

Annual Report 2021



THE FUTURE IS NOT MONOCHROME

The challenges of 2021

The more than 82 million forcibly displaced people around the world, fleeing war and unmanageable situations, were affected by the pandemic in complex and unique ways.

For refugees in overcrowded camps, social distancing was not an option, and access to basic goods, healthcare and essential services became more difficult.

As fear spread across the planet, they risked being left behind. The volatile situation in Afghanistan only exacerbated the risks faced by millions of people.

The more difficult the situation, the greater the need for our services.

With the support of all our partners, we were able to respond to the challenges of 2021 and adapt our work so that no one would be left behind.

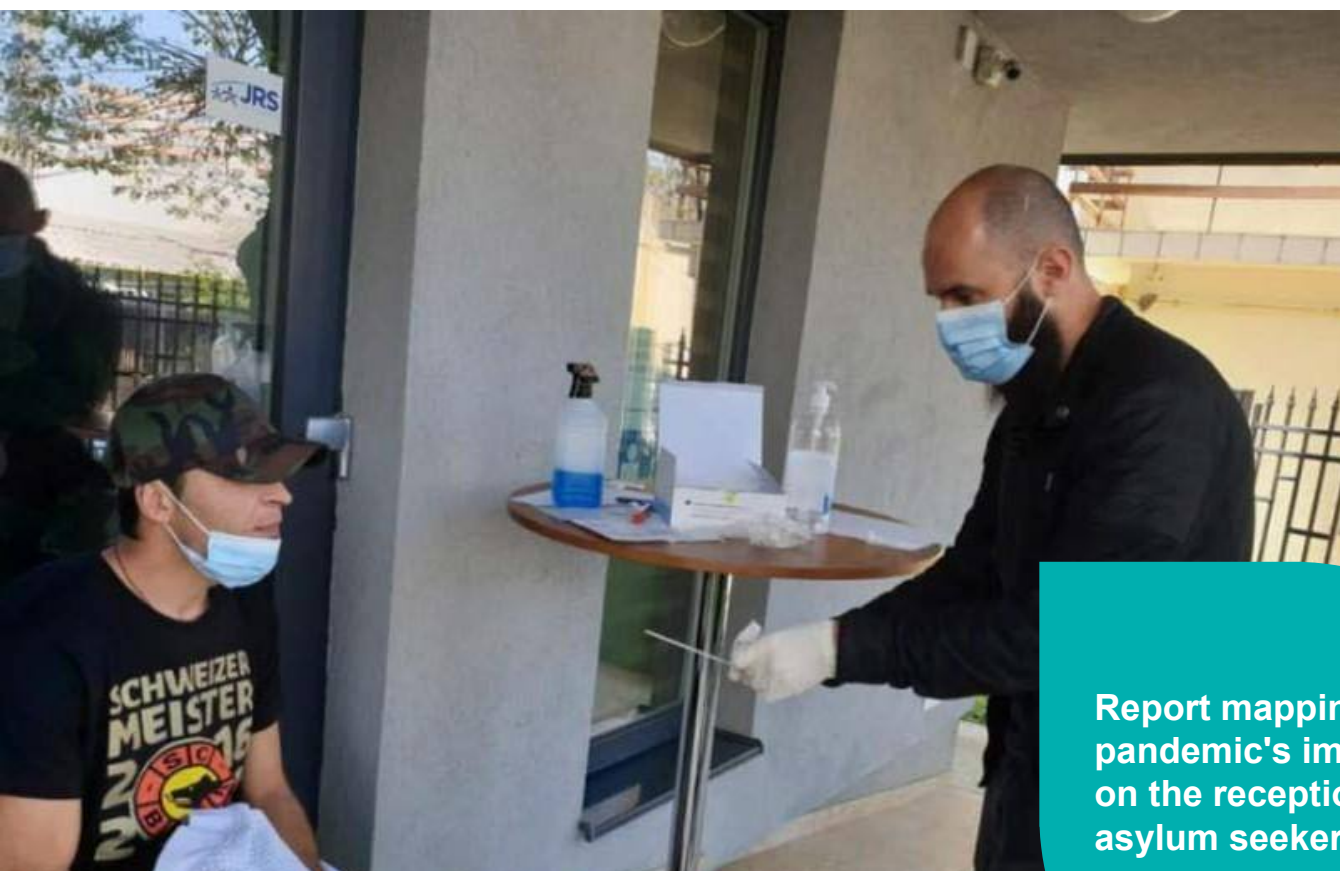


Non-governmental organisations working together in Timișoara.

JRS staff, partners, the people we serve and donors also worked together to share best practices and continue assisting refugees and other forcibly displaced people effectively across the country.

This year we continued our work on refugee integration, responded to humanitarian emergencies, continued accommodating people with tolerated status and established new long-term partnerships.

The JRS team constantly reorganised to respond to unique situations: assisting evacuated Afghans, supporting relocated people and working on the front line in reception centres and at the border.



