



EUROPE

Strategic Framework for JRS in Europe 2022-2024

Keeping Hope
Alive across
Europe

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1. Introduction

1.1 Where we come from

The history of the Jesuit Refugee Service has its roots in a single individual feeling compelled to action and mobilising others to do the same. In 1980, moved by the situation of the Vietnamese boat people Pedro Arrupe, the then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, felt compelled to act. Today, as a network of 22 JRS offices and contact persons in Europe, we are continually reminded that those most vulnerable in society, those at risk of exclusion, whose fundamental human rights have been violated, are those on whom our attention must fall.

Our spiritual tradition leads us to have an optimistic and committed attitude towards the human person. A committed attitude because God, who seeks the good of all creation, focuses attentively on the part of humanity that suffers most, victims of injustice and violence. Ours is an optimistic spirituality because it finds God in all events, in all people, especially in the poor and marginalised, God's presence mobilises a dynamic of solidarity, hospitality and closeness to those who suffer. Our inspiration is our gratitude for this presence of God, which leads us to a radical and sincere commitment.

In Europe, the strength of the work of JRS has often been where interpersonal hospitality and collective advocacy meet. Indeed, in 2014 Fr Adolfo Nicolás, former Superior General, noted that JRS is "Gospel hospitality in action." Through JRS's programmes and awareness raising campaigns, we have seen once again how individual people have felt called to stand alongside refugees and forced migrants and, through their own involvement, convince neighbours, classmates or political leaders to do the same. As members of European society, we also see hospitality as a political responsibility and are challenged to think creatively on how to influence, effectively and positively, rising tendencies of isolation and unwelcoming cultural attitudes.



1.2 Who we work with

Although Europe is hosting only a small minority of the forcibly displaced worldwide, there still are thousands of people – men, women and children fleeing persecution, armed conflict, poverty or natural disasters in their homeland where they can no longer find safety and security – that come to our region seeking protection and assistance. Despite a growing public anti-migration discourse, thousands of citizens all over Europe show compassion and solidarity to refugees and act to help in any way they can. Daily JRS comes into contact with many of these people – both refugees and local citizens – and witnesses as new friendships form, emergency needs are met and public policies on asylum and migration shift as a result of a joint effort of advocacy with other stakeholders.

Following Catholic social teaching, JRS understands the term 'refugee' to include not only persons persecuted because of race, religion, membership in social or political groups, but also internally displaced persons and all forcibly displaced people who are driven from their homes by armed conflict, ruinous economic policy or natural disasters.

JRS also has a particular care for those who are the most vulnerable or whose needs are most urgent. A person can be considered vulnerable because of any number of personal, social or environmental factors. While our past research has shown that vulnerability is a complex and multi-layered reality that encompasses many different kinds of people, we typically mean groups such as unaccompanied minors, women affected by gender-based violence, people with physical and mental health challenges and people at risk of becoming destitute.

1.3 Where we are going

In order to re-articulate our mission, founding values and the future direction of our work, this strategic framework and plan will act as a guidepost. The Strategic Framework for the region of JRS in Europe aims to identify common interests and purposes and key communication channels between countries within the network. To complement this Strategic Framework, the Regional Office of JRS Europe will implement its own Strategic Plan to provide a clear vision of the work to be done and the goals to be achieved within the next three years.

In the elaboration of this strategic framework, we have taken into account the overall journey of the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) that the Society of Jesus has set in 2019 for the next 10 years. One of the preferences directly addresses the mission of JRS, walking with the excluded. We have also coordinated our work and alignment with the strategic framework of the JRS International Office, and the guidelines set out by the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat at the World Social Congress in Rome (2019) and also at the European Social Congress in Loyola (2022), as a milestone in the "deeper renewal" and align processes of the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials (JCEP) Justice Networks, of which JRS Europe is a member. We are also encouraged by the support and guidelines of the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network on Migration.

Finally, we are inspired and affirmed in our work by the words of Pope Francis, "In the poor, you have found a privileged place of encounter with Christ. This is a precious gift. (...) Share your hope wherever you are, to encourage, console, comfort and reinvigorate." (Rome, 2019). We also continue to follow Pope Francis's guidance in our shared response to the challenge of migration with the goal 'to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate'.

2. Our Context

2.1 Global Context

We live in a world of persistent inequality. Excessive social and economic imbalances and the denial of basic human rights have long been recognised as causes of forced migration worldwide.

According to the World Bank's data from 2020, after almost 25 years of slow decreasing, extreme poverty is now on the rise again, due to conflicts, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic. The effects of the pandemic resulted in approximately 100 million additional poor people, bringing the total of people living on less than \$1.90 (USD) a day to between 703 and 729 million.

