENESS RAISING: Promoting human rights, intercultural and interfaith dialogue and education for development; awareness campaigns on destitution, detention and social inclusion.

A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In the beginning of last year, we at JRS introduced a volunteer programme in our *Pedro Arrupe Accommodation Centre (CPA)*, based on the concept of ‘mentoring’, where a volunteer is partnered with a single resident and is responsible – at an emotional and spiritual level – for his integration into Portuguese society.

Together, they take part in daily routine activities. Mentors help to prepare migrants for job interviews, have meals together and help them to learn the Portuguese language. But, most of all, they share the knowledge and experiences both have learned through life.

Today, at CPA, we have 18 mentors working in this programme, each with their own resident. It’s been an amazing experience, mostly because it builds up the means to a long-lost concept that is crucial in our society: the sense of community.

Using football to help migrants integrate into daily life.

A MATTER OF CHANCE

Mohamed, a name like any other; a life like any other. Raised in Côte d’Ivoire, Mohamed was a victim of the civil conflict after the controversial 2010 Ivorian presidential elections. In need of money, Mohamed accepted a small job in Laurent Gbagbo’s presidential campaign. After the allegedly fraudulent election results, he was accused of supporting Gbagbo’s cause. Mohamed faced assaults from his community and even his family. He ended up in a hospital, where his “reputation” kept him from receiving proper medical care.

In the hope of finding a better future, Mohamed fled his homeland to Russia, where he struggled with racial discrimination. He lived in a small bedroom with six other immigrants; he could afford only one meal per day. He would walk around the city applying for all types of jobs to no avail. Employers would often rip up his visa.

Mohamed was advised to go to Portugal and apply for asylum. But upon applying, he was denied and detained in the Lisbon Airport for two months. Although empty handed and emotionally damaged, Mohamed arrived to us from the Portuguese Refugee Council with a new hope to rebuild his life. Accompanied by our staff and volunteers, he enrolled in several group activities that were keen to re-establish his social and professional foundations: from the simplest routines of cleaning the common room, washing his clothes, to Portuguese classes taught by volunteers.

Four months after his arrival to the *Pedro Arrupe Accommodation Centre*, his appeal was accepted, and he was granted a temporary residence permit based on humanitarian grounds. Mohamed now volunteers in a project to improve the integration of refugees. He feels like a changed man: *“Today I have a job, a place to sleep and eat, and a great relationship with the neighbours. I want to find my place here in Portugal, get married and be happy. And, in the end, feel like I left a mark in the world”*.

© JRS Portugal



ADVOCACY: Implemented 13 assistance, advocacy and research projects; focused on Dublin Regulation jurisprudence with 18 NGO's across Europe.

ACCOMPANIMENT: Visited 38 persons in detention centres. Accommodated for 72 persons at the Pedro Arrupe Centre. Provided legal assistance to 124 persons in and outside of detention centres, including 43 persons in Dublin procedures, using six lawyers.

INTEGRATION: Counselling and assisted 150 persons with regards to the labor market, accommodation, medical services, vocational and Romanian language courses, citizenship and socio-cultural activities.

AWARENESS RAISING: Organised and conducted several seminars about asylum procedures and integration programmes with judges, lawyers and national immigration authorities; implemented a public awareness campaign called, "The Future Starts with a Smile".

DESTITUTION: Assisted 25 persons with food, medicine and medical care services.

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF 'TOLERATED' FORCED MIGRANTS

Besides providing asylum seekers and forced migrants with social, legal and accommodation services, JRS Romania spent much of the year advocating for the improvement of the situation of destitute foreigners, such as those who are 'tolerated' on Romanian territory.

Tolerated migrants are given legal permission to stay in the country because they cannot be returned home. In this case, people can stay in Romania, but do not have access to basic entitlements, such as food and housing, or the right to access the labour market.

JRS and other NGO partners worked to improve this situation by proposing amendments to national immigration law. The result of this advocacy work turned out successfully. The new immigration law now includes important changes, such as the right to work and the personal identification code. This means that a person who is tolerated will now have the right to work under the same conditions as a Romanian citizen, and can benefit from social and medical insurance.