Report mapping the pandemic's impact on the reception of asylum seekers

Covid-19 deepens gaps in asylum reception systems

In From Bad to Worse: Covid-19 Deepens Existing Gaps in the Reception of Asylum Seekers, JRS Europe presents findings and lessons from mapping the impact of Covid-19 on asylum reception in nine EU countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Romania, Portugal and Spain.

The report criticises negative practices, highlights some positive aspects and offers recommendations to national authorities and EU institutions on what should be done during and after the pandemic.



Cultural orientation activities in Galați.

COVID-19 AND IMMIGRATION DETENTION: LESSONS LEARNED

JRS Romania contributed to mapping the impact of Covid-19 in seven EU Member States: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain. The report examined whether alternatives to detention had been used during the pandemic, when returning migrants was impossible.

In Romania, JRS runs a shelter for people released from detention and people with tolerated status. Officially recognised by the government as an alternative to detention, it is funded by AMIF and JRS's own resources. JRS Romania provides case management and works towards resolving individuals' immigration status, considering all possibilities, including return.

ACCOMPANYING DISPLACED PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

JRS REGIONAL OFFICES

JRS ASIA PACIFIC
Louie Bacomo
Bangkok, Thailand

JRS EASTERN AFRICA
André Atsu Agbogan
Nairobi, Kenya

JRS EUROPE
Alberto Ares SJ
Brussels, Belgium

JRS LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN
Oscar Javier Calderón Barragán
Bogotá, Colombia

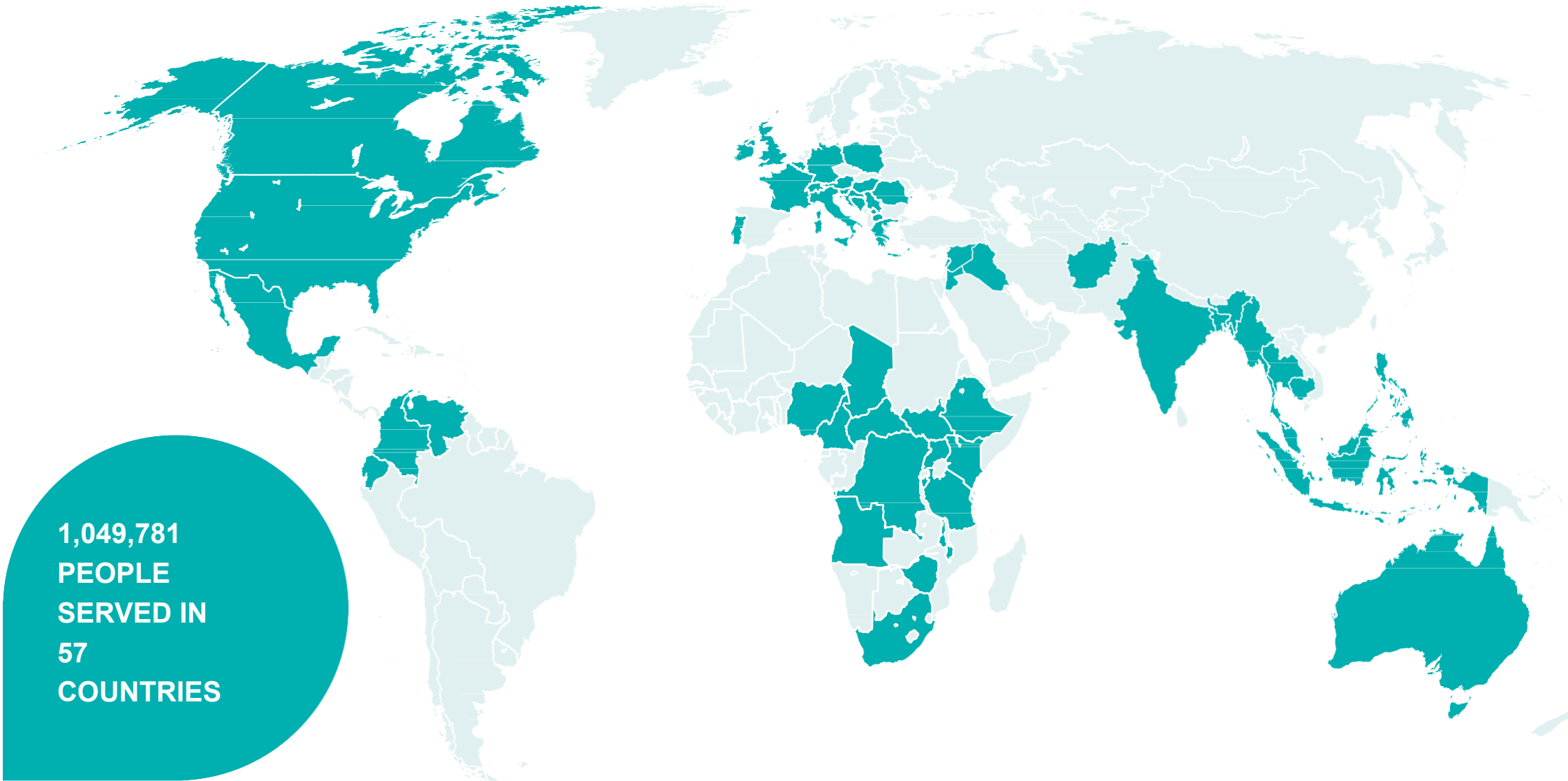
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JRS MIDDLE EAST
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Daniel Corrou SJ