Poverty does not affect all regions of the world equally. The data indicates that the poorest people live in rural areas, half of them are children, and women constitute the majority of the poor. Additionally, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Madagascar account for almost half of the poor in Sub-Saharan Africa. The latest research suggests that the effects of climate change will drive 68 to 132 million people into poverty by 2030, bringing the goal of diminishing the rate of absolute poverty to less than 3% by that year impossible without significant policy action¹.

At the same time, global mobility and global information systems have been making the world smaller: people are more aware of the deep divisions of the world. Travel has become accessible to more people while new streams of communication have increased the speed at which information can be exchanged.

At the same time, armed conflicts have raged for years in many regions of the world, in particular in several African countries, in the Middle East and in Central Asia. In addition, persecution of groups and individuals is still globally widespread. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), during 2020 several crises, including those in Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, forced the displacement of over 11 million people². At the end of 2021, the attention of the international community was drawn once again to Afghanistan, where the Taliban takeover of the country in August 2021 made fear for new waves of refugee displacement from the country.

In an international context characterised by violent conflicts and profound inequality, it is inevitable that people who can will sometimes move from their home countries in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Although statistically it is clear that only a minority of the world's population actually leaves its country of origin; the numbers have nevertheless been rising. According to the most recent estimates of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there are currently 272 million international migrants globally, or 3.5% of the world's population³.

According to the UNHCR, even though arrivals of new asylum-seekers and refugees were sharply down in most regions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, global displacement continued to grow, with the number of forcibly displaced at 84 million, the number of internally displaced at 48 million and the number of refugees more than 26 million. Within these numbers, also lies an unbalance, as we see that 85% of displaced people currently reside in developing countries and 73% are hosted in neighbouring countries, with Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany hosting the highest numbers⁴.

¹ World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview#1> [last Updated on 14/10/2021]
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021>; <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/poverty-and-shared-prosperity-2020-reversals-of-fortune-frequently-asked-questions>; [last accessed on 03/11/2021]

² UNHCR, Global Trends Displacement in 2020, <https://unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends>, [last accessed 03/11/2021]

³ IOM, World Migration Report, <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020> [last accessed 03/11/2021]

⁴ UNHCR, Mid-Year Trends in 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/618ae4694/mid-year-trends-2021.html>,



2.2 European Trends

As one of the most secure and wealthy regions in the world, Europe is naturally a destination for many migrants. In 2019, Europe hosted about 82 million migrants⁵. The numbers are much more modest when it comes to forced migrants, with Europe hosting about 3 million refugees, representing about 12.5% of the world's refugee population⁶.

Therefore, the whole region, and particularly the European Union (EU), with a total population of about 450 million, continues to comparatively receive a small number of forced migrants. After the sharp increase in arrivals that characterised the years between 2014 and 2016, the number of people reaching the EU to seek protection has considerably decreased. In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the lowest number in asylum applications was registered since 2013 (485 000)⁷.

Despite the relatively low, and certainly manageable numbers, both the EU and its Member States continue to approach the challenges posed by migration mainly from the perspective of preventing people from entering their territories. No consensus could be found among EU Member States in the process of reforming the Common European Asylum System initiated in 2016: the deep crisis in solidarity and trust among Member States could not be overcome. To get out of this deadlock, in September 2020 the European Commission presented the so-called New Pact on Asylum and Migration. Meant to be a "fresh start", already at a first look the Pact revealed itself to be a repackaging of many old recipes from the past. The Commission's proposals strongly focus on keeping people at the EU external borders, creating mandatory border procedures and expanding the possibilities for (de facto) detention. The Commission proposal is also weak when it comes to solidarity among Member States. Rather than insisting on the need of accepting shared responsibility for protecting and welcoming in a spirit of European cooperation, the Commission

<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/> [last accessed 19/11/2021]

⁵ IOM, "World Migration Report 2020", <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020> [last accessed 19/11/2021]

⁶ UNHCR, Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/>, [last accessed 03/11/2021], the figure is calculated by subtracting the number of the refugees registered in Turkey (3.7 million) from the regional total (6.7) million.

⁷ Eurostat, Asylum statistics, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics [last accessed 19/11/2021]

introduced the possibility for Member States to sponsor returns from other Member States. At the end of 2021, the New Pact has still failed to gain the consensus needed to be adopted and negotiations are not advancing on several of the crucial files. Next to the many human rights concerns raised by the civil society and by several forces within the European Parliament, the Pact also fails to address the concerns of the Member States at the external borders, who see their workload and responsibility only increasing if the Pact were to be adopted.