IT TAKES VERY LITTLE TO PROVIDE SHELTER AND FOOD

A refugee from Iran lives with toleration on Romanian territory. He is married to an Iranian woman, who is a recognised refugee. He recalls:

"When I arrived, I had a relatively good financial situation, but things went pretty bad and in a short period of time it got more difficult for me to manage. I lost almost everything. I moved to Bucharest and because of my limited financial possibilities it was impossible to pay rent or to live in a hotel. JRS Romania came to my rescue and offered refuge and a decent home for about a year, until I managed to create a life here.

It takes very little resources to provide shelter and some food for a few people for a short period of time, until they find a job and manage on their own. I am happy and grateful that I met my wife at the Romanian and English courses organized by JRS.

Today, my wife and I have our own home, a two-year old boy and a happy life. Many thanks to JRS!"

Meeting with Afghan asylum seekers at JRS Romania's *Pedro Arrupe Centre* in Bucharest.



SLOVENIA

DETENTION AND ASYLUM: Providing psychosocial support and pastoral care for people in the asylum home and detention centre.

ACCOMPANIMENT: Kindergarten for children in the asylum home two times per week; organised seaside holidays for 29 people living in the asylum home, with six volunteers and social workers; informing potential victims of human trafficking about their rights and the availability of services.

AWARENESS RAISING: Broadcast a monthly radio program, "Building a More Open Society"; participating at roundtables and conferences with NGO's and decision-makers; publishing articles on refugee issues.

Sharing a light moment with kids from the asylum home.



© JRS Slovenia

TO LEAVE HOME AND ALL YOUR POSSESSIONS IS THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

For a long time I have thought how to tell our story about coming to Slovenia. Our family consists of four people, and we come from Kosovo. I cannot tell you the reason why we came to Slovenia. I can only say that once we felt threatened, we made the choice to leave our home and to go abroad with the children. To leave home and all our possessions, it is somehow the worst that can happen to you.

We lived in the asylum home for one year and a half. It was not easy to come to a foreign country, without speaking the language, to start a new life again from the very beginning. We were lucky to meet non-governmental organisations that helped us to face these many difficulties.

We met Fr Robin Schweiger and Mrs Milena Frank from JRS. When we were living in the asylum home, Milena visited us twice a week. She prepared kindergarten for the kids and all they needed for play and fun. She also helped the kids with their homework from school. For the women who spent the whole day bored at the asylum home, she organised creative workshops to help us socialise, learn the Slovenian language and to occupy ourselves with handicrafts.

The nicest time we experienced were the holidays at the seaside. We were only the women and kids with Rebeka, another JRS worker, and the volunteers. We enjoyed that time very much. When people are not in a position to afford holidays for themselves and their children, they appreciate things like this.

I have been living in Slovenia for six years and I can say that we have gotten used to our new country. The two kids go to primary school. They are well and they have learned the Slovenian language. I opened a cleaning business, but it has been hard to find an apartment to call our own.

I give my warmest and sincere thanks go to all who helped us to settle down in Slovenia.

INCREASE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SLOVENIA

Every day, JRS Slovenia accompanies, serves and advocates for the rights of migrants living in the country's asylum reception centre and detention centre. JRS also helps refugees to better integrate into Slovenian society. Twice per week JRS organises a kindergarten for kids.

During the last year there was a substantial increase of asylum seekers arriving to Slovenia. In 2010, 246 came, while in 2011 it was 358. From these, 24 persons were granted refugee status, which is considered to be the highest number in recent years. Also in the same year, Slovenia implemented a new Aliens Act (*zakon o tujcih*), which is important for foreigners who live in the only Slovenian detention center in Postojna.

The rise in the numbers of asylum seekers coming to Slovenia encouraged JRS Slovenia to strengthen its media presence. The JRS country director gave interviews for the magazine *Demokracija*, the country's biggest daily newspaper *Delo* and for its Saturday supplement, *Sobotna priloga Dela*. JRS has used its ongoing radio programme, *Radio Ognjišče* (Building A More Open Society), broadcast every third Tuesday of the month, to project a positive image of forced migrants and to communicate their protection concerns to wider audiences.