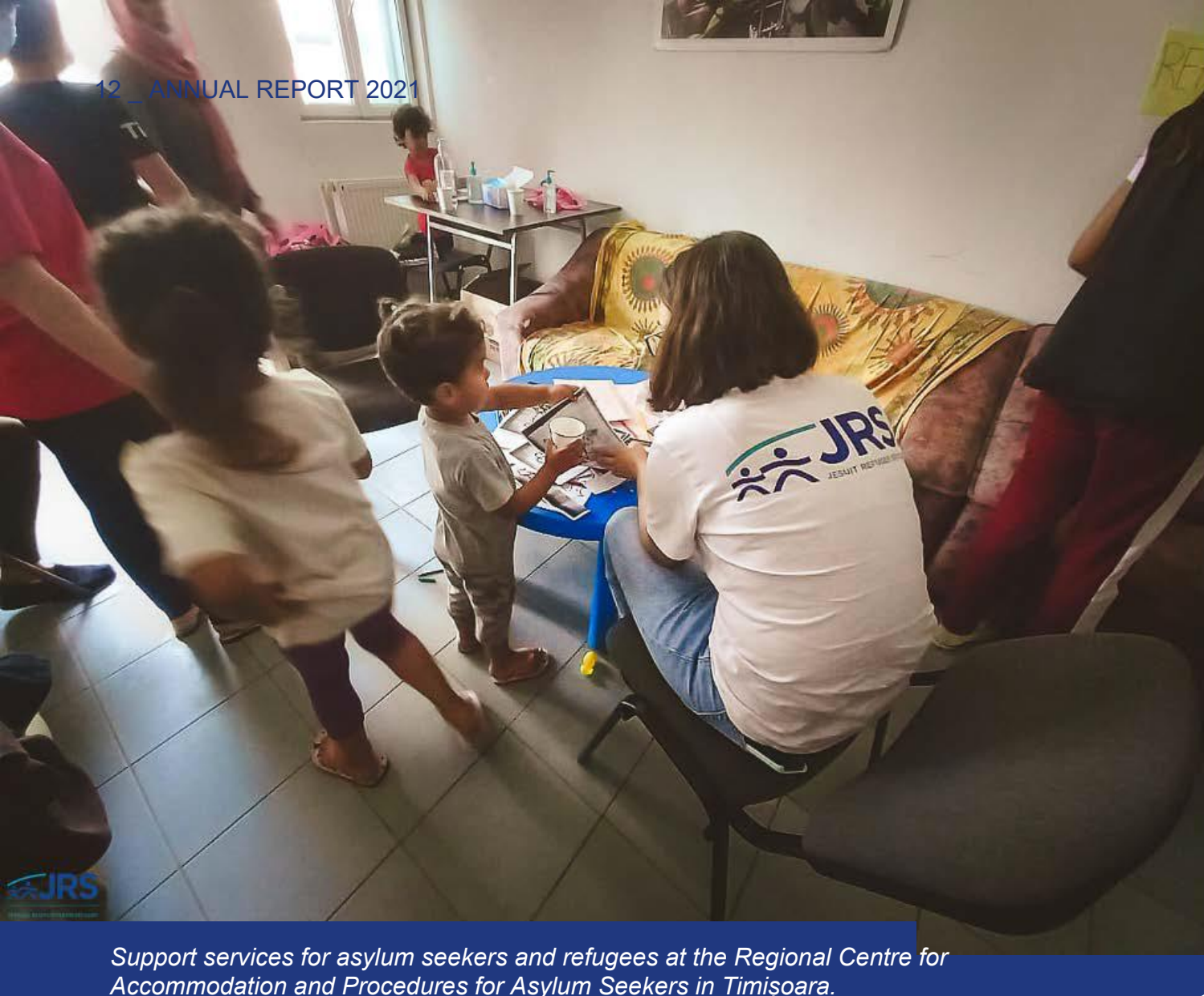
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JRS WEST AFRICA AND GREAT
LAKES Eric Goeh-Akue SJ
Yaoundé, Cameroon



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|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| • Afghanistan | • Cameroon | • Ethiopia | • Jordan | • Myanmar | • South Sudan |
| • Angola | • Canada | • France | • Kenya | • Nigeria | • Switzerland |
| • Australia | • Central African Republic | • Germany | • Kosovo | • Philippines | • Syria |
| • Austria | • Chad | • Greece | • Lebanon | • Poland | • Tanzania |
| • Bangladesh | • Colombia | • Hungary | • Luxembourg | • Portugal | • Thailand |
| • Belgium | • Croatia | • India | • Macedonia | • Romania | • Uganda |
| • Bosnia and Herzegovina | • Democratic Republic of the Congo | • Indonesia | • Malaysia | • Serbia | • United Kingdom |
| • Burundi | • Ecuador | • Iraq | • Malawi | • Singapore | • United States |
| • Cambodia | | • Ireland | • Malta | • Slovenia | • Venezuela |
| | | • Italy | • Mexico | • South Africa | • Zimbabwe |



Support services for asylum seekers and refugees at the Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers in Timișoara.