While the legislative processes remain pending, the experience of JRS on the ground shows that protection and reception conditions for asylum seekers have not improved in the past three years. On the contrary, as our research on the impact of Covid-19 on the reception of asylum seekers⁸ and on detention⁹ showed, many EU Member States have simply never fully been compliant even with the existing EU legislation. In many EU countries, including Greece, Italy, France and Belgium, dignified reception conditions are not guaranteed to all those who are entitled to it according to EU law. The Covid-19 pandemic magnified and aggravated all the existing flaws, homelessness and destitution increased among asylum seekers and refugees.

The pandemic also clearly showed that for most EU Member States detention is not a measure of last resort, and that deprivation of liberty is not only used when it is needed and proportional to the goal of enforcing returns. In fact, during months when return was de facto impossible due to the travel restrictions and the nearly absence of flights because of Covid-19, EU Member States like Belgium, Malta, Romania and Portugal, continued to detain people.

Furthermore, the pandemic also increased the challenges for forced migrants to integrate and participate in the local society. The need to avoid social contacts reduced the possibility of encounters with the local community and increased isolation. Moreover, the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic affected heavily the (informal) sectors where forced migrants were often employed. These challenges will undoubtedly have a longer-term impact and will need to be addressed in the coming years.



⁸ JRS Europe, From Bad to Worse: Covid-19 Aggravates Existing Gaps in the Reception of Asylum Seekers [last accessed 02/12/2021]

⁹ JRS Europe, Covid-19 and Immigration Detention: Lessons (Not) Learned, February 2021, [last accessed 02/12/2021]

The outbreak of Covid-19 also had some positive side-effects on the perception of the society about migrants. It showcased how many people with migrant backgrounds occupy indispensable positions in our societies, in particular in the healthcare systems. It also showed the importance of international solidarity and the need for our societies to be inclusive, because something like a virus does not stop at borders nor makes distinctions among different legal statuses. Despite this, the overall discourse around migration remains heavily polarised and politically instrumentalised, as shown in the debates surrounding the upcoming presidential election in 2022 in France. As France, in the same period, will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU, such national context is likely to negatively impact the discussion at EU level.

Moreover, notwithstanding the declared intentions of the European Commission to 'normalise' the narrative about migration and step out from a crisis-mindset, the trend to step into emergency modus, whenever a real or perceived risk of increase in arrivals materialised, has continued and even reached a new level of concerning practises in the past years. Such emergency modus usually justifies side-tracking EU legislation, turning a blind eye to push-backs, increased use of detention and reducing reception standards. This is exemplified by the emergency response triggered at the EU/Belarus border in 2021, but also already before at the Greek/Turkish border at Evros in 2020. In both cases, non-EU countries attempted to put political pressure on the EU by pushing thousands of people towards the EU external borders. In both cases, the EU reaction has been disproportionate. While the numbers were perfectly manageable, in fear of a pull-factor, the EU and its Member States reacted by being hard on the people seeking protection, closing the borders, mobilising the army, abandoning people in inhumane conditions.

Safe access to European territory for people in need of protection is and will remain a challenge in the coming years. Push-backs are a daily reality at many of the EU external borders (e.g. Croatia, Greece, Spain, Romania, more recently also Poland, Latvia and Lithuania). The response of European states to the Taliban power-seize in Afghanistan of August 2021 shows how little openness there is in Europe to genuinely show solidarity and contribute to protect refugees at the global level. Instead of making concrete efforts to support resettlement and other legal channels for Afghan refugees to be welcomed in Europe, the EU reaction focused on providing help in the region in order to prevent irregular onward movements.

Amidst all these negative trends, JRS experience continues to show that among the local population, there still often is ample willingness to engage in welcoming forced migrants and accompanying them in their road towards integration and participation in our societies. Despite the ongoing attempts by authorities across Europe to criminalise solidarity, we have seen civil society stepping up and defending rights, in court if needed, and winning. During the Covid-19 pandemic, JRS's staff and volunteers, as many other civil society actors all around our region, have been extremely resilient and creative in continuing to reach out and support forced migrants, using old ways and new technologies and maintaining social contacts and proximity in a moment where we all needed to keep physical distance.

Finally, also in the past years, Pope Francis, the Holy See's Migrant & Refugee Section, and many national Bishops' Conferences have continued bringing issues of forced migration to the forefront of Catholic thought and action. This will remain a precious and powerful support for our work in countering an anti-migration and xenophobic discourse that too often certain policy makers claim to be in line with 'Christian values'.

Mission

1

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

2

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.

Values

3

Compassion
Hope
Dignity
Solidarity
Hospitality
Justice
Participation

3. Mission, Vision & Values

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

By the end of 2024, JRS in Europe has enhanced and articulated its role and strategic areas of work in order to fulfil its threefold mission of accompaniment, service and advocacy for refugees. All JRS offices – at national and European level – share a common base of values and an understanding about the importance of working together across Europe at different levels.