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

ACCOMPANIMENT: Visited asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Croatia and Macedonia.

ADVOCACY: Advocated for people's rights in detention and asylum seeker reception centres in both Croatia and Macedonia. Worked to improve conditions and shorter asylum procedures.

INTEGRATION: Promoted reconciliation and integration, peace-building, tolerance as well as ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue between migrants and the host society.

INCREASING NUMBER OF MIGRANTS

JRS Southeast Europe (formerly JRS Western Balkans) accompanied detained asylum seekers and irregular migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Ukraine and Russia.

The Balkan route of migration has become a more widely used due to tougher security at other EU border points, with a growing number of mixed migrations from Africa.

Through weekly visits, JRS staff and volunteers provided detainees with a range of services, including psychosocial and educational support, pastoral support as well as language and computer courses and a JRS structured day care for kids with special needs. JRS Southeast Europe works closely with other civil society partners in Croatia and Macedonia, such as the Croatian Red Cross, UNHCR Croatia, the Croatian Law Centre, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, and Milosrdie – (a charity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church). JRS offered legal assistance to asylum seekers.

JRS Southeast Europe continued its Land Mine Assistance project in Kosovo. Victims of land mine explosions were provided with medical checkups and student support.



© JRS Southeastern Europe

The Salihi children.

A LONG JOURNEY TO SAFETY

The Salihi family left their home country, Afghanistan, eight months ago to seek a better life in Europe. On route to Macedonia, the Salihis went through Iran, Turkey and Greece. In December 2011, they arrived in Macedonia, applied for asylum and were sent to the Asylum Centre in Macedonia.

Throughout their journey to Macedonia, the Salihis faced many challenges. Now, it is clear that the family is quite satisfied with the private center and the staff. In particular, they are very happy that their kids are attending school, which they could not have done in their own country of Afghanistan.

SWEDEN

ASYLUM: Around 30,000 persons sought asylum in Sweden in 2011, mostly from Afghanistan, Somalia, Serbia, Eritrea and Iraq.

DETENTION: There are five migration detention centres in Sweden with a total capacity of around 150 places. Märsta detention centre, near Stockholm International Airport, has capacity of about 70 places.

RESPONDING ON DIFFERENT FRONTS

A detention visitors group of JRS Sweden regularly visits the detention centre in Märsta. The main task of the detention visitors group is to give moral support to the detainees, help them get in touch with lawyers, their relatives and, if necessary, mediate between the detainees, the police and the Swedish migration authorities. In addition, JRS offers pastoral care for Catholics of both Western and Eastern rites.

More and more Iraqis were deported to Baghdad from Sweden. In response, JRS helped Iraqi refugees establish contact with family and relatives in Iraq.

Of concern to JRS Sweden were detainees held under the Dublin Regulation. Contacts were established with other NGOs or JRS offices in the detainees' destination countries to ensure adequate support and a fair treatment upon arrival.

On a less structured basis, JRS offered help and advice to irregular migrants. In autumn 2011, JRS Sweden organised an event in Stockholm on *Migration and Climate Change in Africa* in cooperation with the Newman Institute in Uppsala, and Stellenbosch University from South Africa.

JRS took part in several events on detention to promote the DEVAS report and to raise awareness about the problems of detention and the possibility of community-based alternatives. The DEVAS project has inspired research projects currently underway by the University of Uppsala and the Swedish migration authorities.

JRS Sweden Director Fr Christoph Hermann SJ (second from left) with volunteers in front of the Märsta detention centre.



FEELING SAFE, FOR NOW

I am a woman from Afghanistan, who had converted to Orthodox Christianity when I lived in Russia. When I returned to Afghanistan, I was bullied and badly treated, as the news had spread that I was Christian. My family wanted to force me into marriage with a man I did not know nor loved. I fled my home and eventually a friend helped me to come to Europe. I ended up in the Czech Republic, where I had a very hard time. It was especially tough to be in a camp with other migrants, mostly men. I was forced into prostitution.

I decided to then go to Sweden, since I was not able to stay in Czech Republic. The Swedish authorities wanted to deport me back to the Czech Republic; I was locked into detention.

