



ANNUAL REPORT 2015

JESUIT
REFUGEE
SERVICE
EUROPE





The Jesuit Refugee Service 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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Cover photo: Refugees arrive on the Greek island of Lesbos.
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Back cover photo: JRS staff supporting refugees in the Former
Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
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KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF WELCOME

So many people fleeing from war and insecurity from countries like Syria and Eritrea have made their way to enter Europe, via Greece or Italy, over the last year. It has been and continues to be a big challenge for Europe.

Pope Francis called on us all to offer a welcome of dignity and solidarity, which received an overwhelming response from ordinary citizens. All through the year we saw local people offering their time and support to people travelling with nothing more than the clothes they wore – from the Greek island of Lesbos to the northern reaches of Sweden.

Through our services and communities of hospitality JRS Europe aims to sustain this positive attitude towards refugees and take all this energy into the important long-term project of social inclusion and integration. Thanks to very generous funding and support of our donors and friends we have been able to assist people from the moment they arrive in Europe: providing shelter to the most vulnerable and taking care of health, food and drink.

Many volunteers have joined the JRS teams to offer this first help, and their enthusiasm and joy in their service is priceless. Mediators and translators have been present in camps and in the shelters. These actions have put in motion the accompaniment that is central to our JRS mission: people on the move have needs, and also really appreciate a moment of rest, of friendship and conversation.

European states didn't prepare for these movements, and have had great difficulties in setting up a common political response that reflects the welcome of citizens. Too often we have seen states acting alone, closing their borders and erecting fences.

Over the last year JRS Europe has intensified its calls for safe and legal access to protection in Europe, including more resettlement places and the introduction of humanitarian visas.

We are absolutely convinced of the necessity of common and interdependent policies and our new advocacy officers who joined our team in 2015 continue to discuss this with all our stakeholders.



Each of the national offices bring their own specific experience and expertise to building a common response of JRS in Europe to refugees on the move. Only such a response - 'united in diversity' as the EU motto goes - will bear fruits, as we have already experienced.

A heartfelt thank you to all our teams and supporters across Europe. Together we can ensure that the culture of welcome grows and spreads, building new and dynamic communities along the way.

Jean-Marie Carrière SJ
Regional Director, JRS Europe
May 2016

Policy and advocacy

Unprecedented numbers of refugees and asylum seekers travelled by sea to Europe in 2015 in search of international protection. According to the UNHCR, 84 percent of them represent people from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq.

Safe and legal ways: With no other options open, the vast majority were forced to pay smugglers extortionate fees to board unseaworthy and overcrowded vessels to try and reach a European shore – sometimes Italy, sometimes Greece. Many people died in shipwrecks. JRS Europe continued to urge policymakers to open up more safe and regular channels for people to reach Europe in order to undercut the business model of smugglers and prevent more unnecessary deaths.

We lobbied the European institutions and national governments together with our national offices to boost the number of resettlement places, liberalise family reunification rules and introduce humanitarian visas. New advocacy officer, Olga Siebert, especially focused on this last issue with MEPs in the Justice and Home Affairs committee and considerable progress has been made.

Access to protection: At the same time, JRS Europe called upon the policymakers to improve access to protection for all refugees and asylum seekers at all stages of their journey. We called for the strengthening of search-and-rescue missions that should be focused on saving lives, not on protecting the external borders; the provision of immediate medical and psycho-social assistance, legal aid and information about rights to asylum seekers; and finally the identification and protection of those particularly vulnerable: including unaccompanied and separated children, women, elderly, people with disabilities, victims of torture and victims of human traffickers.

New staff members: For the third year running Stefan Kessler of JRS Europe co-chaired the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights at the EU border agency Frontex, with the focus on mainstreaming and safeguarding human rights in all its operations.

Stefan returned to Berlin to work with JRS Germany in June after 6 years with JRS Europe in Brussels. To take up his post as policy and advocacy officer Mark Provera joined the team in September. With extensive experience in EU asylum law, Mark is leading the group of JRS advocacy officers in Europe towards a common position on the Dublin regulation.



A Syrian family travelling on foot
in the Balkans, September 2015.
© SERGI CAMARA / JRS

Projects

The JRS network in Europe responded with dedication and compassion to the increased number of arrivals in Europe over the last year. With the crucial support of our partners and donors we were able to coordinate our response and provide key services to vulnerable groups of migrants – for example, offering a place for rest and recuperation in our safe house in Skopje. Moreover, JRS Europe programmes coordinator Carola Jimenez-Asenjo and the team performed the groundwork in setting up long-term projects focusing on the integration and social inclusion of forced migrants in Europe. We look forward to strengthening and expanding the following projects in 2016.

I Get You: Our newest project that will promote best practices to counter racism and xenophobia against forced migrants. Via public nominations we will map community building initiatives in Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain. With funding from the European Commission's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme, the project will include a public campaign and advocacy efforts to promote social inclusion.

Emergency Response Coordination: JRS Europe coordinated the emergency response methods of several JRS country offices to the increased number of arrivals in Europe, notably in Greece and the Balkans. With regular exchanges of information and expertise we coordinated our response to the most basic needs of people on the move such as accommodation, food, and language translation.

Communities of Hospitality (CoH): A three-year project, CoH supports community building initiatives and grassroots advocacy for forced migrants in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom and Spain.

Protection at External Borders (PEB): Monitors and documents human rights violations against forced migrants at Europe's external borders through a research observatory while providing accompaniment and services to those affected.

9th Annual Detention Visitors Support Group in Brussels (DVSG): 3-day training for detention visitors on inter-cultural communications, psychological issues, human rights and advocacy in Brussels. Our training manual for detention visitors was published in July and is available via our website.

Participants of the Detention Visitors Support group during the advocacy session led by Stefan Kessler in June 2015.

© JRS EUROPE



Communications

During the year JRS Europe's messages were featured in several prominent news outlets in Europe. As parts of the media and politicians continued to use the rhetoric of a 'refugee crisis', JRS Europe provided a clear, balanced analysis of events, consistently urging the EU with its vast wealth and resources to do more.

Through the numerous summits in Brussels, when EU heads of state came together to work on asylum policy, we continued to promote the creation safe and legal ways for people to reach Europe. We especially highlighted this need in the face of tragedies such as when 800 migrants lost their lives in the Mediterranean in April and in relation to the horrific circumstances which led to death of 71 people in the back of a truck on the Austrian motorway in August.