Because of the strength of the network, the Regional Office of JRS Europe is able to utilise the experience of country offices at national level to effectively contribute to policy, programme and awareness raising work at European level. At the same time, the Country Offices endorse, value and actively participate in the work of JRS at European level. The Regional Office works with and for the JRS country offices, and it has established itself as a main reference point for them – supporting the country offices in identified areas, including best practice exchange through the network, programmatic growth, advocacy and communication expansion, fundraising and capacity building. The network of JRS in Europe has reached a sustained and stable level of healthy financial growth through fundraising, planning and effective programme management.

At European level, the JRS network has expanded its presence and reach and has engaged with a network of stakeholders and advocacy allies. It has defined its expertise within these groups. JRS in Europe has relevant advocacy positions regarding asylum and refugee issues that are connected with national realities and the direct experience of refugees. Therefore, the JRS network in Europe, mainly through the action of the Regional Office, is able to influence the European agenda towards the relevant public policy changes.



3.3 Value

JRS in Europe is inspired by core values that inform our work. These values were started by JRS International in 2012, and they are now reaffirmed and freshly articulated within our current context.

Compassion

Compassion means treating others with equity and respect, and working to alleviate the suffering of others, starting from a base of love, empathy and understanding.

Hope

Hope is the quality of the spirit that provides the necessary energy and direction to keep working towards our aims for an inclusive and welcoming society. Guided by hope, JRS focuses on positivity and solutions rather than problems. Through accompaniment, JRS can inspire hope among people in difficult situations, there by contributing to societal change.

Dignity

Dignity means that all human beings, regardless of their social status, circumstances or identity, are endowed with human rights, agency and a unique personal history. These human rights are inherent and inalienable and must therefore always be respected and protected.

Solidarity

Solidarity is represented by our firm and preserving commitment to do good in society for individuals. It is present when JRS respectfully walks alongside and works with people – refugees and migrants from diverse cultures, nationalities and religions – in order to find with them solutions for their needs.

Hospitality

Hospitality is at the heart of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone can be 'at home'. For JRS, hospitality begins upon a person's first arrival, and we create spaces where people interact, make connections and develop positive networks of relationships.

Justice

Justice is achieved when people – regardless of race, religion, gender, age or ability – enjoy equal opportunities and conditions that ensure access to a dignified way of life. JRS engages in a root cause analysis of injustices that refugees and migrants face in order to seek positive societal and cultural change.

Participation

Participation is a way of working that intentionally involves refugees and migrants in decision-making, planning and evaluation as well as in efforts to raise awareness and advocate on their own behalf. Participation is rooted in relationships based on trust, mutuality and reciprocity. More broadly, participation strives to empower refugees to contribute actively and confidently to society.

4. Core Competencies

Inspired by our Jesuit identity, JRS in Europe affirms the following core competencies and recognises them as “Our way of proceeding”. As such, these competencies consist of certain attitudes, values, and patterns of behaviour that join together to become our way of proceeding. As partners in mission, the JRS network in Europe is not content with the status quo, the known, the tried, the already existing. We are constantly driven to discover, redefine, and reach out on behalf of forced migrants and refugees. For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed. Our way of proceeding is a way of challenge.¹⁰

Abiding by, and striving to improve upon, JRS’s core competencies are central to the success and fulfilment of our mission. They are what help us stand out from similar actors in the field and enable us to find the key spaces where we, a mission-driven organisation, can bring added value.

4.1 Promoting a culture of Welcome in Europe

JRS strives to promote a culture of welcome in Europe, through our core value of hospitality. We promote encounters between local citizens and refugees, creating opportunities for mutual exchange and new friendships. We strive to ensure that these relationships are based on reciprocity and respect. JRS also engages in projects, research and advocacy campaigns in order to counter the insidious societal effects of racism and xenophobia.

4.2 Reconciliation

JRS understands reconciliation as the bridge-building which is never blind to the demands of justice; as the fostering of understanding between different social groups, especially amidst tensions and misunderstandings. We promote these aims societally, and equally in our own work and lives: in our personal relationships, our relationship with God and with the natural environment. In our increasingly polarised European societies, JRS sees one path to reconciliation as the acceptance that migration is a historical constant. It can be justly and judiciously managed, but never simply controlled. JRS sees migration as an act of human freedom, often in the face of oppression or destitution; an act that changes both host societies and migrants themselves. Migration is no threat to European identity but can enrich that identity. In facing the inevitable challenges, JRS affirms the importance of inter-religious partnerships.

4.3 Spiritual Dimension

In meeting forcibly displaced persons we encounter profound suffering. But two aspects always stand out as absolutes. Personal dignity, to be made effective, depends on respect for one’s rights, and on the capacity for self-esteem whatever the circumstances.