OUR IMPACT

Thanks to our partners' efforts and generosity, 2021 was one of our most impactful years to date. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, your support enabled us to help more forcibly displaced people rebuild their lives than ever before.

Since 1980, JRS has supported millions of people forced to leave their homes. Yet 2021 saw another record in forced displacement. With 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, the JRS mission is needed now more than ever.



We helped over 5,000 people in 9 cities across Romania.

In 2021, integration and protection were our main areas of intervention and the areas where we had the greatest impact. Our work took place in nine cities: Bucharest, Giurgiu, Galați, Rădăuți, Timișoara, Șomcuta Mare, Constanța, Galați and Arad, as well as in numerous border areas. Children received 25% of our services.

The year 2021 marked a new record in Romania's migration history: 9,581 asylum applications were lodged in the country. It also brought a change in the profile of beneficiaries following events in Afghanistan, a pandemic that continued throughout the year, and increased public interest in asylum and integration.

People served in 2021*



Integration
3,073



Humanitarian aid
205



Alternatives to detention
125



Housing support
1,425



Protection
2,969



Legal support
715



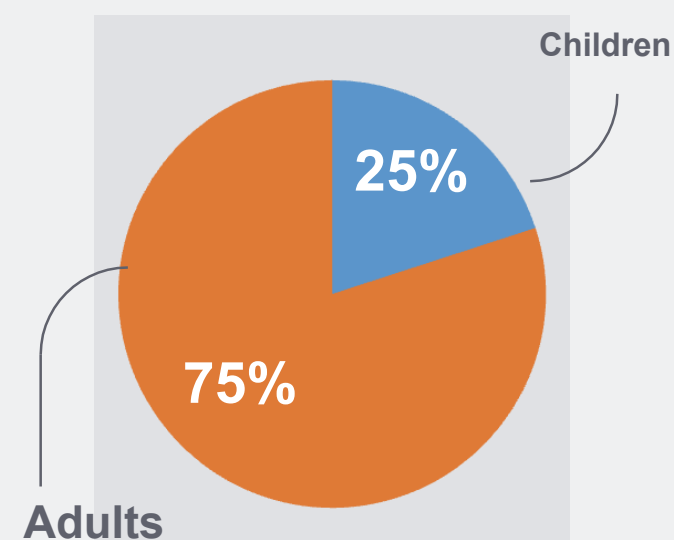
Voluntary repatriation
736



Advocacy
28,000

*Preliminary figures

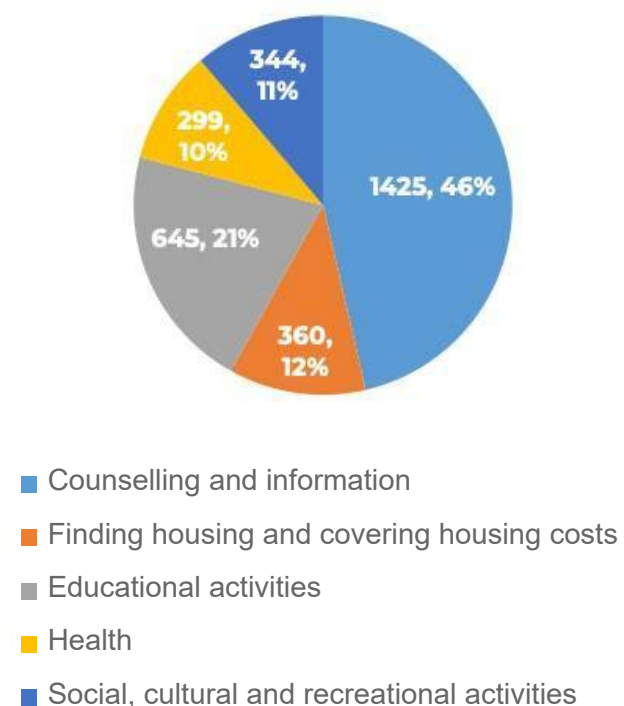
OUR BENEFICIARIES*



*Preliminary figures

TOTAL
people served
5,597