Over the year our voice was shared by Newsweek, Euronews, the IRIN humanitarian news network, America Magazine Catholic Review, Vatican Radio and more. Moreover, we facilitated accurate

in-depth reporting on refugees with journalists from the BBC, AFP, the New York Times and La Croix.

JRS Europe engaged and cooperated regularly with NGO partners in Brussels and beyond – from Caritas to UNHCR. JRS Europe communications officer Oscar Spooner also took part in a special consultation on the launch of a new report by the Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna on human trafficking and severe forms of labour exploitation.

Communications staff from the national offices met in Brussels in March and in October, to share and to plan ahead. As part of this strategy group timelines and plans were made for the collection of refugee testimonies and photos in our common European projects. The group also helped design the concept for the new JRS Europe electronic email newsletter (to replace The Refuge) which was launched in February 2016 and will be sent out on a monthly basis.



Members of the communications strategy group meeting in Brussels. © JRS EUROPE

BELGIUM
FRANCE
GERMANY
GREECE
HUNGARY
IRELAND
ITALY
MALTA
POLAND
PORTUGAL
ROMANIA
SLOVENIA
SOUTHEAST EUROPE
SWEDEN
UNITED KINGDOM

JRS IN EUROPE

BELGIUM

DIGNITY

The respect of human dignity is an ongoing concern in the work of JRS Belgium. In 2015, we visited many migrants in the Belgian detention centres. Every migrant we meet there is going through a period filled with uncertainty. Why am I here? How long will it take? What will happen to me?

Our visitors try to open up a space for encounter and accompany the detained migrants through this difficult time. By being present in a respectful way, with an open spirit, we say to them that you exist and you count for us. It is a genuine process of showing respect. In this way, we try to support them in restoring their self-confidence and building their resilience.

Families who are awaiting their return or the outcome of their asylum procedures are housed in so-called return houses. When visiting the return houses, we observe that this alternative form of detention can be a serious threat to a family's integrity. Due to the rules and the setting of the return houses, parents are no longer in a position to raise their children in the way they are used to. By giving the parents room to express their feelings and worries, our visitors try to help them rebuild their dignity.

In September 2015, JRS Belgium launched the 'Up Together' project. Our detention visitors discovered the existence of a group of people who cannot be removed from the country by the government, nor do they have the right of residence in Belgium. Their migration project

not only failed, but it seems to have led them into a dead end.

They end up on the streets, forced to live as irregular migrants. Through the creation of hospitality networks composed of volunteers, families, single persons and communities, the 'Up Together' project offers them not only a roof over their heads but also warmth, respect, recognition, support and appreciation. We intend to create a safe environment for these extremely vulnerable migrants in order to help them to re-establish their human dignity. By giving them some time to breathe, they can reconsider their situation, their failed migration project and slowly recover and make new choices in both dignity and serenity.



QUICK FACTS

- JRS Belgium was 41 times present in the return houses in Beauvechain, Sint-Gillis-Waas, Tubize en Zulte. In total 53 families with all together 110 children were accompanied.
- 152 visits were counted for JRS Belgium in the detention centers Caricole, Brugge, Vottem and Merksplas. In total 572 persons were accompanied.
- 110 persons showed their interest in the Up Together project by filling in the inscription form on our website. 147 persons attended the information sessions. In mid-December the first migrant was welcomed in the first active solidarity network in Brussels

Our team and the cup of water: JRS-B teambuilding in the Roosenberg Abbey in Waasmunster in June 2015. © JRS BELGIUM

FRANCE

COMPASSION

The year 2015 was marked by an increased public awareness about the dramas experienced by people fleeing areas of armed conflict. The extensive media coverage of these tragedies and the call of Pope Francis stirred the compassion of many people in France and resulted in a multiplication of generous individuals wanting to participate in a better reception of refugees, and significant offers of financial support from philanthropic foundations and others.

From September to December 2015, the office of JRS France and local coordination received hundreds of calls and messages from all over France: inquiries, welcome proposals and offers to volunteer. This mobilization drove JRS France to develop and grow into new areas of refugee support. JRS warmly thanks everyone who took part and contributed to this growth.

JRS France was called to show how new forms of solidarity are possible with the poorest of our refugee friends, regardless of their administrative status, and always with a view to a positive solution in the framework of the law. In terms of legal assistance, JRS France aided many individuals with their asylum applications and helped them to prepare for their asylum interviews.

QUICK FACTS

- Welcome Jeunes: 140 asylum seekers and refugees, 60 students and young professionals plus 600 people took part.
- More than 2,000 hours were invested to accompany refugees in their different needs: how to find housing or a job, how to have access to professional training or continuing education.
- JRS wrote two booklets: 'How to accompany a refugee' (for volunteers), and 'How to succeed in job interviews' (for refugees).

JRS organised many public events during the year, including a special service on All Saint's Day in November to commemorate all the people who lost their lives trying to reach safety in Europe. Over 300 people with different religions and backgrounds attended the event. The Welcome Project tripled the number of families and religious communities hosting refugees. From 2014 to 2015 the number of cities with welcome networks grew from 17 to 30.

The Welcome Jeunes (Youth Welcome) project had more than 600 people participating



Refugees paint a colourful tree on the walls of the common room in the chaplaincy of the Institute of Political Studies in Paris as part of Welcome Jeunes. © JRS FRANCE

in different activities: French conversation workshops, theatre, dance, arts, football, philosophical debate and more. According to two participants:

"Everyone should be united. It was one of the first times I was really happy in France."

Hamid, refugee from Afghanistan

"It is unique because it allows us to organize things with people often marginalized, and on an equal footing."

Daniela, student

GERMANY

JUSTICE

Over the year JRS Germany was actively involved in the reception of thousands of refugees in Germany. Local citizens lined streets and train stations to welcome refugees, and volunteers helped in accommodation centres and soup kitchens.

The current context greatly impacted JRS Germany's work. Because of the obscurities of asylum law, JRS has established legal counselling for individuals during drop-in hours in our office and also for groups of refugees living at reception centres in order to shed light on the system and process. For refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq or Iran who have more difficulty obtaining international protection, the support JRS provides in these cases can oftentimes be decisive.

At the heart of JRS Germany's work are visits to detention centres where we offer legal aid and pastoral care to migrants awaiting deportation. Since the Dublin regulation has now been put back in practice and more refugees face deportation to another EU country, also the number of church parishes who host refugees in order to avoid their deportation has risen again. JRS has closely supported many of these parishes, especially around Munich.

In addition, JRS contributes to volunteer trainings for local German citizens. We have

seen the direct impact volunteers can have as important resources for refugees. Volunteers accompany refugees through navigating the asylum procedure and coping with experiences of trauma.