Second, a person’s ‘spiritual dimension’ is the capacity to be open to transcendence. Openness may be embodied in religious faith - in prayer, the reading of sacred texts or liturgical celebration: elsewhere in a deep and undeniable sense of relationship with the transcendent. JRS knows the capacity of faith, in its many expressions, to sustain persons in their worst ordeals.

4.4 Depth

In accordance with other works of the Society of Jesus, JRS engages in robust social analysis of the most pressing migration and refugee issues of our time. Our multidimensional approach is sustained by our threefold mission of accompaniment, service and advocacy, each activity

¹⁰ Adapted from “Our way of proceeding”, General Congregation 34, Decree 26.

enriching the other. We practise evidence-based research to inform our advocacy positions.

In the Ignatian tradition, depth of thought and imagination require a profound engagement with the real, a determination to reach below the surface. Careful analysis must serve a subsequent practical commitment to the people we serve, and to God, Christ, and the Gospel¹¹.

4.5 Accountability

JRS upholds across the organisation professionalism and high ethical standards. As a network, we work to develop our internal capacities. We do so through improving our operational policies and procedures, practising transparency in finance and administration, being accountable to our staff, through respectful policies in human resources.

We adhere to high standards of relationship with our donors and build up our fundraising capacities to ensure the sustainability of our projects and strengthen our network. JRS engages in careful monitoring and evaluation of its activities, and of its communications.

4.6 Humility

The network of twenty-two JRS country offices and a far greater number of contact persons across Europe has often described itself as members of an inclusive family. The network, like a healthy family, aspires to uphold and foster its internal relationships with humility and openness.

We practise subsidiarity, knowing that the people on the ground and those closest to situations are experts in their own realities. In addition, we approach the people aware that we are privileged to share in their journeys and accompany them in their challenges, sometimes their desolation, and their joy.



¹¹ Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, General Superior of the Jesuits. Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education today. Mexico City. 2010.

5. The way we work together

In order to adhere to the vision of a Europe where human rights, protection, hospitality, integration, and reconciliation all flourish, we will strive, as a network to uphold principles, establish clear working channels, work together on common advocacy and communications lines, and collaborate in common programmes.

5.1 Guiding principles

In Europe, the JRS network brings together independent national country offices for a common goal. Our working relationships are built on the foundations of trust and reciprocity. To encourage everyone to engage and speak honestly, each national office and individual in the network is treated with mutual understanding, fairness, and equality.

All national JRS offices provide varied specialisations and expertise to the JRS network in Europe, according to their contexts, histories, and capacities, to participate in the responsibility of accompanying, serving, and advocating for refugees. As a result, the network will identify the tasks and responsibilities of each of its members, taking into account their various capacities, in order to uphold standards of service delivery to our beneficiaries and of our own professionalism.

Each partner in the network should always operate transparently and in the best interests of the people, we serve and the company as a whole. As a result, the JRS network makes decisions based on deep discernment with the active participation of its members.

5.2 JRS network's working channels

Over the next three years, the JRS network in Europe will ensure that each JRS national country office is connected with the Society of Jesus in the office's respective province and strengthens Jesuit links at national and regional level.

Within the network, we will seek to expand both existing and new communication channels. This will include communication channels between JRS Europe and national country offices, as well as direct communication between national offices in common areas of work. JRS Europe aims to develop its own capacities in areas such as governance, quality management, human resources, and fundraising through strengthening the network.

Regular in-person gatherings are essential for the work of a network, not only for the purpose of exchanging information and expertise but also to foster interpersonal relations and the sense of belonging and participation to a wider goal. For these reasons, we will maintain the bi-annual Regional Coordination Meeting (RCM) and Annual General Meeting (AGM), as well as yearly meetings of the Advocacy and Communications Task forces and the Detention Visitors Support Group and, depending on specific projects' need, the Steering Committees of the common European projects.

Next to this, in the past years, we have more and more often relied on the use of technology for remote meetings. Such a way of working has proven to be highly beneficial for the maintenance of regular contacts within the network and for the smooth implementation of joint projects. In the next years we will therefore continue to improve our joint remote work on platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

This intention goes hand in hand with the wish for our network to be more conscious about our environmental footprint. We, therefore, commit to always consider whether the goal of a meeting can be achieved by a remote one before scheduling it in person and, when we still opt for travelling, to limit the use of flights and to engage into more ecological alternatives.



5.3 Common advocacy and communications strategies

When it comes to advocacy, JRS works together as a network to analyse relevant issues and policies as they arise, to identify difficulties, and to develop common positions and proposals for effective change. Then, at the European, national, and local levels, we submit our positions and recommendations to those in charge of initiating change, such as politicians and administrators.

In terms of communications, JRS collaborates to better share its programmatic work as well as the stories of the people we serve and accompany.

