

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**JRS**  
JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

EUROPE



## Mission

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and others who are forcibly displaced.



## Vision

JRS in Europe works towards a Europe where human rights, protection, hospitality, integration, and reconciliation all have a place to flourish within a larger vision for inclusive and welcoming societies.

**74,350**  
people served in  
Europe



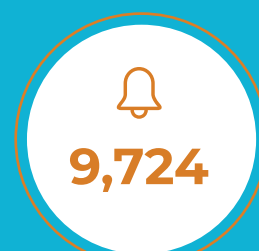
Education



Livelihoods



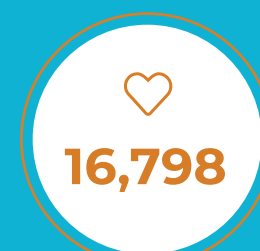
Psychosocial/Pastoral



Emergency



Advocacy/Protection/  
Reconciliation



Healthcare

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**04**

JRS EUROPE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**05**

JRS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

**06**

CHANGE

**08**

COVID-19

**12**

ADVOCACY

**13**

THE WORK ACROSS COUNTRIES

**30**

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



## JRS EUROPE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Covid-19 has been a prolonged and traumatic social experience, whose full impact is still unknown. We went through phases: from fear and surprise to indignation, then admiration, for medical professionals and workers who typically go unnoticed but have proved critical. Brutally, we've discovered something profoundly human: our biological fragility and our interdependence as a species and as societies. It's been a steep learning curve, with suffering, illness, loneliness and anguish. The pandemic made up most of 2020. At the time of writing, it is ongoing.

As a result of the pandemic, we've experienced completely new situations, notably the closure of international borders. Travel has been virtually halted since March 2020, heavily reducing foreign arrivals compared to previous years. This is not to say socioeconomic conditions have improved in countries of origin, simply that movement has been nearly impossible. Resettlement programmes and family reunification have been suspended or carried out at lower capacities.

Reception centres — which often host large amounts of people — have suffered due to restrictions on movement, confinement, and health concerns, leading to the hardening of already precarious circumstances. In detention centres, living conditions have worsened, and the closure of borders meant that detainees couldn't be repatriated, leading either to the extension of detention periods or the release of detainees, usually without any kind of support, especially in times of confinement. The most surprising case was Spain, which closed and emptied detention centres. This was provisional, however, and the centres reopened in September.

The pandemic has affected most of our services. Some have had to be interrupted. Many others have continued under severe restrictions. We've also relied on the internet and phones to facilitate administrative procedures, and have increased the number of home visits to provide individualised support and/or food, hygiene products or medicine. We have made a greater creative effort to be close to those we accompany. But we have also had great allies, the refugees themselves, who have used their resilience and capacity to adapt to show us how to support them.

The Regional Office knew it was important to financially support this new situation, which was clearly going to put us under a lot of pressure. The Covid Special Fund raised over €400,000, made available to our Country Offices following a careful application and selection process. It is time to thank everyone for their efforts: the Country Offices' teams and the Regional Office team, who in a few weeks managed to process all the applications, identify the funds and allocate them. And without the donors, it would have been impossible to provide timely assistance.

2020 was also the year JRS celebrated 40 years of accompaniment. In Europe, we organised "Faces of JRS," showcasing the faces of our protagonists: beneficiaries, volunteers, and staff. We want to assure all of them of our commitment to continue this mission. We've gained a lot of experience these past 40 years, but we still have the same enthusiasm that inspired Fr Arrupe when he founded JRS.

### Jose Ignacio Garcia SJ

*Regional Director, JRS Europe*

*"JRS has a key role to play in raising awareness of the plight of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Yours is the vital task of extending the hand of friendship to those who are lonely, separated from their families, or even abandoned, accompanying them and giving them a voice, especially by providing them with opportunities to grow through educational and development programmes."*

*Letter from Pope Francis for JRS's 40th anniversary*



## JRS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

In 1980 JRS was founded by Pedro Arrupe SJ—then Superior General of the Society of Jesus—to respond to the plight of Vietnamese refugees that had to flee their homes at the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Today, the JRS network has 10 regional offices worldwide, and extends to 56 countries, of which 22 are in Europe. Each office responds to the needs of diverse national contexts while continuing to uphold JRS's foundational mission: to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and others who are forcibly displaced.

From November 2020 until the end of the year, we celebrated the different Faces of JRS—staff members, volunteers, and refugees and migrants we accompany all around Europe—through photos and short interviews. "JRS means help for humanity. There is so much hope for the refugees who have nothing with them and come to JRS," said Mirza Bashir Ahmed Baig, a 62-year-old from Pakistan who works at Magazi for JRS Greece.

Our Annual General Meeting gathered over 100 staff members and volunteers online to celebrate the 40th anniversary. We were joined by Danielle Vella, JRS Director of Reconciliation and Social Cohesion, and heard testimonies from an Afghani woman accompanied by JRS Greece, a recent JRS worker in Hungary, and the Director of JRS Malta for the past 22 years. Finally, participants created a word cloud of words they associate with JRS's mission, among which one stood out above the rest: Hope.

*"The urgency that inspired Father Arrupe and that inspires our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is still with us today. JRS is a ministry of the Society of Jesus, and its role as part of the Society is clear. The ministry of JRS can inspire us to live the Universal Apostolic Preferences, drawing on the spirituality that motivated Father Arrupe to accompany the forcibly displaced, to give hope to young people, to shine a light on the connection of displaced sisters and brothers with the care of our earth."*

*Fr Arturo Sosa SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus*





Despite the lockdown measures to limit the impact of Covid-19, we continued implementing our awareness raising programme, CHANGE ([www.jrschange.org](http://www.jrschange.org)), and all partners stepped up to the challenge of adapting the content of the lessons and to online encounters.

CHANGE encourages students to think critically on the subject of refugees and migration, through a 6-stage educational course.

Have a look at how partners all over Europe have experienced the 6 stages of CHANGE.

### EXPLORING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

The students begin by laying out their feelings about migration and migrants. For many of them, this is the first time they truly engage with the concept. Portuguese and Irish students packed a rucksack with what they thought would be essential for fleeing their homes on short notice, and Maltese students were asked to think of three words to describe themselves. The facilitators then ask the question, “Do these three words describe everything about who you are?” More often than not the answer is no. A further reflection allows students to realise how easy it can be to paint all refugees with a broad brush, regardless of their stories or intentions.