There were many welcoming initiatives for refugees, but also a rise in instances of racist attacks and discrimination. In 2015, JRS Germany aimed to counter this by contributing a positive message about refugees to the public discourse. We participated in about 100 public discussions and lectures and are frequently asked to give interviews to the media. Through JRS advocacy and media work, we constantly call for the rights of forced migrants to be upheld, in the wake of changing asylum laws. At the same time, we advocate for a society that promotes justice in accordance with European and Christian values.

QUICK FACTS

- Approx. 100 refugees accommodated in church asylum who were facing deportation were provided with legal and social assistance by JRS staff.
- Approx. 700 migrants and refugees in detention centres in Bavaria, Berlin and Brandenburg were offered social and pastoral care and legal aid.
- More than 550 counselling sessions were held for migrants seeking residence permits for themselves and their families via the hardship commission. In about 30 cases of these cases the senator of the interior granted a stay.

A girl is interviewed by the media after she arrived with her family at Munich train station after a long journey through the Balkans. © PASCAL MEYER SJ



GREECE

HOPE

More than one million people, mostly refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, crossed Greece during 2015. The JRS team in Greece officially began operations in November with a team of two Jesuits, Maurice Joyeux SJ (Director) and Pierre Hong SJ (Arrupe Centre) and six employees and volunteers.

When the situation changed radically in May 2015, a small team of volunteers was already present in the field and thinking about better ways to accompany people looking for hope and dignity, doing their best in a spirit of hospitality.

During several months of planning and preparation together with colleagues from JRS Europe, activities were launched with a specific JRS character of accompaniment as a way to contribute to the humanitarian effort in Greece without duplicating the efforts of other organisations.

A shelter was opened in November 2015 on the second floor of the Jesuit community located in the centre of Athens, with a capacity to host 25 to 30 vulnerable migrants on a short-term basis. Here, JRS looked after mainly families with small children, giving them the opportunity to rest, to eat, to change clothes, to talk and receive information and advice. As much as possible,

JRS tried to meet their basic needs such as medical care and legal assistance. Often, people would continue on their journey into northern Europe after only one or two night's stay, but JRS performed a valuable role of providing a first point of welcome and warmth in Europe.

A small JRS team was also present on the island of Lesbos which saw thousands of arrivals from Turkey on a daily basis. JRS coordinated actions with Caritas in a local soup kitchen and also distributed good quality JRS backpacks and baby carriers to those most in need. As migrants were taken by ferry from the Greek islands to Piraeus port near Athens, JRS was present distributing food and other essential items.

The JRS presence in Athens was firmly established to provide support to all migrants, those that remain as well as those in transit. Volunteers regularly visited people in detention centres, especially around Athens and in Korinthos to listen to, support, and encourage detainees, and also orient them for their basic needs and alert competent authorities if needed.

JRS work on education and integration was also an important part of the new set-up. Around 130 children and youths of 17 different nationalities were assisted at the Pedro Arrupe Integration centre with their studies, giving them an opportunity to build a better future.

QUICK FACTS

- The JRS shelter in Athens hosted 700 refugees.
- 4,000 meals were distributed in the camps and other sites.
- Lesbos: 600 backpacks and 250 baby carriers distributed.

JRS staff and volunteers distribute soup to refugees.
© JRS GREECE



HUNGARY

DIGNITY

Hungarian Jesuits launched their refugee program in August 2015. We were concerned about the great number of refugees entering our country and especially the hostile reactions towards them from some parts of the population. We strongly believe in the dignity of every single human life and thus decided that we should help the refugees as well as our fellow Hungarians to find a common language in a situation of crisis. We are serving dignity by working for better integration.

As soon as September, we started visiting the young refugees in the Fót centre for unaccompanied minors. We first created a common place with them which they baptised "Happy House" and where we could organize indoor activities, teach Hungarian and English basics and get to know each other.

In January we set up regular Hungarian as a Foreign Language classes with our specially trained volunteers. Here is how one of them relates his experience teaching the minors in Fót: *"The first time we went there, we were rather stressed but also excited. I had plenty of unanswered questions. How would we communicate with them? Will they pay any attention to us? However, once we arrived there and met the first few refugees, my anxiety disappeared immediately. The boys were extremely enthusiastic and motivated to learn Hungarian."*

We also started paying visits to the Bicske Open Refugee Camp, where we decided to help parents by taking care of their children (0-14 years old) so that they may have some free time to learn Hungarian, work on their refugee status claim or just take a rest.

Our volunteers also got to know a few adult refugees in the Bicske Camp. One of them relates:

"I left Congo five years ago where I had been arrested and sent to prison because I was part of a student organization fighting for freedom of speech and democratic transition. Now my first priority is to learn Hungarian. Later I would like to continue my university studies in the field of political science and work in the humanitarian sector. I always liked helping people, that is what I did in Turkey with Caritas and that is what I am already doing here in Bicske."

Although our Refugee Program in Hungary is a young organization, we already have about 35 volunteers to whom we are extremely committed. We strongly believe that volunteering to accompany and serve the refugees is the best way to better understand their human dignity as well as ours.

A view from the kindergarten activities at Bicske open camp.
© KRISTÓF HÖLVÉNYI / JRS HUNGARY

QUICK FACTS

- In the Bicske Camp 15 families were visited and provided with support. In the Fót Camp more than 150 minors were visited since October 2015 and more than 30 minors attended Hungarian language classes.
- Our volunteers supported the Hungarian Maltese Charity and JRS Croatia in the most difficult period in the autumn.
- We took part in many community and school awareness raising sessions about refugees.



IRELAND

PARTICIPATION

At the close of 2015 nearly 5,000 people, one quarter of them children, were living in Direct Provision. People seeking asylum in Ireland have no right to work, limited access to education and are provided with a weekly allowance insufficient to meet their needs. In the experience of JRS Ireland, the biggest problem migrants face is length of time they spend in the system. As one resident stated: *“Ten years later I still live in the same bed, in the same shared room, of the same direct provision centre – a full decade spent in limbo.”*

In June 2015 the Irish government appointed Working Group, of which JRS Ireland was a member, published a report recommending improvements to the asylum process and to conditions and supports to enable people in Direct Provision live with greater dignity.

Over the past year, approximately 1,400 people more than 5 years in the system had their situation resolved. JRS Ireland directly assisted and intervened on behalf of 110 ‘long stayers’ who were granted status. Despite this progress, it is clear that there still remains the significant challenge of ensuring all those originally estimated to benefit from the ‘long stayer’ solution – a total of 3,350 individuals – will have their situations resolved.