IMPACT OF INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES



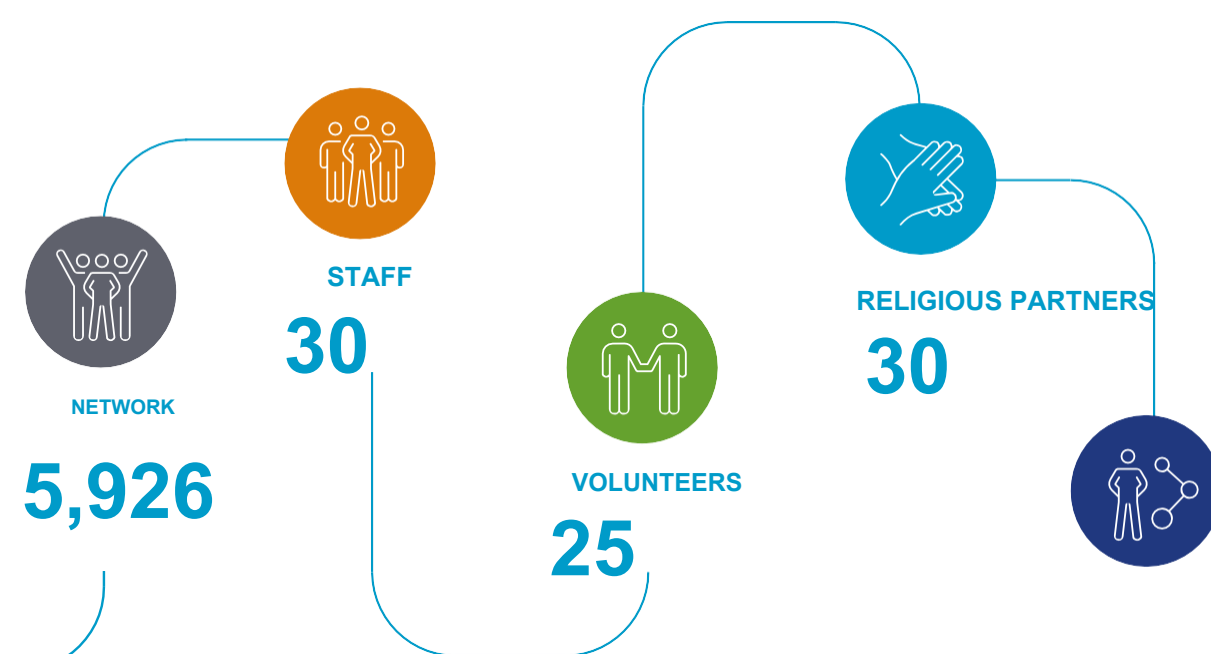
INTEGRATION OF FOREIGN NATIONALS

For most refugees in Europe, integration is the most relevant durable solution, and EU Member States have placed it at the top of the political agenda on refugees and foreign nationals.

Through the My Place to Integration project, we carried out activities in Constanța and Galați to ensure that all foreign nationals wishing to do so could access quality integration services. We prioritised vulnerable people and those with special needs, offering services that complemented state provision.

Despite the obstacles caused by the pandemic, we provided information, counselling, material, legal, medical and psychological assistance, as well as social, cultural, recreational and educational activities, Romanian language courses and cultural orientation throughout the region, including through mobile teams. The project also supported the dissemination of relevant information, the expansion of intercultural mediator and volunteer networks, and the establishment of further local collaborations and partnerships.

JRS PERSONNEL

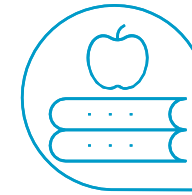


INTEGRATION THROUGH ACCESS TO HOUSING

As the number of asylum applications rose substantially in 2021, accommodation in public reception centres for refugees and asylum seekers became a challenge. To prevent overcrowded, unsanitary or unsafe living conditions, we supported vulnerable people, families with children, and survivors of domestic violence, torture or human trafficking.