Thanks to JRS, I was able to leave detention and I got in contact with a lawyer and a women's rights organisation that is now working on my case. I hope I will be able to stay here in Sweden. At least for the time being, I feel safe.

ACCOMPANIMENT: Provision of room and board for up to 24 asylum seekers, plus legal representation, language instruction, job search, community life, and life-skills counseling.

ADVOCACY: Work with government and social organisations to improve laws, administrative procedures, and delivery of services to migrants and refugees.

EXTERNALISATION: Monitoring developments in Ukrainian law and changes in EU policy with respect to migrant flows in Ukraine.

EU PARTNER: FRIEND OR THREAT?

Year by year Ukraine aligns its laws with the international community, with a special reference to the European Union. The EU's rules are demanding for a country like Ukraine, but most people even within the country view this as an important and even necessary process. One down side is that laws and structures are created, often with EU funding, before the country's bureaucracy can understand or handle the implications. While representing asylum seekers, we are often confronted with state workers who are not aware of new laws or, being aware, are still awaiting administrative procedures to carry out the laws. Sometimes this means that honest people in need are denied their basic needs.

With every new government comes a new energy to reorganise and update. Ukraine has a larger and entirely new staff of migration offices that include lawyers for the first time. JRS Ukraine still encounters situations in which, despite now having qualified officers in principle, these officers have no training in asylum law. Fears of making mistakes often leads to the simple denial of refugee status for people who should by any standard receive it. Our work is often doubled or tripled by having to explain state laws and international procedures to officers in these positions. Sometimes the results are positive; sometimes people's suffering is increased.

HUMANITY DESPITE BUREAUCRACY

The family is from Iraq. The father is a lawyer who defended "the wrong side" in a property issue. Two vengeful car bombs later, the family fled at the insistence of his wife and mother of their young child. They made their way to Ukraine en route to the EU or anywhere. After some months in the country, the man's brother who had accompanied them decided to return to Iraq. Shortly after his arrival, the family sent word that the brother had been killed by a bomb placed in his car. The threat is alive. They pleaded that the others not return.

This is one of few cases that has ample documentary evidence, including court transcripts and newspaper articles that name names. The family was refused status in Ukraine on the ground that they had falsified a visa for entry into the country. The man had to pay a fine. Despite explanation of their dramatic situation and enduring threat, the bureaucracy could not find a way to forgive the falsification issue. The recommendation was immediate deportation. We were shocked, as was the UNHCR office. The case is under appeal but we fear that it still will not be judged according to the merits of the case and the ongoing threat to life. A certain nervous attention to bureaucratic detail, a lack of balance in weighing bureaucracy against humanity, and, more importantly, a lack of familiarity with using the law for the aid of needy people are the pressures under which Ukraine is working its way into the international arena. New laws, EU pressure and financial aid are not enough to train the human heart.

© JRS Ukraine



An Iraqi family who fled to Ukraine after being threatened with death.

UNITED KINGDOM

DESTITUTION: Weekly ‘drop in’ services to 100 refugees and asylum seekers each week at the JRS UK office.

DETENTION: Regular visits to Harmondsworth and Colnbrook detention centres, located near Heathrow airport.

ADVOCACY: Invited asylum seekers to share their experiences with the UK Border Agency authorities, and sought their input in developing advocacy recommendations.

SOLICITOR LIAISON SERVICE

Since the completion of the DEVAS project on detention, it has become apparent that a contributory factor of vulnerability is the negative rapport between solicitors and detainees. Many detainees express a lack of confidence in the ability of their solicitors to manage time constraints, maintain contact and report case developments to them. Those solicitors who were able to communicate, on a semi-regular basis, found it both challenging and time-consuming to simplify their legal language and convey tentative or no progress. Additionally, lawyers also found their clients persistent calls unhelpful as they were often called away from their casework to reiterate the knowledge they had imparted days before.

In response, in JRS UK implemented a solicitor liaison service (SLS). The main objective of this service is to facilitate sustained updates of progress related to detainees’ legal cases and communicate outcomes in simple terms. Secondly, it is hoped, that our service would indirectly protect their lawyers from receiving frequent calls from their clients thus enabling them to concentrate on their cases.