JRS Ireland is a member of the Timetoact.ie initiative, which also includes UNHCR and the Children’s Rights Alliance amongst others. We continue to advocate for long stayer solutions, the right to work for asylum seekers and an increase to the weekly allowances for adults and children in Direct Provision.

One of the most significant projects that JRS Ireland ran in 2015 was *Transition*. This project assisted those long-term residents of Direct Provision who were eligible to be granted status under Working Group recommendations in order to prepare them for life outside the system. *Transition* included 12 distinct training modules, ranging from full-day workshops to 10-week programmes, that were delivered to combat the negative effects of institutionalisation and enhance the life skills, motivation and self-reliance.

Children taking part in the JRS Ireland Summer Programme, which is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers and families living in Direct Provision.

© JRS IRELAND

QUICK FACTS

- JRS Ireland provided outreach to individuals and families living in 13 Direct Provision centres.
- 145 people participated in JRS Ireland’s Summer Programme which provided a range of fun activities for children and families.
- 91 people took part in the Transition project enabling them to participate more fully in societal life and live independently.



ITALY

HOSPITALITY

In 2015, Centro Astalli / JRS Italy served around 36,000 asylum seekers and refugees. Of those 21,000 living in Rome. Offering hospitality to refugees in Italy today is a complex challenge, that calls for different levels of response.

In a particularly difficult year for the protection of refugees in Italy, JRS continued to provide services to asylum seekers and refugees who recently arrived in Rome, such as daily hot meals, Italian language lessons, accommodation, and medical and legal assistance.

Alongside these services, JRS Italy began new initiatives to help refugees become independent in a new context. We gave particular attention to the accompaniment of the most vulnerable refugees, such as those who have been victims of torture.

Thanks to the coordination of various services of JRS, such as the legal office, the medical clinic and the program to support survivors of torture, around 700 vulnerable refugees were welcomed and accompanied in a path towards rehabilitation.

During 2015, another major project was collaboration with various religious institutions who opened their communities to give hospitality to refugees. JRS Italy has supported 20 Congregations who have welcomed around 80 refugees; men, women and families. Fifteen refugees were able to find independent accommodation and a work contract after this experience of hospitality.

During the year, we conducted extensive outreach programs in Italian schools, through the cultural project 'Finestre e Incontri' on asylum and inter-faith dialogue. Around 20,000 students in 15 Italian cities had the opportunity to listen to the testimony of a refugee or of a person of another faith.

In 2015, as never before, the issue of refugees was one of the top issues in Italy. Following the shipwreck near Lampedusa on the 18 April, resulting in the loss of 800 lives, the plight of refugees took centre stage again in public and political discourse. JRS increased its advocacy and communications efforts, to defend the rights of migrants and work against divisive and dangerous xenophobia, to create a society based on hospitality.

Two refugees play during a holiday in the mountains organized by a group of JRS Italy volunteers (Centro Astalli). © JRS ITALY

QUICK FACTS

- In 2015 34,000 asylum seekers and refugees were assisted in Italy by Centro Astalli (21,000 in Rome).
- Five days a week meals for 300 forced migrants are cooked at our soup kitchen in Rome. We provided social and legal assistance for 1,000 asylum seekers and refugees with particular attention at vulnerable people.
- 600 forced migrants (in Rome, Palermo and Catania) attended Italian language classes.



MALTA

PARTICIPATION

JRS Malta has worked to strengthen the services offered to migrant women to ensure they are protected and supported throughout their stay in Malta. We also strive to equip women with skills to tell their stories and empower them to become advocates for themselves by raising issues of concern and making recommendations for change. In this way, JRS Malta stays true to its policy to advocate not only for but with refugees.

As part of this focus, we have developed an 8-session empowerment programme offered to women in detention and published *No Giving Up*, a booklet that contains the experiences of migrant women launched in

May 2015. The publication of this booklet was especially significant because it was done so under the patronage of her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta. A stakeholder's round table meeting accompanied the launch of the booklet where the women's concerns and recommendations were discussed with government entities.

The voice and participation of these women enables JRS Malta to better understand their experience of seeking asylum in Malta and to improve the way we implement our services. Projects like this offer hope because they empower asylum seekers in their struggle to actualize their fundamental rights. In the words of one of the participants reflecting on the messages conveyed to her by JRS staff, *"This is what I felt JRS told us: Your voice can*

reach all around the world. If you feel shy and hide your feelings, your voice will not reach anywhere, but when you explain what you feel in detail, it will."

Through accompanying the women, we were struck by their insight about what protection is or rather what protection should be. We learnt that, protection, after all, is not just a piece of paper, it is about creating communities that enable people to live life to the full, to have all the support they need to live in dignity and self-sufficiency, to develop their potential, to be able to look after their families, and to be wholly a part of the community where they live. This project was supported by the Fund for Women. We are especially grateful to Victoria Gomez-Trenor for her generous support, without which it would never have happened.

QUICK FACTS

- JRS Malta provided legal assistance to 217 individuals and families on 221 different issues.
- 157 individuals who came to JRS Malta's drop-in service were referred for further in-depth services. Of these, 108 were referred for legal assistance and 49 for psychosocial support.
- 46 individuals were provided with individual psychological support by JRS Malta staff.



Laki, one of the women who contributed to the *'No Giving Up'*, meets Daniela Schadt, the partner of German President Joachim Gauck, at the JRS office on 30 April 2015. © JRS MALTA

POLAND

HOPE

The past year was a time of many changes for the Jesuit Social Centre 'W Akcji' (in action). Rafał Bulowski SJ ended his regency work with us and went on to start his theological studies.

We welcomed Damian Krawczyk SJ and Sister Barbara Olejnik to the team and are happy to have them both on board. We are also very grateful to the fantastic volunteers that support our staff and make it possible to overcome the challenges of our work.

Ongoing programmes at the Jesuit Social Centre include, Polish language classes open to all those looking to learn Polish regardless of their background or status.

The visit of the Archbishop of Warsaw, Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz, to the Jesuit Social Centre on World Refugee Day marked a significant highlight of our year. During this time, we also organized an Intercultural Carol Evening, where refugees gave cultural presentations from their home countries and local Polish citizens were able to meet and speak with them. In March, with the help of dedicated volunteers, we provided activities and events for refugee children during the week of their winter holiday.