The Advocacy and Communications Taskforce is the platform in which, together, we develop common goals, positions and strategies, and share experiences about our shared positions and campaigns.

JRS advocacy and communications develop strategic partnerships with other NGOs, civil society organisations, policymakers, and media on a national and European level so that they can represent JRS policy positions in relevant fora.

5.4 Gender sensitive approach

Gender equality is not just a fundamental human right, but a prerequisite for a world that is peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable. Gender relates to specific socially constructed roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations, and expectations which are often unequal and hierarchical. Gender may enhance or limit individuals' opportunities and power in decision-making, access to and control over resources.

Gender disparity continues to be at the root of inequality between women and men; Women and girls make up significant proportions of displaced people worldwide and must contend with the intersection of displacement and gender-based inequality.

While over the last decades some positive developments can be observed- more girls are attending school, fewer girls are being coerced into early marriages, more women are serving in parliament and leadership posts, and laws are being amended to promote gender equality - there are many obstacles to overcome. Discriminatory legislation and social norms persist, and women are underrepresented at all levels of political leadership.

Covid-19 pandemic has further resulted in an uptick in violence directed at women and girls. Many women are confined at home with their abusers because of lockdown measures, unable to access services that are being curtailed or restricted.

In line with the JRS International Gender Policy (Mai 2020) and other relevant frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), JRS in Europe will continue advocating for and promoting gender equality in those spaces where clear signs of inequality persist.

JRS will do so by embedding a gender intersectionality approach to effectively address gender inequalities, since very often these are combined with other structural inequalities such as poverty, discrimination, or racism - notably by:

1. Ensuring gender responsiveness in the design and delivery of our common projects to forcibly displaced persons in Europe;
2. Promoting in our network an organizational culture that guarantees the right to equal opportunity for all individuals irrespective of their gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, social, racial or economic status;
3. Communicating JRS's transformative gender equality aspirations in clear and simple terms to both internal and external audiences.



5.5 Common programmatic areas

At the Regional Coordination Meeting of November 2021, the directors agreed that, provided some minor adaptations have been included, the following four major programmatic areas - already identified in the strategic framework for 2019-2021 – continue to best describe JRS's work across Europe. These are also the areas in which we believe our work remains most needed in the current European context.

When considering shared European projects, we keep these thematic areas in mind. We also collaborate on programs to strengthen evidence-based research, which we are uniquely positioned to accomplish as a network of 22 European countries working on the issue of asylum and migration. Pilot initiatives, for example, are used to see if best practices from previous projects can be scaled up or mainstreamed. We also work on initiatives that focus on changing people's minds and behaviours in order to generate systemic change, as well as advocacy projects aimed at collecting evidence and arguments to support our policy positions.

JRS also tries to acquire a new narrative on migration related topics through the work of accompaniment in the different areas of its mission and a communication driven by storytelling. One of the objectives in the coming years will be to acquire a common understanding of such deep-rooted concepts as hospitality, reconciliation, reception or detention, among others.

5.5.1 Social inclusion and integration

JRS works on projects that help people from the moment they arrive in Europe and accompany them on their journey to self-sufficiency and full participation in their new societies. These projects address areas such as informal relationship-building between local citizens and refugees, housing, labour market access, education, and civic participation. JRS also pays special attention to developing programs that benefit the most vulnerable in society.



Where our strength lies, in the area of social inclusion and integration:

In the past, hospitality-related projects have predominantly highlighted JRS' commitment to social inclusion and integration throughout Europe. The Communities of Hospitality project has been the main example of how JRS in Europe operates as Hospitality in Action or the people it works with, from hosting schemes to volunteer training to campaigning.

Currently the network is often engaging in different ways in the provision of service and accompaniment in the reception of asylum-seekers, in some cases as an official service provided within the national reception schemes, in other cases responding to gaps left by state authorities. In all cases, JRS strives to provide reception services in proximity or within the community, in a spirit of hospitality and encounter. Similarly, different members of the network are also increasingly engaging in national programs of community sponsorship for refugees.

JRS defines social inclusion as the process of ensuring that those at risk of social exclusion have access to the opportunities and resources they need to fully participate in economic, social, political, and cultural life, as well as to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society they live. It implies that individuals have a bigger voice in the decisions that influence their lives and have better access to their fundamental rights.

Integration, according to JRS, is a dynamic, two-way process of social interaction between forced migrants and the society that receives them, with the purpose of decreasing economic and social marginalisation and fostering more cohesive, inclusive, and resilient societies. JRS firmly believes that the work to foster integration should start from the moment of arrival of forced migrants in Europe and not only from the moment they obtain a legal status. In that sense we believe that qualitative reception and accompaniment of asylum seekers from day one is a fundamental ingredient to achieve integration and social inclusion in the long term.