### RECEIVING AND PROCESSING CRITICAL INFORMATION

A facilitator from Hungary writes, “In one article the applied visual materials breed compassion, while another generates fear [of] the faceless but violent ‘other’, the dangerous foreigner. ‘How can all this be true?’ as students ask. Or: ‘How can we decide?’” In this stage, the students are exposed to a variety of news items about refugees and migrants, and asked questions such as: what is the intention of the article? Who wrote it? And for what purpose? Critical thinking skills are strongly engaged, at this point.

### CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

CHANGE invites refugees to share their stories about their experiences, hopes and dreams for the future with students in the classroom. As an Italian teacher put it, these encounters led the students to see “not only the history of one person, but of many people who have simply chased a need: the recognition of their dignity as persons.” It is also an opportunity for the refugee or migrant to use their own voice and take charge of the narrative. One Spanish student commented that the young migrants “almost received us more than we received them.”

### FORMING AND REPRESENTING JUDGEMENTS

This stage often involves roleplaying exercises, where the students defend positions they may not agree with. It allows them to perceive the motivations behind certain talking points and political strategies. “This is where a space for reframing previous judgments and individual responses opens, and where faith might transform into action,” says the Hungarian CHANGE coordinator.

### DEALING WITH PREJUDICE

Applying critical skills learned over the previous stages is a big step, and there are different ways to approach it. A teacher in Belgium had the students pick a preconceived idea/generalisation and do research to argue whether it is true (evidence-based) or false; in Ireland, some teachers preferred to build on the encounter from stage 3 to continue dispelling myths and humanising the “other”; in Portugal, students were confronted with facts that directly countered their thoughts on refugees, such as a general lack of education among migrant populations.

### GETTING INTO ACTION

JRS Italy held a writing contest dealing with migration that received hundreds of entries; Maltese students opted to volunteer with organisations that work to help refugees and migrants, including JRS; Belgian students organised a clothing drive for a centre for unaccompanied children. Some students wrote to their elected officials, and Spanish students from Pamplona even won an award for their work with local migrants.

### IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

JRS Country Offices of  
Croatia, Hungary, Ireland,  
Italy, Malta and Portugal

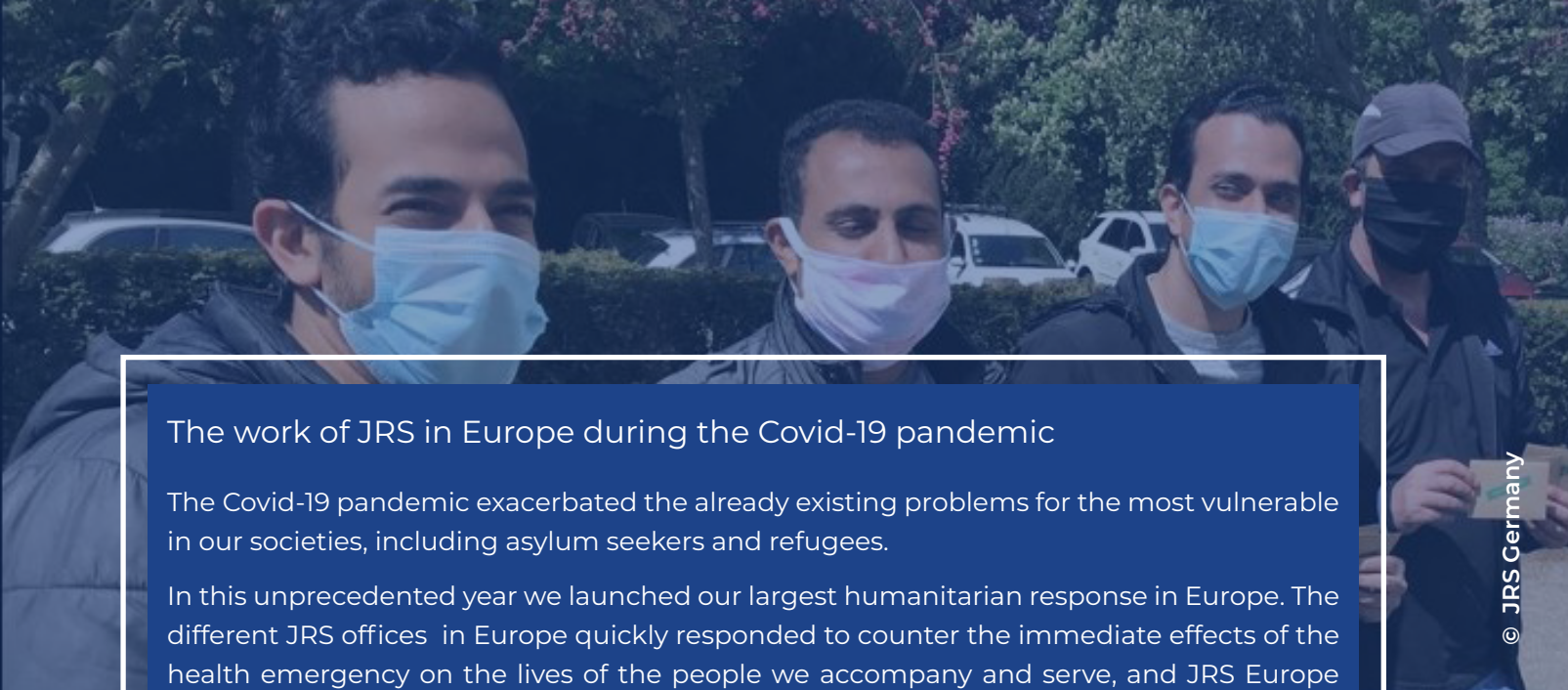
Lucas Onderwijs  
in the Netherlands

Fundación ALBOAN  
in Spain



Funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union





## The work of JRS in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the already existing problems for the most vulnerable in our societies, including asylum seekers and refugees.

In this unprecedented year we launched our largest humanitarian response in Europe. The different JRS offices in Europe quickly responded to counter the immediate effects of the health emergency on the lives of the people we accompany and serve, and JRS Europe mobilised emergency funds to make it possible.

Our response to covid was inspired by JRS's core values:

### SOLIDARITY

The initiatives undertaken have guaranteed the health and safety of beneficiaries, supporting those in difficult situations through the distribution of food, basic necessities, hygiene and health kits.