During the summer holidays, the Jesuit Social Centre ran a summer camp for women and their children near the Baltic Sea. During this



camp, the women participants also prepared for the Summer Festival of Different Culture in Jastrzebia Góra. The women organized activities and workshops for people attending the festival.

In the Fall, the JRS staff conducted several visits to schools, during which pupils could meet with migrants. Finally, the end of 2015 marked a time for celebrations and feasting. The Jesuit Social Centre organized social and holiday events for individuals, children and families around Christmas and St. Nicholas Day.

A group photo on the celebration with children and families on St Nicholas Day. © W AKCJI

QUICK FACTS

- 30 people benefitted from our special Polish language learning programme.
- 70 refugees gathered for our end of the year feast in December, that included people from both the Christian and Muslim faiths.

PORTUGAL

SOLIDARITY

In 2015, JRS Portugal took on new challenges as powerful images emerged in the media throughout the year and the world was moved to act on behalf of refugees. This has been especially true for Portuguese civil society as they have become more aware of the issues facing refugees and have created nationwide initiatives on their behalf.

One such initiative is the Platform Support for Refugees (PAR). This large platform of organisations, which was established in September 2015, aims to coordinate local actions to welcome refugee families. JRS Portugal assumed its role in this platform as the technical secretariat, being responsible for selecting the hosting organisations and matching them with the families. The first priority is to find suitable accommodation for families.

JRS Portugal works with over 30 partners to identify buildings and establish guidelines of best housing practices. Many local authorities and municipalities were also involved in this initiative. At the end of the year, there were about 90 welcoming organisations registered, with the capacity for hosting 600 refugees in total.

At the same time, PAR launched the fundraising campaign "PAR Linha da Frente" aiming to raise 200,000 Euros, of which about 100,000 had been raised by the end of 2015. The funds will

ensure 1,720 Syrian refugee children (5 to 17 years) living in East Lebanon will receive a daily meal. The children who will benefit from this program are enrolled in an educational project that JRS Lebanon is developing in five schools of the Bekaa valley region in partnership with Caritas Lebanon.

Besides these new ventures, JRS Portugal continues to accompany resettled refugees through its ongoing project 'Seeds of Hope.' The goal of this project is to help people settle into Portugal by finding accommodation, providing language and vocational training and also helping with legal and cultural issues. In 2015, the second year that the project has been operational, JRS welcomed a new group of 15 refugees coming from Syria and Eritrea.

For JRS Portugal, 2015 was characterised by solidarity. Portuguese citizens really got involved in welcoming refugees and opened up to the idea of being a truly welcoming country, showing concrete acts of solidarity and generosity.

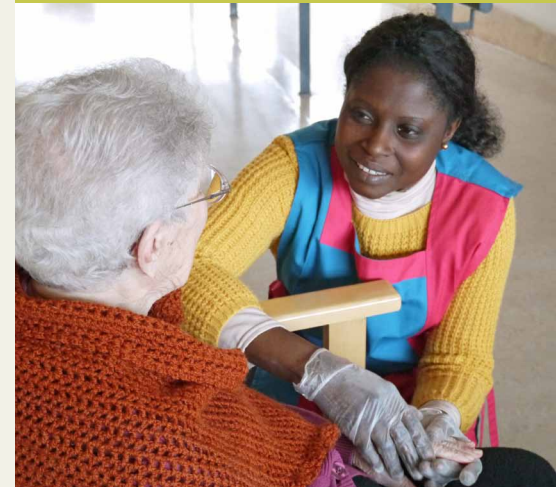
"I want to finish this training course (Elderly Care) because I really like to help the elderly. This training can give me a more technical approach to this kind of task. I want to stay in Portugal and, if it's God's will, I will find a job in the elderly care field and I will help taking care of others."

Farhat James, 36 years, Pakistan

QUICK FACTS

- Overall, JRS Portugal accompanied 2,436 migrants in 2015.
- There were 135 migrants that received specialized training, offered by JRS Portugal, in different fields of expertise, such as the GeriCuidar elderly care project, Casa em Ordem domestic services project and the Capacitação4Job project providing specialized vocational training for young people.
- JRS Portugal counted on the help of 77 volunteers during 2015.

Building trust and professional skills: a trainee carer during her internship on the JRS Portugal elderly care project. © INÊS BRAZINHA / JRS PORTUGAL



ROMANIA

JUSTICE

In 2015, JRS Romania's focus has been on providing asylum seekers and other beneficiaries with emergency assistance and help in seeking protection. This is because, during the latter half of the year, funds from the European Union that were formally used to provide these needed services were suspended.

One of JRS Romania's greatest achievements of 2015 was our contributions to change the asylum law. As a result of our advocacy actions, such as lobbying policymakers, new provisions were included in the asylum law. In the words of JRS Romania's Advocacy Officer Stefan Leonescu, *"We succeeded to have the information in the country of origin be taken into account when deciding their return and based on this information people were released from public custody on the grounds that they cannot be returned, so they receive a tolerated status. This will cause a change in the decisions of other courts of appeal in the future."*

JRS Romania organised many training activities for magistrates at courts of appeal who are responsible for issues of migration and detention and return, thereby improving our organisation's relationship with them. We developed a protocol with the National Institute of Magistracy and have created two seminars for the training of magistrates. We also published two training

manuals for judges and staff of the General Inspectorate of Immigration; the manual includes jurisprudence regarding public custody and return.

JRS Romania continues to work on a project that offers accommodation for tolerated people at the Pedro Arrupe Centre. We have also successfully secured European funds to continue financing the project in the years to come. Accommodation in this centre represents an alternative to detention for vulnerable people and is the result of JRS Romania's active and prolonged lobbying efforts. In the words of one refugee staying in the centre, *"Where I live now is good... If I find a job here, I stay."*

Finally, thanks to the US Embassy in Bucharest we have received funding to provide minimal assistance and immediate emergency intervention to those who arrive at the borders to ask for asylum.

QUICK FACTS

- 15 projects were developed in total in 2015 in partnership with both European and national organisations.
- Housing services, legal and social assistance and employment help provided.
- We assisted all categories of refugees and migrants by being present in all 6 of the open centres in the country and in a total of 2 of the detention centres.

JRS Romania meets with staff of the General Inspectorate of Immigration. © JRS ROMANIA



SLOVENIA

SOLIDARITY

JRS's operations in Slovenia are focused on providing services for individuals, children and families while also maintaining our mission of accompaniment in the detention centre where we provide weekly visits. Through these activities, we hope to engage in active solidarity with the people seeking safety that we encounter.