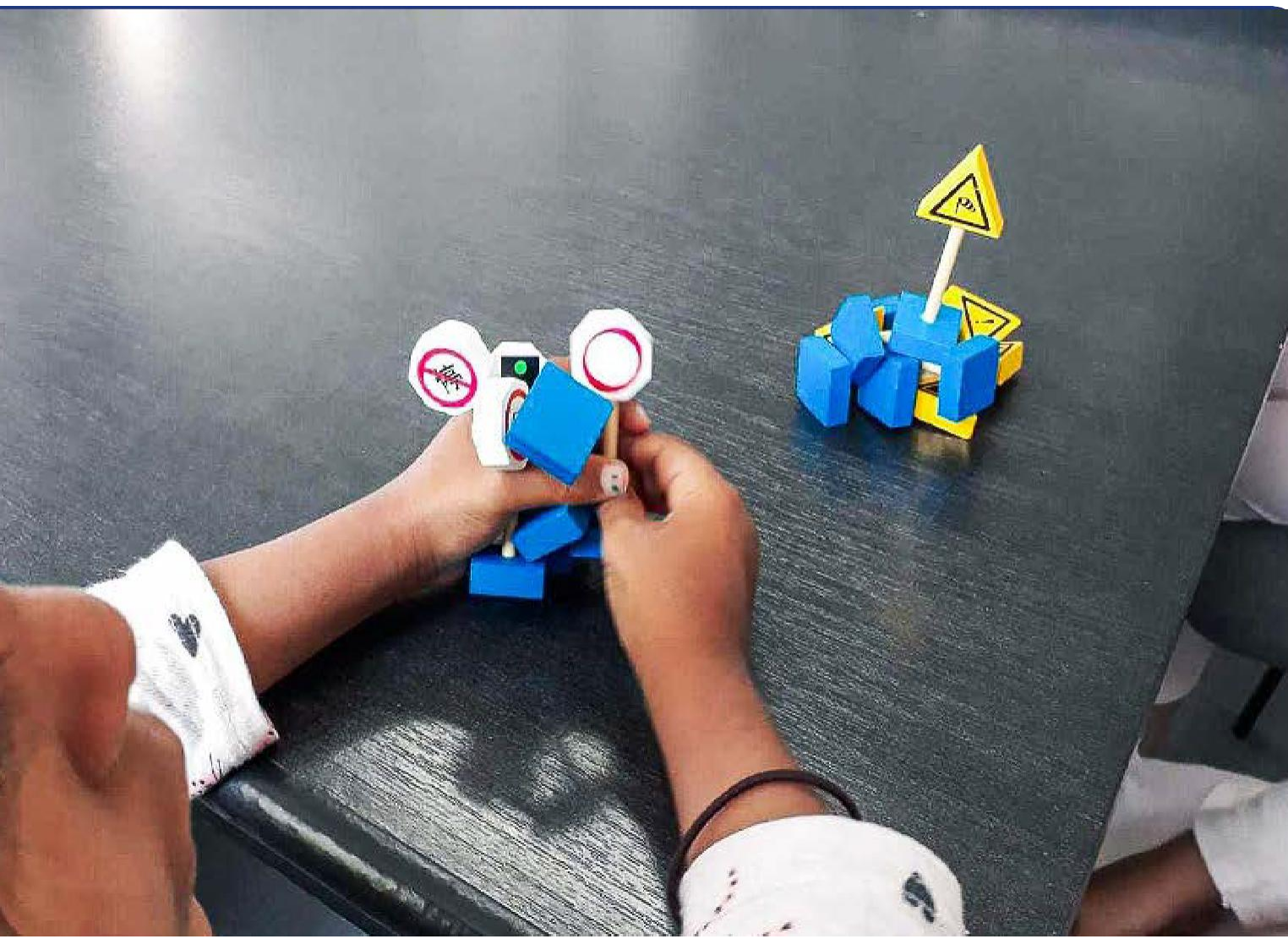
Through our work, we helped more than 700 refugees in 6 Romanian cities access independent housing, accompanied them to apartment viewings, and helped them settle into their new homes or equip them with essential items. We advocated for refugees and raised awareness of poor housing conditions and the lack of regulation in the rental market.

We provided financial support for rent to 360 people, enabling them to fulfil their potential for development and integration into the host community. We also prevented the segregation of refugees in marginalised communities by distributing housing evenly across mixed residential areas. We addressed the lack of housing accessible to people with mobility impairments by offering safe alternatives equipped with ramps and lifts. We considered each person's specific needs, providing confidential accommodation for survivors of domestic violence and their children.



To fulfil our mission of providing suitable, affordable housing, we worked with volunteers from the host and migrant communities to address the obstacles refugees face in accessing a home.

Blood Donor Day in Galați. During the «Giving Life for Life!» activity, 10 refugees accompanied by JRS Romania donated blood at the National Blood Transfusion Centre in Galați.





Rahaf is a bright, 20-year-old refugee living in Bucharest. She fled Syria with her family after the war broke out, and all she remembers is fear: fear of bombs, fear of speaking freely, fear of being kidnapped, fear that her brother would not be conscripted into the army, fear of being forced to marry someone, and fear of being forbidden to attend school. She dreams of becoming an advocate for Muslim women's rights, and her passion is coding.

«After turning 15, most girls in Syria are forced to marry and stop going to school. How can you raise children when you are a child yourself? I was lucky because the women in my family were educated, and I was always encouraged to study and become independent of men.»

Rahaf was one of the graduates of the digital skills mentoring programme piloted by JRS Romania in 2021 to improve refugee women's employment prospects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

«When I told them I liked programming and was thinking of enrolling at university, they said computer science was not for girls. Even my family was worried and advised me to choose a subject more suitable for women. But I was stubborn, because I knew this was what I loved doing.»

The online programme focused on the basics of HTML/CSS; technical knowledge and critical thinking; styling websites with fonts, colours and shapes; and an introduction to JavaScript.

After graduating from the programme, Rahaf decided to continue studying web development and enrolled at the Romanian-American University in Bucharest.

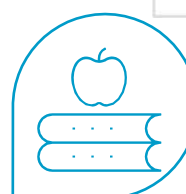
EDUCATION - Creating learning opportunities for girls and women

JRS Romania piloted a mentoring programme led by a Syrian migrant and software developer based in the Netherlands. It focused mainly on teaching the basics of HTML and JavaScript, but also included creative problem-solving tasks, team-building activities and themed lessons led by other migrants in the Netherlands and Belgium.