The SLS has proven, over time, to be advantageous to both detainees and to their solicitors. Paul (a solicitor liaison) is friendly, caring and personable, ensuring comfort and trust throughout the legal process of detainees. As a consequence, confidence in their legal representation has risen, anxiety levels have decreased and most importantly their self-esteem has been strengthened.

JRS have developed a good rapport with the solicitors, which has enhanced communication and advocacy. This has enabled our SLS to contact a partner or supervisor where a trainee solicitor presents as needing additional, professional support. Phone calls by detainees have eased, giving the legal team more time to concentrate on the complexities of their caseload.

EASIER AND SMOOTHER COMMUNICATION

JRS Detention Outreach Coordinator, Margaret Baxter, and JRS volunteer, Paul Okaru, speak about their experience of the Solicitor Liaison Programme.

“One of the reasons for the difficulty in communication with solicitors”, according to Margaret, “was because they simply did not know JRS. Also they did not take us seriously to begin with...”

Paul says: “I discussed how we could make it easier for us to assist the detainees with various cases. This was very relevant as Margaret was increasingly seeing more detainees at Colnbrook and Harmondsworth who needed legal representation. We decided we had to get detainees to sign a disclaimer form which I prepared that would waive the legal professional privilege in communications with their solicitor. The disclaimer was a bonus to JRS as the solicitors started to know JRS better and it paved the way for easier and smoother communication with solicitors for the detainees.”

Margaret Baxter (Detention Outreach Coordinator) and Faith (JRS Events and Administration Volunteer) at the “Open House” event.



JRS activities in other countries

SPAIN

In the fourth trimester of 2011, the general unemployment rate among foreigners in Spain reached 35%. Tough economic times have discouraged foreigners from coming to Spain. However, for migrants who are already here, few choose to return to their countries of origin. Less than 5,000 participated in the government's return programmes. In all, there are nearly 800,000 foreigners – EU nationals and third country nationals included – who may be living in Spain without residence documentation.

A legal reform to the Foreigners Act, adopted in June, imposes limits on the right to family reunification for third country nationals, and gives the authorities wide discretion on how unaccompanied minors are to be treated. The ability for migrants to renew their work permits became harder in light of high unemployment rates for Spaniards.

Immigration and integration policies were mostly left aside during local and general elections. In any case, the Spanish Jesuit Migration network published a booklet, entitled *Overcoming Borders*, to raise awareness and change attitudes towards migrants. Another booklet touching on similar themes was published by the Jesuit Social Apostolate, entitled, *Crisis prolongada, solidaridad reforzada*. The two booklets were well received by the press, Jesuit communities and even policy makers.

The debate on immigration detention intensified during 2011. A new policy permitted NGOs to visit detention centres. The organisation Pueblos Unidos published a report about the Aluche detention centre. The deaths of two detainees in two different centres sparked negative reactions from a police trade union. Civil society organisations, meanwhile, called for stronger regulations on detention.

LUXEMBOURG

In January, the Ignatian Migration Group (GIM) organised the fifth annual European Christian Life Community (CLC) meeting on forced migration. In attendance were 23 CLC members from seven countries, two delegates from JRS Belgium and Franklin Ibanez, the Executive Secretary of the World CLC. Participants developed guidelines for the Ignatian accompaniment of forced migrants. This document is available in French, English and Spanish, and was printed in *Progressio*, a publication of the World CLC. Four refugees gave their testimonies at the conference.

Luxembourg opened its first detention centre during the summer. A member of GIM visits the detention centre on a weekly basis, serving as a lay chaplain. Special encounters with persons in detention are organised for Christmas and Easter with GIM's support.

As Luxemburg received in 2011 a significant number of asylum seekers from former Yugoslavian republics, belonging to the Roma community, GIM decided to work on the issue of Roma people in Europe, searching for good practices to promote within Luxembourg's population.

Finally, in response to the plan of the national authorities to reduce social assistance to asylum seekers, GIM published a reflection paper to influence public debate.

Discussing refugee issues at the CLC conference.