Covid containment measures were made complicated by a lack of information and personal protective equipment, particularly in detention centres. JRS Macedonia focused on providing masks, gloves, and sanitizer to asylum seekers accommodated in the reception centre in Vizbegovo, and to migrants in the detention centre in Skopje.

JRS Bosnia and Herzegovina raised awareness and distributed information in five languages about the symptoms and treatment of Covid-19, in five of the camps in the Una-Sana Canton.

JRS UK was forced to take their Day Centre on the road, distributing food parcels and toiletries to refugees wherever they are spending lockdown. Volunteers do weekly calls to refugees to understand what their needs are, and 10 to 13 volunteers distribute the items.

### COMPASSION

Due to the loss of jobs, many refugees required support to continue living autonomously.

For many of the people JRS accompanies, it meant starting from the beginning, retracing years of their integration process. In this context, JRS Hungary provided food and housing support to those who had lost their jobs and apartments, to prevent homelessness.

JRS Ireland provided dedicated accompaniment, information and advice to 600 asylum seekers moved by immigration authorities to new locations in order to reduce overcrowding and protect the most vulnerable residents in centres. JRS coordinated a freephone National Resident Support Helpline, established to provide remote support to residents in all 84 Direct Provision centres across Ireland.

To continue serving people, JRS Malta's 'drop-in' service was converted to a phone line, operating 5 days a week, to receive requests, assess needs, and make referrals as appropriate.



### DIGNITY

The Italian office of JRS created individualised accompaniments based on the specific needs of each person to promote social inclusion and to ensure that people could continue living autonomously. Families in critical situations were also provided with food vouchers and monetary support for their rent and bills.

Between March and July 2020, visitors from JRS Belgium were unable to visit people in detention, and instead offered support over the phone to detainees experiencing heightened levels of isolation, stress and anxiety due to the uncertainty posed by the pandemic.



### HOSPITALITY

The Women Day Centre in Athens continued to support people. Appointments made virtually enabled JRS Greece to continue providing social care to those that could not reach the facilities due to restrictions. Sanitary facilities, such as showers and laundry, were also accessible via appointment.

JRS France's Welcome hosting programme for families continued, with added precautions: asylum seekers stayed in homes for longer periods of time instead of frequently rotating, and resources were provided for hosted people to participate in French conversation workshops, and to receive legal advice and any kind of support needed. JRS France also provided subsidies for the purchase of masks, gloves and antiseptic gel, as well as financial aid for host families who were struggling to host someone for longer than originally expected.

SJM, the Spanish branch of JRS, and the NGO Entreculturas collaborated with the Spanish singer Rozalén. She launched a song during the lockdown, *Aves Enjauladas* (Caged Birds), the profits of which went to the Hospitality project of welcoming single migrant women in Valencia.





## HOPE

JRS continues its work with a look towards the future, to ensure individualized accompaniments and to plan new paths of social inclusion that are adaptable to changing circumstances.

JRS Poland adapted their Polish language courses for distance learning and provided computers for remote learning.

"With the pandemic, a new training model was experienced—more specifically online through the Zoom Platform—demonstrating a total adaptation on the part of the students, and the possibility for future projects to use a mixed model," explains Cláudia Santos, coordinator of the JRS Portugal Academy, which organizes training projects for refugees and migrants.

## JUSTICE

JRS Europe advocated for asylum seekers and refugees to be considered by the relevant institutions when adopting measures to contain the spread of the virus. With partners in nine countries, and thanks to the support of European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM), we assessed and mapped the impact of Covid-19 on immigrant detention and asylum reception.



## PARTICIPATION

JRS Romania's Pedro Arrupe centre in Bucharest, which normally accommodates 30 people, expanded its capacity during the lockdown to 47. The residents were involved in installing new beds, and preparing areas for the temporary isolation of the newcomers. They also supported JRS staff in providing information on safety measures, and were involved in offering both adults and children a safe and peaceful space. There was also increased participation of the local community, who donated clothes, electronic items, food, nappies and toys.







## JRS Europe's Advocacy

On 23rd September 2020, the European Commission published the new Pact on Asylum and Migration. Its main goal is to quickly identify people in need of protection at the EU external border and swiftly remove those who are not entitled to stay. In JRS's view, the proposed measures will negatively impact the rights of forced migrants, among others by increasing the chances that they will be detained for prolonged period of times, reaching up to two years.

Moreover, the mechanism proposed to share the responsibility of dealing with asylum applications among Member States will not be sufficient to reduce the pressure at the external borders. On the contrary, the system as envisaged will likely further aggravate the dire and inhumane conditions in countries such as Greece. JRS, in coalition with other NGOs, continued to advocate for a more fundamental change in the EU asylum policy, in which protecting people is the main concern.



### Advocacy on the Common EU Asylum System

Participation in the European Commission consultations on the Action Plan on Inclusion and Integration (subsequently published in 24 November 2020).

Some of JRS's messages - e.g. the importance of choosing for small scale, individual reception models that foster autonomy (as opposed to large collective centres) - are reflected in the Action Plan.

JRS's statement upon release of the Pact:

- "New pact on asylum and migration: more (worrying) questions than answers"

NGO joint statement on the Pact:

- "The Pact on Migration and Asylum: to provide a fresh start. Risky elements need to be addressed and positive aspects need to be expanded"



### Advocacy and Covid-19

Public communication on Covid-19 and asylum:

- "Covid-19 and asylum: the right response is the same as ever - ensure protection, stop detention, invest in inclusion."

- "Covid-19: one more reason to choose for small scale reception of asylum seekers."

"Every life is worth saving - in hospitals and at sea."

Mapping and analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on detention and reception of asylum seekers with partners in 9 EU countries, supported by EPIM. The pandemic magnified and aggravated preexisting flaws in EU asylum systems. The results of this work, published at the start of 2021, will continue to inform and support our advocacy in the context of the pandemic and beyond.

At the start of 2020, many families who applied for international protection were held in return homes, at risk of being returned to their countries of origin.

However, as the pandemic unfolded across the globe, the detention policy changed rapidly to keep in line with safety measures. While many remain in closed centres, roughly half the detainees were released during the first lockdown in March and received emergency accommodation.

Between March-July 2020, the team couldn't visit people in closed centres. To ensure continued services, the centres agreed to provide detainees with phone numbers of JRS staff, enabling regular contact.