5.5.2 Access to Protection

JRS has long advocated throughout Europe for more safe and legal ways for those seeking asylum to reach the continent. This continues to be a critical issue, as many people are still losing their lives in the attempt of reaching Europe and many others are caught in limbo at European borders or in lengthy asylum procedures once they arrive. We focus on projects that improve access to asylum procedures on EU territory, as well as the accountability and oversight of border operations and human rights protection.

Where our strength lies in the area of access to protection:

In the past years, JRS has always tried to draw attention to migrant's arduous journeys to Europe, both by telling their stories and carrying out research on their experiences at the EU external borders. Moreover, throughout the network, in the Balkans, at the border with Morocco, at border crossings in Romania, in detention centres in Malta..., JRS and its partners serve and accompany people blocked at different sides of the borders.

Furthermore, in many countries JRS is also active in ensuring access to protection by providing dignified reception or accompanying asylum seekers in reception centres run by other public or private actors.

JRS defines access to protection in two ways: (1) ensuring reasonable entry to European territory, and (2) ensuring access to fair asylum processes and respectful treatment for those seeking protection. The first part is accomplished by providing safe and legal routes so that individuals do not have to take dangerous journeys. We believe the EU can do so by expanding resettlement commitments, increasing family reunion policies, establishing a clear legal framework for the use of humanitarian visas, and expanding and supporting community sponsorship initiatives among others. The second element is accomplished towards a shared European legislation on asylum processes and reception conditions that fulfils the necessary standards for respecting the human rights and dignity of asylum seekers. Particularly in the field of reception, based on our experience, we promote models based on small scale facilities established in locations allowing for close proximity with the local community, while at the same time fostering autonomy, empowerment and self-development. We'll keep working on research, direct service, and advocacy projects that bring these challenges and recommendations to light.

On a smaller, or more personal scale, JRS in Europe also promotes the protection of people in light of our mission to accompany them. In the work of our national offices, we strive to create safe spaces where refugees and migrants can feel protected, comforted and assisted in whatever they are seeking.

5.5.3 Detention

JRS continues to see the need to respond to the increasing use of detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Europe, particularly detention of families and children. JRS offers immediate service to detainees by visiting detention centres and providing legal, pastoral, and psychosocial support.

JRS also conducts critical research of detention conditions and policies, as well as alternatives to detention, in order to better serve and advocate for those who are detained. The ultimate purpose of this research and advocacy is to limit the use of administrative detention in all circumstances, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the practice. We intend to create a common research and advocacy program on detention at the European level in the next years, as well as to propose alternatives.

In the next three years, our network will also need to look for ways to address the challenge of the

increasing use of detention upon arrival of forced migrants, in the context of border procedures. Our traditional work and advocacy, also on alternatives to detention, has been mainly focusing on detention used in the context of enforcing the return of people who have usually already spent some time, even years, in Europe. JRS, as well as the civil society more generally, currently does not have access to places of (de facto) detention at the external border. In the coming years we will need to look for ways to serve people detained in such places and to advocate for their rights, including the right to liberty.

Where our strength lies, in the area of detention:

The Detention Visitors Support Group (DVSG) has been providing specialized training and experience sharing for over 13 years. JRS Europe will maintain the DVSG as an important training component for detention visitors throughout the framework's life cycle.

In recent years JRS Europe has launched a process of systematization and coordination of the process of collecting information, observations and testimonies by the detention visitors throughout Europe. This work will be at the basis of JRS's advocacy on detention conditions in the coming years and is meant to be a cornerstone of our work in this area.

Next to the broad network of detention visitors, JRS in Europe is also present in designing and piloting community-based alternatives to detention, such as Belgium and Romania.

5.5.4 Raising Awareness

All JRS projects have a strong emphasis on creating awareness in terms of communication and advocacy on the challenges faced by refugees and forced migrants and on their rights. JRS promotes shared messaging and positions across our network through awareness-raising projects, campaigns, press interviews, social media, videos, and testimonials. As such, raising awareness should be seen as a transversal activity and a core competence of JRS's work. Strategically, although we experienced a considerable growth in this programmatic area in the past years, we still see the need to further specialise in this field and therefore to keep it as a programmatic area to guide the choice of our common activities.

JRS projects aim to change the public's perception by presenting both facts and compelling stories about our work through project reports, awareness campaigns, and communication materials. Because our mission and values are aimed at journeying with refugees and giving them a platform, we value refugees' own words as crucial in the process of raising awareness.