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Families living in direct provision centre enjoying a trip to the beach as part of the JRS Ireland Summer Programme 2011.



© JRS Ireland

A Sudanese family being supported by JRS Malta.



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Structure of JRS Europe

JRS Europe was established in March 1992. It is an incorporated “International Association” under Belgian law (AISBL No. 452165993), with a Constitution, General Assembly and Governing Council. It is recognised as a refugee-assisting NGO by the EU institutions and by several states both within Europe and beyond (such as in Angola and Ethiopia).

JRS Europe is a region of the Jesuit Refugee Service worldwide. In Europe, it is organised as a project of the Conference of European Provincials and an inter-provincial apostolic work of the Society of Jesus. The JRS Europe region covers around 20 Jesuit provinces. National coordinators and directors answer to their respective provincials, and for certain matters directly to the JRS Europe regional director.

The directors of the JRS country offices meet twice annually for a regional coordination meeting, which facilitates strategic planning for the region.

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BE, FR, DE, IE, IT, MT, MA, PT, RO, SI, SE, UA, UK, Southeastern Europe (Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia)

■ CONTACT PERSONS:

AT, DK, EE, LX, NL, SK, ES, CH

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Luigi Romano SJ, Assistant Regional Director (left in October)
Stefan Kessler, Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer
Carola Jimenez-Asenjo, Project Development Officer
Philip Amaral, Policy and Communications Officer
Isabelle de Sazilly, Administrator

VOLUNTEERS, INTERNS, JESUIT PLACEMENTS, TEMPORARY STAFF

Joseph Poncin, Administrative Support
Gianluigi Campogrande, Policy Support
Mary Kita, Media Volunteer (left in March)
Whitney Henderson, Policy Intern from Boston College Graduate School of Social Work
Cathal Foley, Media Officer Intern

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Michael Schöpf SJ · **Luigi Romano SJ**
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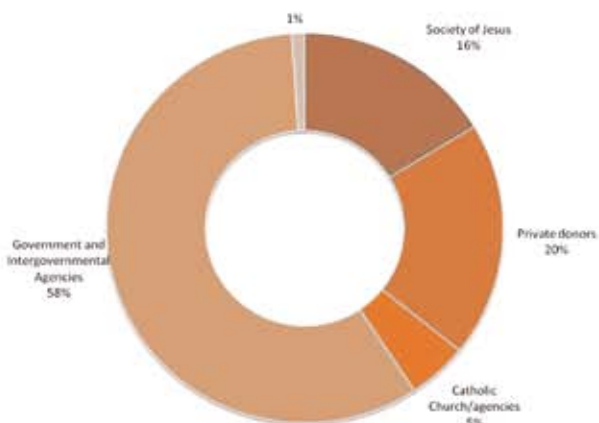
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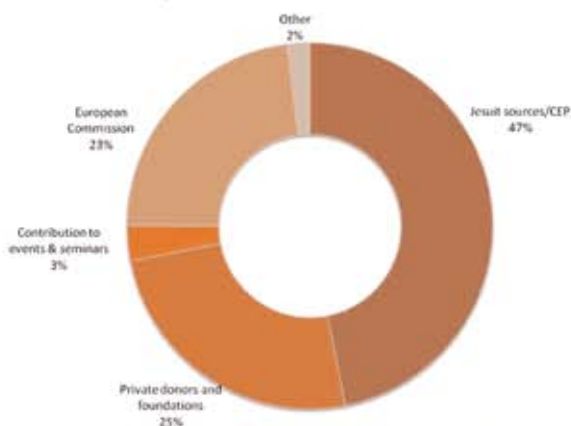
Financial summary

JRS-Europe country offices – source of income



Society of Jesus	892,604
Private donors	1,068,447
Catholic Church/agencies	268,923
Government and Intergovernmental Agencies	3,194,047
Other	58,075
TOTAL	5,482,097