The remainder of 2020 saw a decline in vulnerable people being detained and repatriated—mainly due to border closures, cancelled flights and lower capacities in centres—and a noticeable shift in attitude regarding return policy. JRS and other NGOs worked together to inform lawyers, send open letters to

ministers, and convince MPs to visit closed centres and return homes. Public pressure led the newly elected government to vow not to detain families and children again.

In September, JRS initiated the project "Plan Together," which offers a low-threshold environment to help people plan for the future, and provides legal and psychosocial support to families with children under 16 who do not have a legal right to stay in Belgium. By accompanying families at home and sharing expertise with similar initiatives in Europe, the team aims to show policymakers that there are more sustainable alternatives to the repressive policies migrant families face.

Following a collaboration of the Belgian government with the regime of Omar al-Bashir of Sudan in 2017, a commission mainly consisting of government officials delivered a positive report on return policy. Because JRS Belgium has extensive experience in this area, the team were able to deliver a critical counter report to inform the Belgian parliament as well as public opinion.





JRS France continued to run its programmes, adapted to the restrictions of the pandemic. The team also used this time reflectively, and worked to improve their skills to enhance services once life returned to normality.

For JRS Welcome, reception continued as normal thanks to the many families who agreed to host asylum seekers. JRS kept in regular contact with via Zoom, and offered financial aid to lower income families. 138 people were hosted during the first lockdown, and 110 during the second.

The JRS Youth team organised over 400 activities in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Dijon and Limoges. 1338 participants of 60 different nationalities took part, including 740 refugees and asylum seekers. The key focus was to maintain social links and help participants come out of isolation through online or face-to-face activities, depending on the restrictions. To ensure safety, the team's physical activities used a registration system and took the necessary measures, such as enforcing

social distancing.

For JRS Employment and Training, support was provided both remotely and physically. At the Paris office, around 30 refugees were able to receive support in finding employment, and around 50 received access to training. Throughout France, several branches continued to provide support with the help of volunteers.

Following the uncertainty of the first lockdown, staff made the necessary preparations for any subsequent ones. Hence, many activities were able to continue in an adapted way. French classes took place on Zoom for an hour a day, and then in person for three hours. 36 students passed the DELF (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française) exam in June.

JRS also formed the new Saint-Germain-en-Laye partnership with Solidarité Nouvelle face au Chômage, to provide asylum seekers and refugees with personalised support in the job-seeking process.

In response to the evolving Covid-19 outbreak and the effect it had on communities, JRS Germany increased its support services and facilitated a project called JRS-hilft (JRS Helps), which provided people who were negatively impacted by the pandemic with food vouchers and supports based on individual needs.

In the Berlin office, following sanitary guidelines, JRS was able to carry on providing legal advice with minor adjustments. JRS was also allowed to visit the reception centre in Eisenhüttenstadt twice a week for pastoral care. Faced with stricter lockdown measures, the staff in Munich were required to reduce the time spent on the premises and work from home where possible. For this reason, the team switched to online support and began offering counselling and social work remotely.

Despite all this, JRS was able to carry out a number of projects and events throughout the year, starting with the launch of the new JRS Germany

homepage. Later in the year, volunteers set up a language café in Berlin, aimed at promoting integration and improving communication among people of different backgrounds. The café is an open space, where people can cook and play games together, and have discussions on different aspects of life in Germany.

JRS also hosted an online exhibition featuring artwork by Essam Shenouda, an Egyptian artist. Each drawing was accompanied by the stories of different refugees, who identified with the scenes portrayed in Shenouda's art, and were inspired to write about their own lives and experiences.

Although concert halls were closed, musical events were permitted in churches following strict hygiene regulations. As a result, an event was organised in St. Canisius Church, Berlin, together with the Hanns-Eisler-Berlin music school. The concert gave students the chance to express themselves through music and perform on stage, which was particularly important after months spent in lockdown.





JRS Greece continued to focus its mission on social inclusion and education by providing support in the various centres in Athens.

The Pedro Arrupe Centre (PAC) welcomed almost 200 students, all of whom received educational support and participated in activities run by staff and volunteers. The Hub Community also continued to host the project 'Magistories', with the aim of training refugees, asylum seekers and Greek people on different cultures, languages and computer skills. For the first time, JRS organised a Magistories Summer Camp in July, with activities and games for 32 children.

The pandemic forced PAC and Magistories classes online, via platforms such as Zoom. Thanks to donors, JRS provided free internet to vulnerable students who could not afford it, and textbooks were distributed to students to accompany their online classes.

JRS also had to make adjustments at the Women's Day Centre, which had 1211 beneficiaries in 2020. The staff

ensured that social distancing guidelines were followed by monitoring the number of people entering the building, taking their temperature and accepting people via appointment only. "The activities at the Day Centre are very important to me. I am improving my level of French and I have started to speak English. My son is attending classes in Maths, Art and English at Magistories", said T., a 37-year-old female asylum seeker from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Magazi store, where people in need can avail of free clothes and supplies, was forced to close during the first lockdown but reopened its doors in December at a reduced capacity.

The Tea Time project was significantly affected by Covid-19, due to the large number of people gathering daily who were at risk of spreading the virus. With Tea Time temporarily paused, a new project called Food Basket began in July, whereby a monthly package was delivered to vulnerable women and their families.

JRS Hungary's social programme continued to provide flats and safe housing conditions for families and young refugees.

In close partnership with local Jesuit institutions, additional housing was provided for refugee youths committed to finishing their studies. A group of local parish members supported families helping them in areas such as language learning and filling in paperwork, while providing them with a safe and supportive community. In this regard, JRS provided monthly training and professional support when requested.

Supporting school inclusion remained the top priority of the educational programme. The team worked in close cooperation with schools that enrol refugee children and provided them with the requested support. At the same time, JRS maintained a strong focus on language skills development: weekly Hungarian language training classes were held for both children and adults with the help of 15 volunteers. Other

tutoring sessions were carried out by volunteers, depending on the children's needs. In close cooperation with a partner NGO, JRS Hungary also continued its work in the reception facility for unaccompanied children in Fót, where language classes and other activities were organised twice a week.