JRS Slovenia offers a safe place for children to live and grow in the asylum home in Ljubljana. There, JRS runs a kindergarten twice per week for two hours where children can play and make new friends in a relaxed environment. This time also enables the children's parents to have some down time and socialize freely with one another. As one mother declared, *"It is time that I can take a cup of tea or coffee with other mothers in the asylum home."*

JRS volunteers also coordinate creative workshops for men. These opportunities allow men, of all ages and backgrounds, with the opportunity to spend their spare time in producing something they can take pride in. Another key outreach that JRS Slovenia provides to asylum seekers is visits to detention centres. Once per week in 2015 JRS goes to a detention centre 50 km away from the capital city. It is clear that the presence and solidarity offered by the JRS team in the detention



centres has had a positive impact on those staying there. As one detainee said, *"It is so nice to meet you. You are the only connection with the outside world."*

While many detainees we have met are frustrated and sad with being in detention, they all share with us their inspiring life stories and their hopes for a better future. Mostly, the JRS team engages the detainees in conversations about whatever is on their minds, but we also enjoy some fun by playing table tennis.

JRS Slovenia also invites some volunteers to the detention centre. *"It is usually an exciting time getting to know the detainees and meeting him/her every week,"* says one of them. It takes time to establish solidarity and friendship.

Children take part in the St Nicholas day activities. © JRS SLOVENIA

QUICK FACTS

- Have continuously run a children's kindergarten twice per week in the asylum home in Ljubljana.
- Ongoing weekly visits to the detention centre throughout the whole year.
- Production and broadcasting of the monthly radio program "Building a More Open Society" on Sunday evenings.

SE EUROPE (CROATIA, MACEDONIA, KOSOVO)

COMPASSION IN CROATIA

In the course of 2015 almost 560,000 refugees passed through Croatia. JRS was present from the first night refugees entered and continued to accompany, serve and advocate 24/7 ever since. Our activities varied from psycho-social support, translation, purchasing and distribution of food and non-food items, accompaniment to doctors and hospitals, helping in family reunification and helping families who stayed for longer periods in Croatia due to serious medical conditions.

“Arriving at the refugee camp Opatovac was amazing and sad at the same time. That look in their eyes, sadness and happiness, humanity and gratitude is something I will never forget. I have learned that sometimes just a friendly word can make all the difference.”

Kristina, JRS volunteer

JRS in Croatia also continued to help asylum seekers and refugees who remained in the country with finding apartments, access to medical care, access to computers and getting to know the local culture amongst other things.

QUICK FACTS

- 12,000 working hours in refugee camps.
- More than 100 volunteers have joined JRS.
- Successful collaboration with the Governments' and more than 45 NGO stakeholders.

HOSPITALITY IN MACEDONIA

“No one leaves home unless there is nothing left behind. We run away from the war. From a country where everyone and everything is against us. Tell us where to go? Open the door!”

Ahmed, Syrian refugee

Apart from the everyday activities in reception and detention centres (Vizbegovo and Gazibaba), the past year for JRS in Macedonia was marked by work in the transit refugee camps, Tabanovce and Gevgelija, for people on the so-called Balkan route. JRS also opened a safe house for vulnerable people in Skopje. This project proved to be one of the most needed projects in the refugee crisis. In August, a baby boy was even born in the safe house to Syrian refugee parents with the supervision of our staff and nurses.

Since it was opened, the safe house has been continuously full with people who needed special care, including those with injuries, pregnant women and babies as well as unaccompanied children. JRS provided everything in the house from food to television and internet. Every day a



Moment of joy, transit camp in Croatia. © JRS SEE

psychologist visits the house to speak with the people and organise games and activities for the children.

SOLIDARITY IN KOSOVO

The year 2015 is the third year that JRS in Kosovo is operating with asylum seekers. For JRS in Kosovo it is easy to understand refugees because not long ago Kosovars themselves were refugees. With this experience we know what solidarity with those in need of protection is. Knowing their suffering and helping in different ways JRS is welcoming refugees. It is this attitude that helps JRS in providing support to asylum seekers in the reception centre, Magura, as well as to detainees in the detention centre, Gjilon. To foster social inclusion we also offer Albanian language courses to refugees. Finally, JRS Kosovo regularly visited and supported refugees in the transit camp of Presevo, across the border in Serbia.



Newborn at the safe house in Skopje. © JRS SEE

SWEDEN

HOSPITALITY

The events of summer and autumn 2015 and the huge number of people who crossed the Swedish border from Denmark to either claim asylum here or move on to other Nordic countries have shaped the work of JRS Sweden in 2015. Different initiatives by JRS and by other faith-based actors were initiated, with the main focus on offering hospitality.

Together with St. Eugenia Parish in central Stockholm, JRS provided shelter to new arrivals from October to December 2015. Approximately 40 refugees per week benefitted from these services and enjoyed cooked dinner and breakfast served by the project's many volunteers. Many of these spoke languages such as Arabic and Tigrinya and therefore also provided a chance for the refugees to finally talk about their ordeals or ask for practical advice.

'For the first time since I left home, I feel safe'
– Kasim, who spent a night in the shelter in Stockholm in November.

JRS Sweden's integration project called 'Encounters' began in late 2015 and is still operating. The aim is to match a well-established Swede with somebody who is fairly new in the country and who needs to practise their language skills and accelerate



their integration process into Swedish society. This scheme is open to both migrants who are asylum seekers and those who already have residence permits.

'I'm still waiting for my asylum claim to be processed and meanwhile I have very little to do at the camp where I live. Registering with the 'Encounters' project gave me the chance to get to know more Swedish people, the Swedish culture and to practice my Swedish. I spread the word to my friends and family and many of them have also now joined the project!' – Shafiq, 20.

We organise activities for all participants in and around Stockholm to enhance the

QUICK FACTS

- More than 160,000 people claimed asylum in 2015 and JRS Sweden identifies hospitality as a core value for the integration of the newly arrived refugees.
- In 2015 JRS Sweden served more than 650 refugees and forced migrants in the different projects and initiatives.
- About 100 volunteers were active in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the different activities.

What do you love? This man writes 'peace' on the big heart as part of a special Valentine's Day awareness raising activity. © JRS SWEDEN

migrants' understanding of Swedish culture and broaden their social networks as many of them have expressed feelings of isolation. Project volunteers also take part in these activities to increase the migrants' opportunities to communicate in Swedish.

Finally, JRS Sweden continues to visit the detention centre at Mårsta/Arlandastad which is situated 10 km from Stockholm's airport Arlanda. We have engaged with around 100 detainees from different countries such as Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Syria and Belarus. The contacts had varying purposes, from just simple company to pastoral and human support and in some cases legal counselling.