JRS-Europe Brussels – source of core income

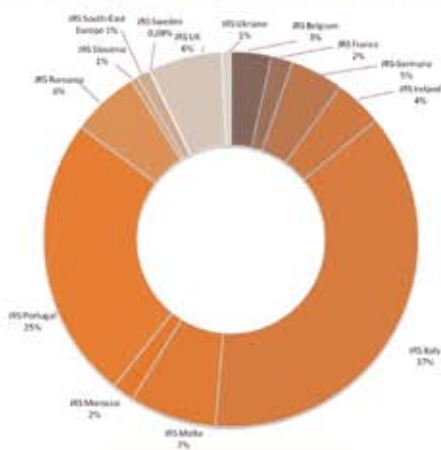


Jesuit sources/CEP	157,488
Private donors and foundations	84,002
Contribution to events & seminars	10,483
European Commission	77,011
Other	6,806
TOTAL	335,790

The income not spent in 2011 was used to:

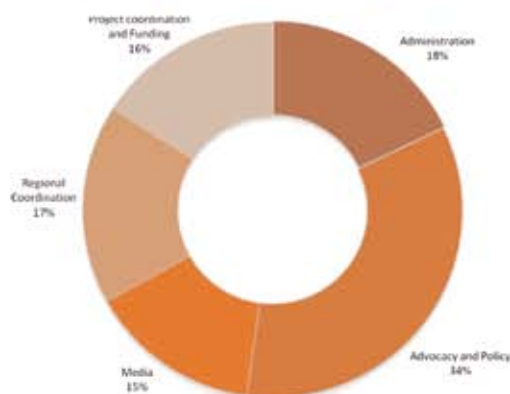
- to complete the fund for the new communications work of JRS Europe. Spending will start in 2012.
- upgrade the reserves fund which is required in case of financial difficulties or in case the operations should have to cease any time in the future.

JRS-Europe country offices – expenditure



JRS Belgium	173,349
JRS France	91,909
JRS Germany	226,474
JRS Ireland	208,550
JRS Italy	1,854,000
JRS Malta	372,293
JRS Morocco	94,453
JRS Portugal	1,220,048
JRS Romania	291,403
JRS Slovenia	28,500
JRS South-East Europe	57,698
JRS Sweden	4,052
JRS UK	312,794
JRS Ukraine	41,234
TOTAL	4,976,757

JRS-Europe Brussels – core expenditure



Administration	43,940
Advocacy and Policy	84,751
Media	36,384
Regional Coordination	42,520
Project coordination and Funding	39,207
TOTAL	246,783

JRS-Europe accounts are audited by an independent auditor.



Mohammed Idris, a refugee from Eritrea, works for JRS Malta. He made five attempts to traverse the Mediterranean Sea from Libya. Upon arrival in Malta he was detained, for one year. "God gave me patience", says Mohammed. He now uses his experiences to help other detainees cope with their plight.



Ethiopian children resettled to the UK as refugees. Resettlement remains one of the most important ways in which a government can offer protection to refugees.

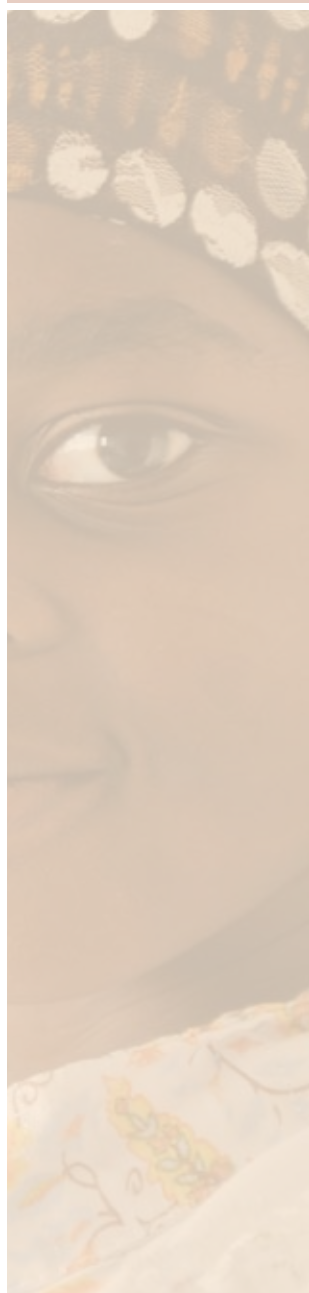


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