As in previous years, JRS participated in an outreach project coordinated by UNHCR. This involved hiring an outreach coordinator with a refugee background, who was involved in the organisation's social work and maintained regular contact with JRS beneficiaries. This allowed the team to respond to their needs and difficulties more effectively, which was extremely important during the trying and uncertain months of the lockdown.

The CHANGE project coordinated by JRS Europe aimed to promote critical thinking skills among high school students through in-class activities. Due to Covid-19, these workshops were moved to online from March onwards, and 478 students were reached overall.





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JRS Ireland prioritised the accompaniment of asylum seekers and forced migrants, to vindicate their rights and support them to live with greater dignity. 2,500+ benefitted directly from services in 2020.

In response to Covid-19 the outreach model was adapted to support individuals living in 12 Direct Provision centres and 20 emergency locations. Children benefited from #CHANGE and a summer programme. Over 50 asylum seekers were also sponsored to undertake education/vocational training.

JRS enhanced delivery of the Fáilte Project, providing essential reception and orientation supports to new protection applicants. Since July, weekly one-stop-shop clinics have given protection applicants access to key public services. A residents' photo competition promoted positive mental health with the winning image featuring in the 2021 JRS Ireland Calendar.

In 2020, the housing crisis continued to frustrate persons with status' ability to exit

Direct Provision. In response, JRS launched 'Connecting Communities', which will provide targeted support to transition to the community.

As a member of the Limerick Covid-19 Community Forum and Chair of the Limerick Integration Working Group, JRS responded to the needs of migrant families/undocumented persons at risk of destitution.

Due to the pandemic, education has been delivered online. Access to technology is a significant barrier for Direct Provision residents. JRS distributed 23 laptops to support asylum seeking students.

JRS also secured funding to deliver 'LINK' and the 'Remote Education Access Initiative.' In 2021, these projects will provide hardware and sponsorship to support asylum seeker participation in education.

After years of criticism, the Irish Government committed to ending the Direct Provision system. In response JRS developed 'Protection with Dignity', offering a roadmap to radical system change.

The projects carried out by Centro Astalli (JRS Italy) followed two fundamental guidelines: giving continuity to already established paths, and addressing the exceptional context of the pandemic and its socioeconomic repercussions.

In keeping with Centro Astalli's mission to help migrants restore their sense of dignity and integrate successfully into Italian society, a new reception project was launched for 11 men in January 2020, joining the four active centres that host men, women (either alone or with children), and refugee families.

Special attention was given to training and employment, and access to health and education. In addition, various multiyear project initiatives continued during the year and others were launched in order to strengthen the dialogue with other actors present in Rome, with the various offices of Centro Astalli in Italy and with the international JRS network. The main objective of this was to build common and shared responses and innovative solutions to the challenges of

the present time.

Within the context of the Covid-19, the initiatives focused on the consolidation of services and inclusion activities for the vulnerable (specifically, single-parent families and migrants who lost their jobs).

At the start of the pandemic, Centro Astalli took rapid action to counter the immediate effects of the health emergency on the lives of forced migrants. "Essential services have been rethought and reorganized according to the directives but have always remained open. At the canteen, bags and groceries are distributed every day and the clinic ensures the distribution of medicines, hygiene kits, gloves and masks.

The operators continue to work by contacting people on the phone and trying to give a concrete answer to the numerous needs. The social and economic consequences of the pandemic begin to weigh too much, risking the marginalisation of the most vulnerable," explains Sara Tarantino, staff member of Centro Astalli.



JRS Switzerland continued to focus its work on empowering refugees and asylum seekers, and providing a sense of community. To raise awareness within Swiss society, public debates and meetings were held, allowing refugees to interact directly with Swiss citizens.

Where possible, given the Covid-19 situation, JRS continued to run communal cooking sessions and provide passes for public transport. At the height of the lockdown, the staff provided remote support and carried out outdoor visits to emergency shelters. In the summer, between the first and second waves of Covid-19, a bicycle tour through Switzerland was organised. For three weeks, people cycled from Zurich to Basel, Bern, Fribourg and Luzerne, with a total active participation of 120 people.



© Christian Ender



JRS Luxembourg was founded in May 2020 after a long and valuable partnership between JRS Europe and the Group Ignatien pour les Migrations (GIM). A ceremony was held on the 18th of May, attended by three Jesuits and five laypersons, chosen for their closeness to the Jesuits and their interest in human rights and asylum defence.

The team immediately implemented several projects throughout the year, despite having to constantly adapt them in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The first of these was a two-week Summer Academy for 20 teenage refugees, organised with the aim of helping them improve their French, discover Luxembourg, and experience a positive environment outside of their reception centres. Of the team of ten volunteers, three had a refugee background; their knowledge of Arabic, Farsi and/or Tigrinya was of great help, particularly in situations where cultural mediation was needed.

Following the decision by the founding

assembly to prioritise the integration of young refugees, JRS initiated a three-year project called Karibuni. The purpose of this project is to organise events and workshops that revolve around creativity, culture, sports, languages and professional skills. The project had a successful start, as it welcomed 47 young people of different nationalities from its launch in November until the end of December. Working so closely with young people through these projects has assisted the team in identifying difficult situations faced by refugees in Luxembourg, and hence in developing stronger support services that are more tailored to their needs.

JRS continued the work of GIM in asking for a change of Dublin regulation, as the newly proposed European pact on asylum was not deemed sufficient. A proposal was also made to the Minister of Health to give vaccine priority to those in refugee camps, which have been closed to all visitors, including family members and NGO workers, since March 2020.



In line with the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus “walking with the excluded”, JRS Austria’s project “Locugee: Awakening Potentials” continued to support young refugees in shared apartments, accompanied by a Jesuit.

Following the Covid-19 outbreak, the team worked to ensure the safety of all tenants, by implementing strict hygiene regulations, ceasing outside visits and providing different forms of entertainment—such as games—to encourage them to stay indoors. As restrictions eased in the summer months, various outdoor activities were organised, including regular barbecue gatherings.

At the end of the year, JRS published a brochure, which included testimonials, to share positive perspectives on refugees and their value in society.





© Kristof Holvenyi



In 2020, JRS Malta strengthened its employment support services, which aim to facilitate access to the labour market through information provision, CV-writing and job search assistance.

To this end, staff engaged in the ongoing recruitment and training of volunteers, and developed training materials and guidelines. JRS also worked with Teatru Salesjan and UNHCR to organise training workshops for women, focused on enhancing interpersonal and communication skills and addressing topics related to employee rights, preparation for job interviews, and the Maltese labour market culture.