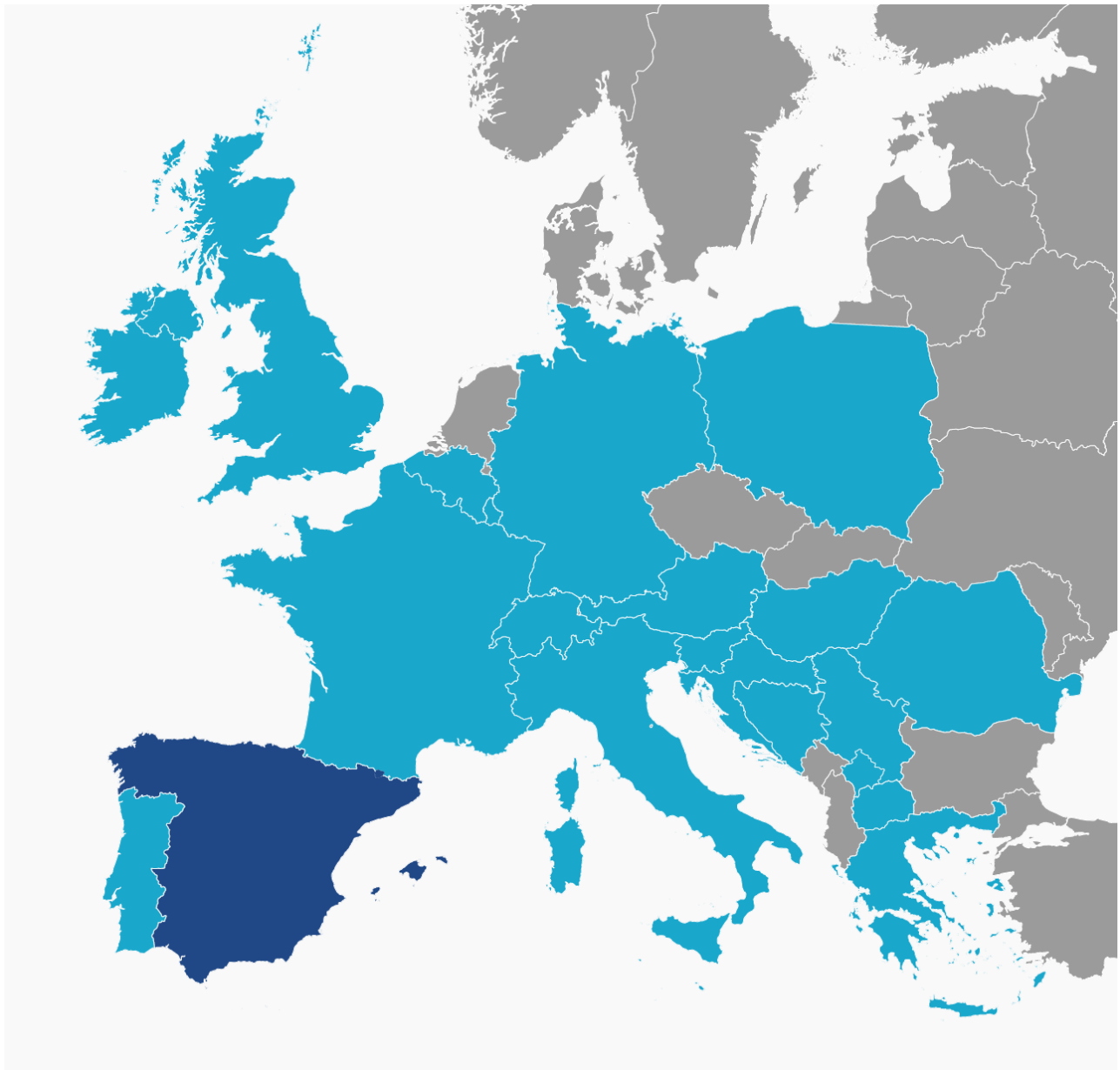
Where our strength lies, in raising awareness:

In the past years, JRS in Europe made considerable steps in expanding its raising awareness activities. Through the CHANGE-project, we have been investing energy in educating young people about the challenges encountered by forced migrants in 9 European countries – Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Through a combination of a fact-based curriculum and storytelling, creating classroom encounters with migrants, and supporting their own voices in schools and local communities, CHANGE fosters critical thinking skills among young people on the positive contribution of forced migrants to society. The project also provides a platform for refugees to share their stories directly with students.

Moreover, with the launch of European campaigns, such as ‘The Power of Vote’ ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections or during the 2021 Eye Conference in the European Parliament, JRS regularly calls European citizens to action while keeping in mind the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Campaigns focus on four areas: access to protection, alternatives to detention, dignified reception, and inclusion.

Finally, strategic communication and a storytelling approach with the purpose of creating new narratives to underpin our advocacy positions is systematically included in all of JRS Europe’s new projects.





JRS COUNTRY OFFICES

Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Malta, Potland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kindom



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