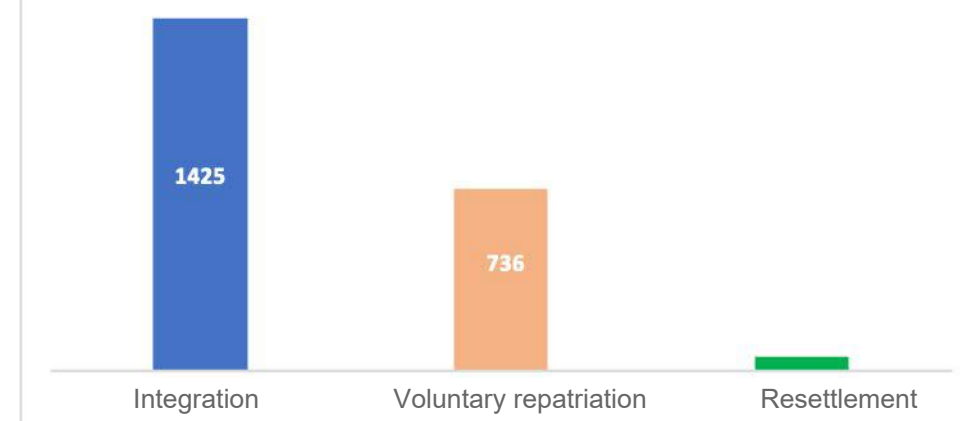
The programme's innovation was the limited technical resources required from participants: only a smartphone was needed, given refugees' low socioeconomic status at the beginning of their integration into new host countries.

Each participant's final mentoring assignment was to develop a personal website telling their own story and journey.

Voluntary repatriation and reintegration

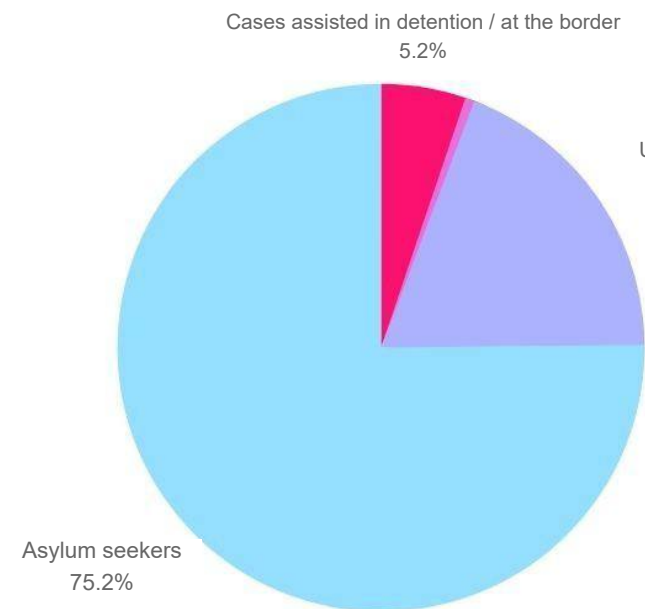


Durable solutions



Millions of refugees dream of returning home. As the durable solution preferred by the greatest number of refugees, voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity requires the full commitment of the country of origin to help people reintegrate into their communities. JRS Romania carried out activities under the Assisted Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration project to create optimal conditions for voluntary repatriation, ensure free and informed choice, and mobilise support for returnees. In practice, we promote and facilitate voluntary repatriation through counselling, information and facilitation.





BORDER / DETENTION

People counselled and assisted in immigration detention centres (Bucharest / Arad) and in border asylum procedures.

STRATEGIC LITIGATION

Legal representation, especially for people from Afghanistan, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and vulnerable people.

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Mediation with legal representatives, tailored assistance and child-friendly counselling.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Support throughout asylum procedures in centres; interview preparation, information, counselling and case management.

PROTECTION

Our work took us to all asylum reception centres, all immigration detention centres and all relevant border crossing points. We monitored the cases of the most vulnerable and marginalised people and worked with authorities to improve legislation, reception conditions, asylum procedures, the information available to people needing protection, and access to fundamental rights.

We worked alongside refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to identify the best durable solutions to their problems and ensure their voices were heard and their views taken into account. In 2021, we provided legal assistance in cases with the strategic potential to change national practice, highlighting the protection needs of people from Afghanistan, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and vulnerable people requiring procedural safeguards.

A significant part of our work protecting refugees and asylum seekers in 2021 focused on unaccompanied minors. A very large proportion of asylum seekers were children, half of whom were unaccompanied. We provided child-friendly counselling and information, mediated between unaccompanied minors and their legal representatives, offered specialised legal representation and continued advocacy efforts to end the detention of unaccompanied minors.



Migrant smuggling

Migrant smuggling is a highly profitable crime with a low risk of punishment for the offenders involved. Smugglers sell illegal and dangerous services to desperate people and often belong to well-organised multinational networks.

Violence, abuse and the risk of exploitation are widespread features of this crime. Many migrants die of thirst in deserts, perish at sea or suffocate in containers.