From July to October, together with the Carmelite Fathers and AWAS, the team implemented a project offering temporary accommodation and psychosocial support to 14 asylum seekers facing homelessness. Staff worked with residents on issues (education, employment, and basic needs) crucial to their transition from this project to their own accommodation. A plan was drawn up for each individual, to help them

secure employment enabling financially independence. Some recipients also started vocational training or language courses to increase their employability.

In collaboration with Migrant Women's Association Malta and UNHCR, JRS piloted online training for women in open centres. The training programme aimed to empower women to become community leaders and address issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the community. This initiative highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces where sensitive issues can be discussed, and where ongoing individual support can be provided. It also emphasised the key role of women in raising awareness about SGBV in their communities. 13 women were trained in two programmes.

From April 2020, JRS initiated a legal and advocacy project in partnership with aditus foundation and ASGI, focusing on advocating for access to protection. The project places particular importance on access to territory and detention, both of which are extremely relevant in the Maltese context.



In 2020, JRS Poland assigned a team of volunteers to publish key information about the situation of migrants both locally and internationally. Training sessions were held to facilitate this, and open meetings were organised with people who worked in the Middle East, to share their experience of intercultural diversity.

The celebration of World Migrant and Refugee Day was an important event with a number of activities for adults and children from refugee families. Halfway through the year, a fundraising campaign was set up in aid of a vulnerable family. With the help of benefactors, JRS was able to obtaining a social housing apartment for them to live in. In addition, the staff provided basic necessities—such as food and clothing—to mothers raising a young children alone. he



In March 2020, JRS Slovenia maintained visits to the only detention centre in Slovenia, and provided psychosocial support to detainees who were experiencing heightened anxiety due to the pandemic. These visits were suspended from the 1st of April due to the spread of the virus, and for several months the team could only provide distant support.

JRS Slovenia's radio show called "Building a more open society" continued to air on the national Catholic radio once a month, with the goal of providing a more positive view on migration and refugee issues. The programme is centred around interviews with people who have worked with refugees and migrants, and provides additional news on this matter in both local and foreign contexts.





Of the several projects implemented in 2020, “Entre Palvaras” was one of the most successful. This project was set up to by the JRS Portugal Academy to help migrants and refugees improve their literacy skills and knowledge of the Portuguese language and culture. The programme involved cultural outings and lessons, which took place online during the pandemic.

The Work-Up project also had a very positive outcome. The aim was to provide migrants with practical training in areas like domestic service, hospitality and elderly care while promoting the development of personal, social and professional skills through a basic training model. Each training course was also supplemented with workshops on job search techniques, and information sessions on migrant rights.

In 2020, the Communications and Advocacy teams merged to adopt more holistic positions defending the rights of migrants and refugees, in particular in terms of raising awareness and

increasing the presence of JRS on social networks by significantly increasing content, gathering testimonials reflecting political positions and success stories. With the support of several national artists, the newly formed team launched a campaign called “#VidasEmEspera” with the aim of showing people the positive contribution of migrants in Portuguese society.

JRS welcomed new members to assist with the housing project, which helps refugees find suitable accommodation. The new team worked on strategies to reach out to landlords and real estate agencies, to form a working relationship with them and address any negative preconceptions that usually prevent refugees from being accepted as tenants.

In one of the shelters, the Centro Pedro Arrupe, 13 out of 47 residents managed to achieve independence with the help of JRS staff, and 16 got a job. The team also continued to develop its daily activities, seeking to maintain proximity to migrants and refugees and responding to their needs.

To facilitate integration, JRS Romania gave financial assistance to 243 refugees to cover rental, and 316 additional refugees and migrants participated in Romanian language classes and cultural, recreational, and educational activities, as well as being offered social and medical care and counselling throughout their integration process.

As an alternative to detention, 91 migrants were housed in the Pedro Arrupe Centre, where they also received social assistance and medical care. Following the outbreak of Covid-19, JRS ensured safe conditions to minimise the risk of contagion, and supplied medical items for their protection.

Among JRS’s priorities are ensuring access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and reception conditions that meet international standards, ending the detention of children, and creating alternatives to detention. To this end, the team organised seminars and training activities related to the asylum procedure, offered counselling with regards to voluntary repatriation, and provided legal

support to 1900 migrants.

Due consideration was given to the challenges refugee women face in accessing employment in their host country. In addition to the already existing cultural barriers, the Covid-19 pandemic created even more obstacles, particularly stemming from school closures and the loss of jobs, as well as private housing evictions due to the impossibility of paying rent and utilities. In response to these circumstances, a team of JRS volunteers launched a gender-responsive website development programme for single refugee mothers, with the aim of teaching technical skills and improving the remote employability of refugee women during the pandemic. The mentorship programme started in December 2020 with online lessons mainly focusing on HTML/CSS basics, technical knowledge and critical thinking development, website design, and JavaScript.



## JRS South-East Europe

## JRS South-East Europe

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

As the number JRS BiH focused its work on cultural integration, mediation and advocacy by means of various projects. In addition to the translation services provided in temporary reception centres, the team extended their skills to public institutions in the Una-Sana Canton. JRS also operated an outreach programme

through which they distributed food packages on a weekly basis.

The main activity in 2020 was JRS's 40th anniversary, which was a two-day event filled with activities in all the camps, and brought together refugees and other colleagues in the field.

## CROATIA

JRS Croatia supported resettled refugees from Turkey with their daily needs and their inclusion into Croatian society. All children were enrolled in primary school and successfully completed the 2019/2020 school year, while the adults were offered Croatian language and skilled courses. In order to sensitise and inform the local media and communities, the team also held meetings and events in several cities. Further activities for refugees were organised on a regular basis, until the project's completion in October 2020.

The project "TRAZILICA: Social inclusion and strengthening the competitiveness of asylum seekers/labor market in the Republic of Croatia", initiated in 2019 in partnership with Zagreb Open University,

concluded in September 2020. The aim of the project was to support refugees with their education and integration into society and the labour market, while also responding to the need for skilled workers in shortage occupations.

JRS also participated in the project "Education for better integration of asylum seekers". As asylum seekers are at the highest risk of poverty and marginalization, the main goal of this project is to increase their employability and provide vocational training programmes for occupations in tourism and hospitality. The project has so far assisted 34 people (of which 20 are women) from 12 different countries.