UNITED KINGDOM

SOLIDARITY

At JRS UK we have a special ministry for the destitute and detained and we have continued to practice and give witness to hospitality. The context in which we work is becoming more challenging as legislation and policy change creates rising numbers of asylum seekers unable to access financial support. For JRS UK however, support for asylum seekers in this position is a core to our mission.

JRS UK has welcomed over 270 people at our weekly Day Centre and met with over 300 in two detention centres. We have given out 2,000+ toiletry packs, bus money for 12,790 essential journeys, provided winter coats, food parcels, children's birthday presents. We have connected detainees with pen-befrienders, offered mobile phone top-ups to call relatives and secured welfare provision for others.

Many refugees took part in a photo-shoot resulting in a personal portrait with prints to keep or send back home to family or friends. We launched cycling training for refugee women, providing new skills, generating team spirit and free bikes for all attending. Those with children brought family members to a museum tour given by refugees with a shared lunch for relatives and friends.

During the last 12 months we launched two resource guides to encourage people to pray in solidarity with homeless refugees. JRS UK supporters took part in a Lenten pilgrimage as an act of witness in front of government departments.

But the bedrock of our work is accompaniment – being there for refugees, sharing food and conversation, building relationships, sharing their journey. This respectful and humble encounter between refugees and volunteers in our day centre and detention visiting teams is the heart of what we do and is what gives us inspiration to argue for change.

"I can't even describe how helpful JRS is to me every week. In life people pretend to care, but they really don't care. But JRS really does care!" **Refugee who attends our day centre**

"It is a humbling moment when a person thanks you for simply taking their hand and allowing them to take you to places of darkness and light."

JRS volunteer

Participants of the Bike Project in action by the Thames. © JRS UK

QUICK FACTS

- Welcomed 271 people to our Day Centre, offering 12,790 bus passes, provided 2,000+ sandwiches, distributed 2,000+ toiletry packs and gave out emergency food grants to 60 newly destitute people along with food parcels and coats in winter.
- Met with 96 women and 260 men in detention over 12 months at twice weekly pastoral care sessions and offered welfare support to more than 70 women and 108 men during the same period, as well as maintaining our pen-befriending scheme
- Through our activities programme 21 women learned to cycle, in partnership with The Bike Project, 28 men and women participated in peer support group discussions and 8 people had a total of 270 weekly massage treatments.



A refugee folds his blanket after drying it in the sun in Idomeni, Greece, 30 November 2015.
© KRISTÓF HÖLVÉNYI / IRIS





A refugee gives a rose to a woman in Budapest, Hungary, September 2015.
© KRISTÓF HÖLVÉNYI / IRS

APPENDIX I
THE STRUCTURE OF JRS IN EUROPE

APPENDIX II
JRS CONTACT DETAILS

APPENDIX III
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

APPENDICES

The Structure of JRS Europe

JRS Europe was established in March 1992. It is an incorporated “International Association” under Belgian law (AISBL #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 within Europe and beyond.

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, covering 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 regional coordination meetings, which facilitates strategic planning for the region.

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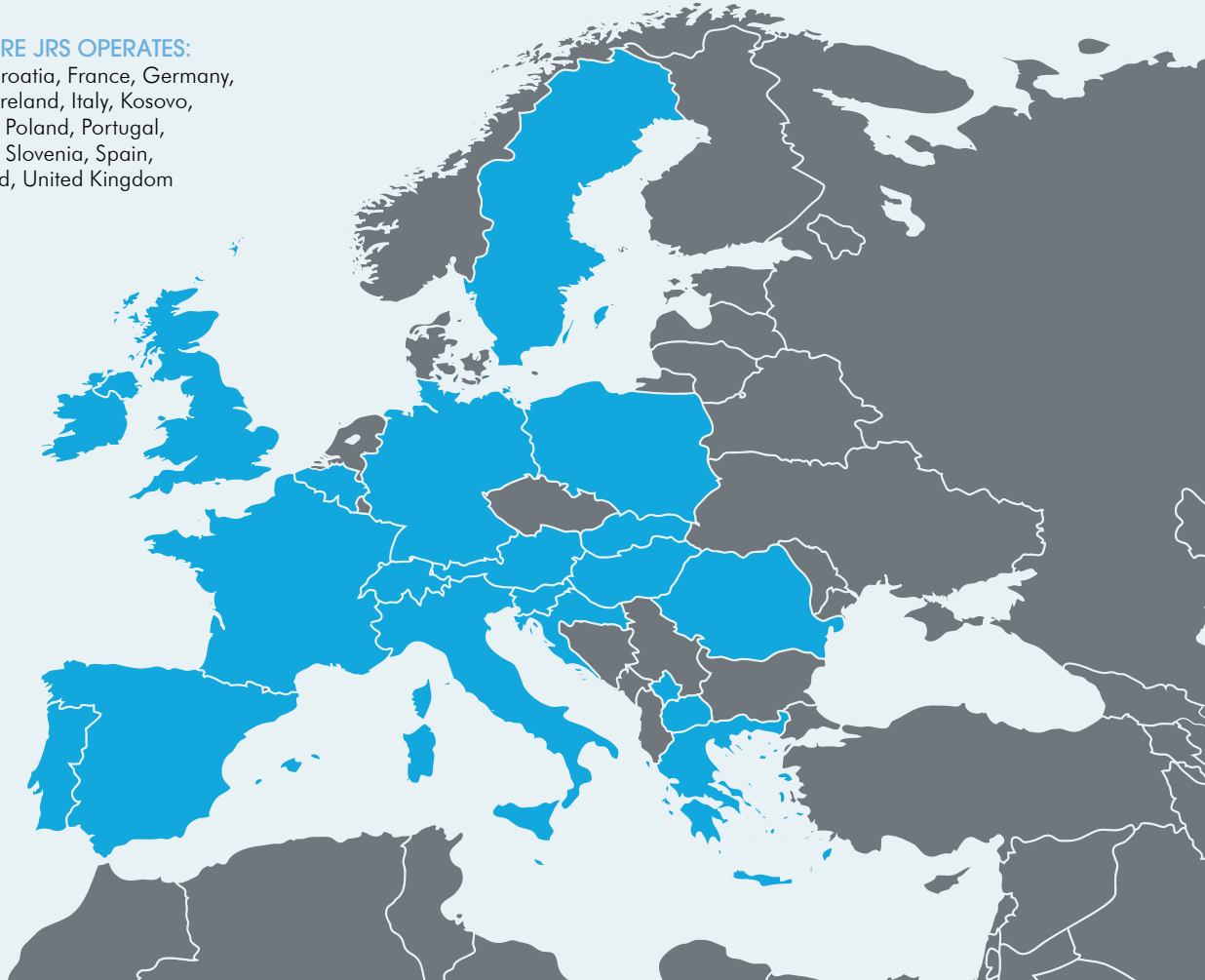
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COUNTRIES WHERE JRS OPERATES:

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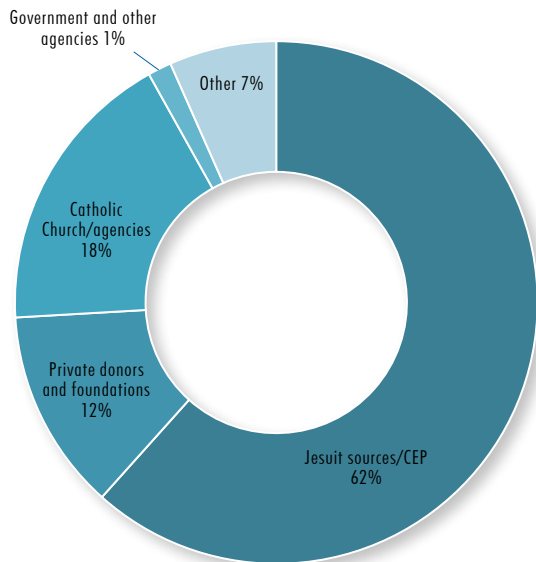
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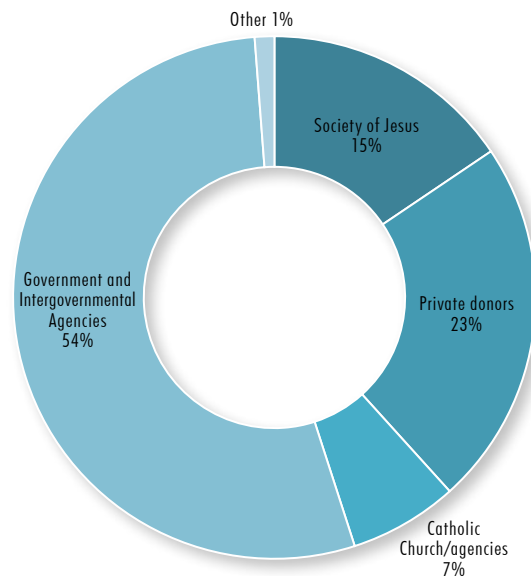
Financial summary

REGIONAL OFFICE - INCOME 2015 (EURO)



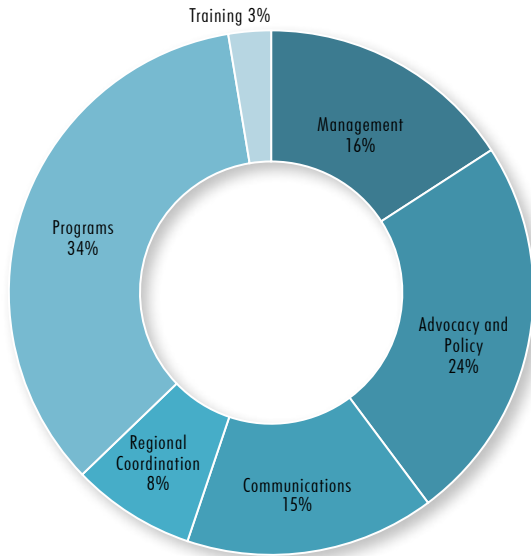
Jesuit sources/CEP	179.844
Private donors and foundations	36.363
Catholic Church/agencies	52.000
Government and other agencies	4.269
Other	19.366
TOTAL	291.842

COUNTRY OFFICES - INCOME 2015 (EURO)



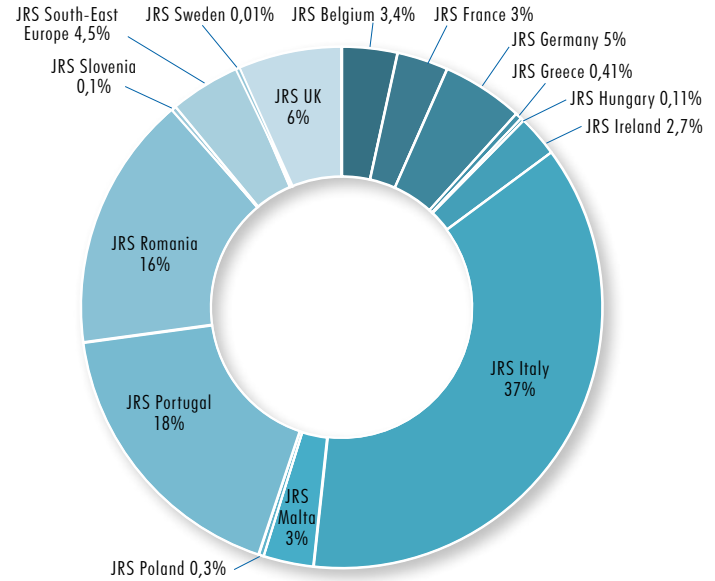
Society of Jesus	1.335.898
Private donors	1.954.134
Catholic Church/agencies	578.059
Government and Intergovernmental Agencies	4.618.143
Other	104.113
TOTAL	8.590.347

REGIONAL OFFICE - EXPENDITURE 2015



Management	55.684
Advocacy and Policy	84.078
Communications	53.994
Regional Coordination	26.799
Programs	121.435
Training	9.209
TOTAL	351.200

COUNTRY OFFICES - EXPENDITURE 2015



JRS Belgium	265.587
JRS France	244.662
JRS Germany	388.836
JRS Greece	31.470
JRS Hungary	8.773
JRS Ireland	204.320
JRS Italy	2.837.000
JRS Malta	240.322
JRS Poland	23.304
JRS Portugal	1.361.640
JRS Romania	1.234.146
JRS Slovenia	8.000
JRS South-East Europe	351.944
JRS Sweden	114
JRS UK	495.425
TOTAL	7.695.542



The mission of the Jesuit Refugee Service is to **accompany**, **serve** and **advocate** for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

Please support our mission:

You can donate via PayPal on our website or by bank transfer.

Account name: JRS Europe
IBAN: BE 49 2100 9067 7571
Swift code: GE BA BE BB

Thank you



www.jrseurope.org