Smugglers exploit people who need to escape poverty, natural disasters, conflict or persecution, or a lack of employment and educational opportunities, but have no options for legal migration. (UNODC)

In 2021, we strengthened our work on human trafficking, establishing new partnerships with actors in related fields and launching an important project to identify priority areas for action. We responded through training, newly developed materials and public awareness activities, while creating platforms for the voices of trafficked people to be heard.



ALTERNATIVE: ESSENTIAL SUPPORT IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Between late February and early March 2020, it became clear that the Covid-19 outbreak had reached Europe. By mid-March, almost all EU Member States had adopted measures to contain transmission, including lockdowns that severely restricted both domestic and international travel.

This continued in 2021, leading to the release from detention of more migrants than usual, particularly vulnerable people whose only option was accommodation in our shelter, an alternative to detention.

Our shelter, the Pedro Arrupe Centre, funded through AMIF, offered people released from detention a dignified place to live and access to social, legal, material and medical services. It accommodated more people and more families than ever before.

Among the 113 people accommodated, we kept the spread of COVID-19 below 1% through prevention: regular information sessions, ongoing testing and counselling on vaccination options.

Usually an almost invisible group of migrants, 113 people with tolerated status were accommodated in our shelter, while a total of 125 received some form of assistance.

Our beneficiaries include women, often survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, who need specialised assistance. We provide it by involving actors with different, relevant areas of expertise.



«In Somalia, they cut me twice. The first time I was little, no more than seven, and I only remember the injection. After I gave birth, they mutilated me again. I swear to God I did not consent: the doctor and my partner decided while I was unconscious.»

I met Ugbaad three years ago in a refugee centre in Bucharest. Although she was concerned about starting a new life in another country, I was impressed by her strong determination to earn a living so she could reunite with her daughter, who was still in Somalia. Only a few months after arriving in Romania, she was already working hard and saving to pay for her daughter's plane ticket.

«My only goal then was to bring my daughter to Romania quickly, before they mutilated her too. I was terrified during the family reunification process, knowing she was in danger.»

After a year of repeatedly changing jobs and navigating a complicated bureaucracy, Ugbaad managed to reconnect with her daughter and bring her safely to Romania. But the challenges did not end there. From finding a well-paid job to covering rent and utilities and securing a kindergarten place for her daughter, the difficulties mounted. Ugbaad stubbornly overcame every obstacle, while remaining grateful for the chance to raise her daughter in a safe country, far from violence. She also became a pillar and an inspiration for the community of single Somali women in Bucharest, helping them and offering shelter, food and kindness when needed.

Access to shelter and employment in host countries is a challenge for all refugee women, especially survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Alongside language barriers, limited education and psychological trauma, women also carry the burden of traditional norms from their countries of origin.

«In Somalia, boys are sent to school and girls are sent to clean. The women in my family cannot read or write. I am forever grateful to my mother! She supported me in going to school and enrolling at university. Thanks to her, I am independent today.»

As demand is only likely to grow, we are constantly seeking to improve conditions in our shelter. Our partners have helped us do so thus far.



ADVOCACY: NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

“

Advocacy helps transform policies and services affecting displaced people at local, national and regional levels. It is an integral part of every project we implement.

In 2021, we carried out more than 80 targeted advocacy interventions, including attending legislative sessions and actively drafting and supporting amendments in relevant areas. We contributed to numerous international reports on asylum, migration, borders and human trafficking.

We provided specialised advice to asylum lawyers on applications to the European Court of Human Rights, complementing our court representation work.



A commitment that makes no distinction between natives and foreigners, between residents and guests, because it concerns a shared treasure from whose care and benefits no one should be excluded.

WE REACHED OVER 28,000 PEOPLE THROUGH AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Pope Francis,
26 September
2021



In November 2021, JRS national directors from across Europe attended the twice-yearly regional coordination meeting in Drongen, Belgium, organised by Jesuit Refugee Service Europe (JRS).

The meeting was an opportunity to work towards shared goals, in line with our mission to serve, accompany and advocate for refugees and forcibly displaced people in Europe.

Throughout 2021, we worked with partners to develop and distribute more than 2,000 information materials for our beneficiaries, the authorities we work with and our partners. We participated in working groups developing training materials for Border Police schools and legal representatives of unaccompanied minors. We joined local support teams within prefectures and organised 60 local and national coordination meetings to encourage cooperation and communication among relevant actors in asylum and integration.

Cooperation with international and regional partners is an essential part of our work, whether to identify joint actions or to provide individualised support to the people we assist.

In 2021, we launched a project to develop a sustainable and enabling framework for local and national advocacy, promoting social justice, inclusion and the ability of refugees and asylum seekers to know and claim their rights.

TAKE ACTION

Since 1980, JRS has provided life-changing services to millions of refugees worldwide. During the pandemic, we adapted our programmes with the support of individuals and partners committed to offering forcibly displaced people new opportunities to change the course of their lives. Your compassionate support for the most vulnerable members of our global family made the impact described in this report possible. This is only the beginning of what we can achieve together.

Together, we have the power to help refugees have a say in shaping their own future.

Together, we can keep hope alive.

Thank you for your support.



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