## KOSOVO

JRS is currently the only NGO in Kosovo offering direct assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, and throughout 2020, the team maintained its daily presence in reception and detention centres. Various social and cultural activities were organised to facilitate integration,

and language and computer lessons were provided twice a week.

JRS also worked closely with UNCHR to create the Standard Operating Procedures for unaccompanied children. In response to Covid-19, emphasis was placed on medical and psychological support, and food packages and hygiene kits were distributed.

## MACEDONIA

JRS Macedonia continued accompanying asylum seekers at the various reception and transit centres in the country. Services provided included free legal aid and counselling, psychosocial support, and medical assistance, and social and

educational activities were also organised by staff and volunteers in all the centres. The team carried out advocacy work by participating in public hearings, filing lawsuits with the Skopje Administrative Court, and helping asylum seekers with their ID card applications, among other initiatives.

## SERBIA

JRS Serbia continued its advocacy for the rights of refugees by working with government institutions and NGOs to provide systematic and coordinated services aimed at improving integration. Several initiatives were implemented in the Integration House for unaccompanied

refugee children in Belgrade, including educational activities, stress relief workshops, and activity plans tailored to each child's developmental needs. In the context of Covid-19, the team prioritised medical assistance and online psychological support for the children.





The weekly Day Centre where refugees could get a warm meal and socialise, as well as take part in a creative arts group, community kitchen, and prayer groups, closed due to Covid. JRS UK transitioned to remote working, aiding the 300 refugees they support from a distance.

The Emergency Response Team delivered food, toiletries and financial aid to refugees and asylum seekers. JRS UK provided mobile phone top-ups to allow continued contact. The Refugee Friends' Hardship Fund was created to finance these efforts. A few weeks into these initiatives, JRS UK had already delivered over 100 parcels and phone top-ups.

Although the hosting programme 'At Home' was temporarily closed to new hosts due to the pandemic, guests continued to stay with volunteers, parishes, and religious communities affiliated with JRS UK.

'Refugees Call for Change' offers an open, peer-support space for refugees to gather and discuss openly the problems and experiences they are facing within

the UK's asylum system. "People like me are unable to take up employment, rent accommodation or apply for any benefits, and we certainly cannot open a UK bank account. We belong to a rather unfortunate category of immigrants whose lack of status actually means we have 'no recourse to public funds,'" wrote one of its 13 members in The Independent in May 2020.

Advocacy also continued: along with hosting a number of virtual events on the situation of refugees in the UK, JRS also published the report "Detained and Dehumanised", drawing on the accounts of 27 forcibly displaced people with direct experience of detention spanning the last 20 years. The report finds that the policy and use of immigration detention fosters a culture of death, self-harm and ongoing trauma leaving those who are detained, or threatened by the prospect of detention, dehumanised.

JRS UK continued to provide legal advice and manage casework over the phone and through video calls.

#### JRS Europe Partner



2020 began with a series of vigils organised at detention centres in Madrid and Barcelona, to show solidarity with the detainees and to raise awareness of their living conditions, followed by a campaign to rally citizen support and put pressure on the government to abolish such centres and guarantee safe and sanitary living spaces for migrants.

SJM issued a press release in February highlighting the position adopted by the European Human Rights Court on pushbacks at the Spanish Southern Border, and joined the #MigrantesconDerechos network to denounce the injustice of these practices and the danger of legitimising this violence against vulnerable migrants. An additional press release was issued regarding the Spanish Supreme Court sentence recognising SJM's defence of asylum seekers' right to move from Melilla to the mainland. Although this was a positive outcome, the situation on the Southern Border remained difficult for the hundreds of people held in improvised centres, which were over capacity and

lacked basic sanitary conditions.

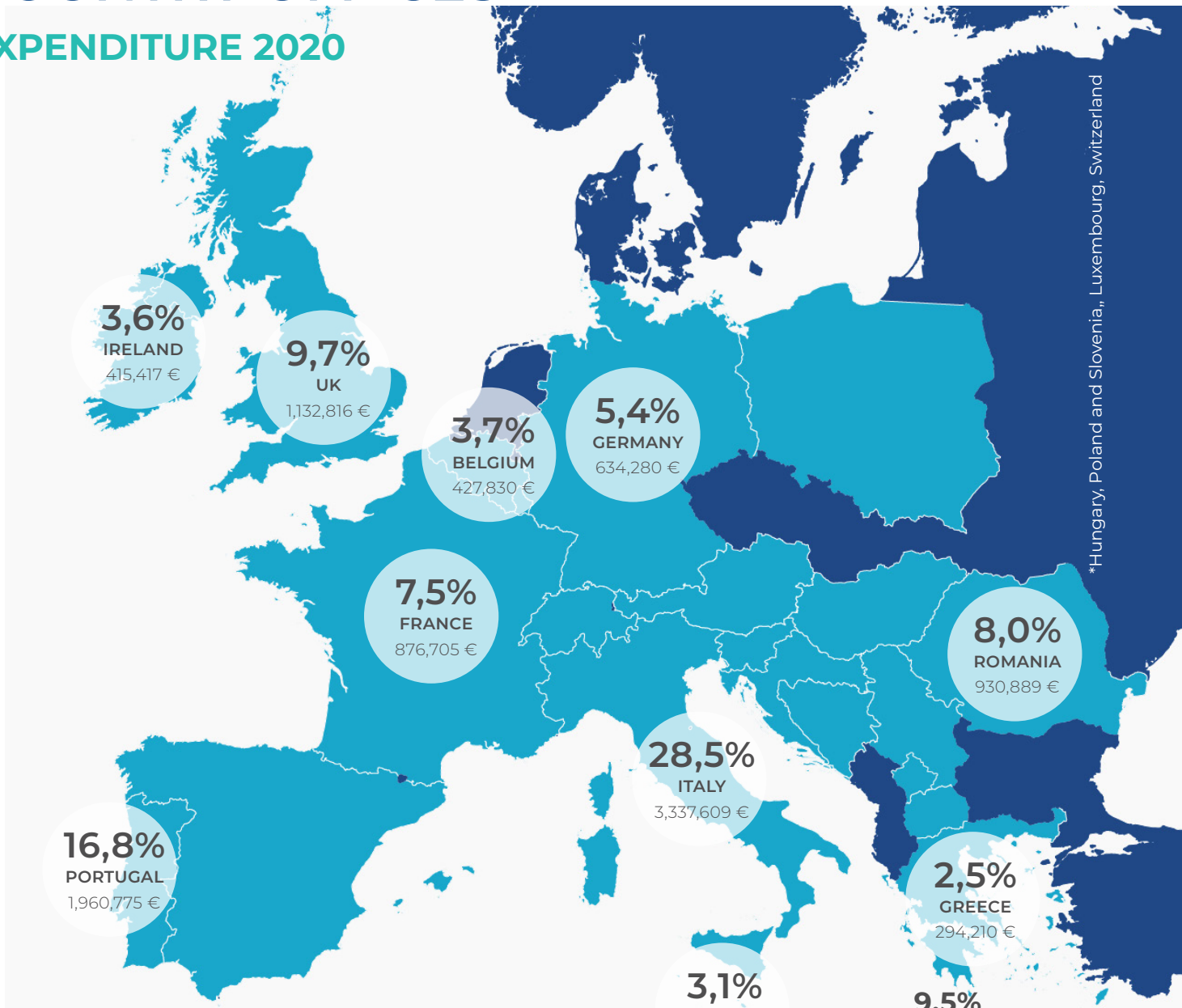
In response to the challenges of the pandemic, SJM focused on covering basic needs and establishing virtual closeness with migrants by: delivering tablets to vulnerable families for online schooling; distributing food and basic necessities to people's homes; accompanying beneficiaries with psychosocial care online or over the phone; and attending to emergency requests such as legal or health issues. In order to keep offering integration solutions, new hospitality communities and initiatives were launched, and previous intervention models were adapted in line with Covid-19 prevention measures.

SJM also organised webinars and published reports within the context of Covid-19. The team participated in several initiatives online, including JRS's 40th anniversary and the Social Apostolate initiative to publicly denounce the situation of migrants stranded in the Canary Islands.



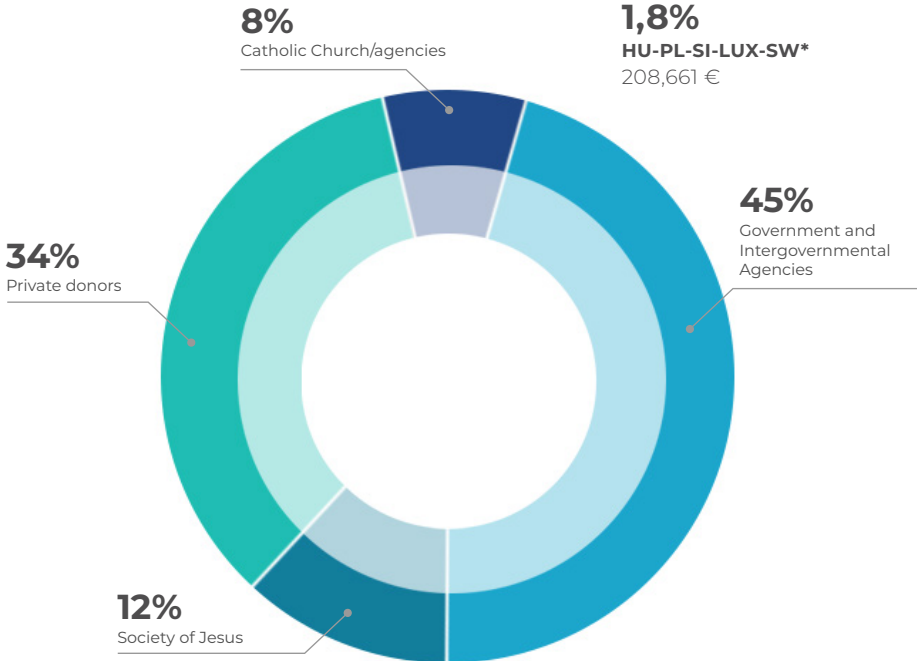
COUNTRY OFFICES

EXPENDITURE 2020



INCOME 2020

Society of Jesus	1,453,888 €
Private donors	4,060,095€
Catholic Church/agencies	960,582 €
Government and Intergovernmental Agencies	5,393,119 €
TOTAL	11,967,684 €



REGIONAL OFFICE

Management	152,124€
Advocacy and Policy	53,127€
Communications	30,292€
Regional Coordination	10,080€
Programmes	687,207€
Profit/loss	+19,397€
TOTAL	952,228€

EXPENDITURE 2020

INCOME 2020

Jesuit sources/CEP	293,621€
Private donors and foundations	281,395€
Government and Intergovernment agencies	263,715€
Catholic Church agencies	113,497€
TOTAL	952,228€

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Tom Smolich SJ  
Director JRS International
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- André Costa Jorge  
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Thank you

JRS Europe thanks our donors who made our work with refugees possible in 2020.

JRS Europe thanks our donors who made our work with refugees possible in 2020. Your generous support - be it through volunteering your time or offering material and financial support to sustain our programs - helped JRS Europe to successfully accompany people, advocate for their rights, provide needed services and raise awareness on the issues they face as well as the positive contributions that they lend to building diverse and inclusive societies across Europe. Notably, we would like to thank the Council of Europe Development Bank, ECRE-PICUM Follow the Money project, EPIM, EU AMIF, EU Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps, Jesuit Conference of European Provincials, JRS International Office, JRS USA, Missionsprokur Germany, Oak Foundation, Fondation L´Oeuvre d´Orient, Renovabis.





EUROPE



## ADVOCATE

You can keep yourself informed about our work and share our messages and stories. Sign up for JRS Europe newsletter on our website ([jrseurope.org/contact](http://jrseurope.org/contact)) and follow us on social media.



## DONATE

You can contribute to JRS's work by donating via PayPal on our website ([jrseurope.org/donate](http://jrseurope.org/donate)) or via bank transfer to the following account:

**IBAN: BE 49 2100 9067 7571**

**Swift code: GE BA BE BB**


**Account name: JRS Europe**



## CONTACT

**Jesuit Refugee Service Europe**

Chaussée de Wavre 205, 1050  
Ixelles, Brussels – Belgium

 +32 (0) 2 554 02 20

 [europe.admin@jrs.net](mailto:europe.admin@jrs.net)



**[WWW.JRSEUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.JRSEUROPE.ORG)**