

# Regional Bureau for Europe

## UPDATE #33

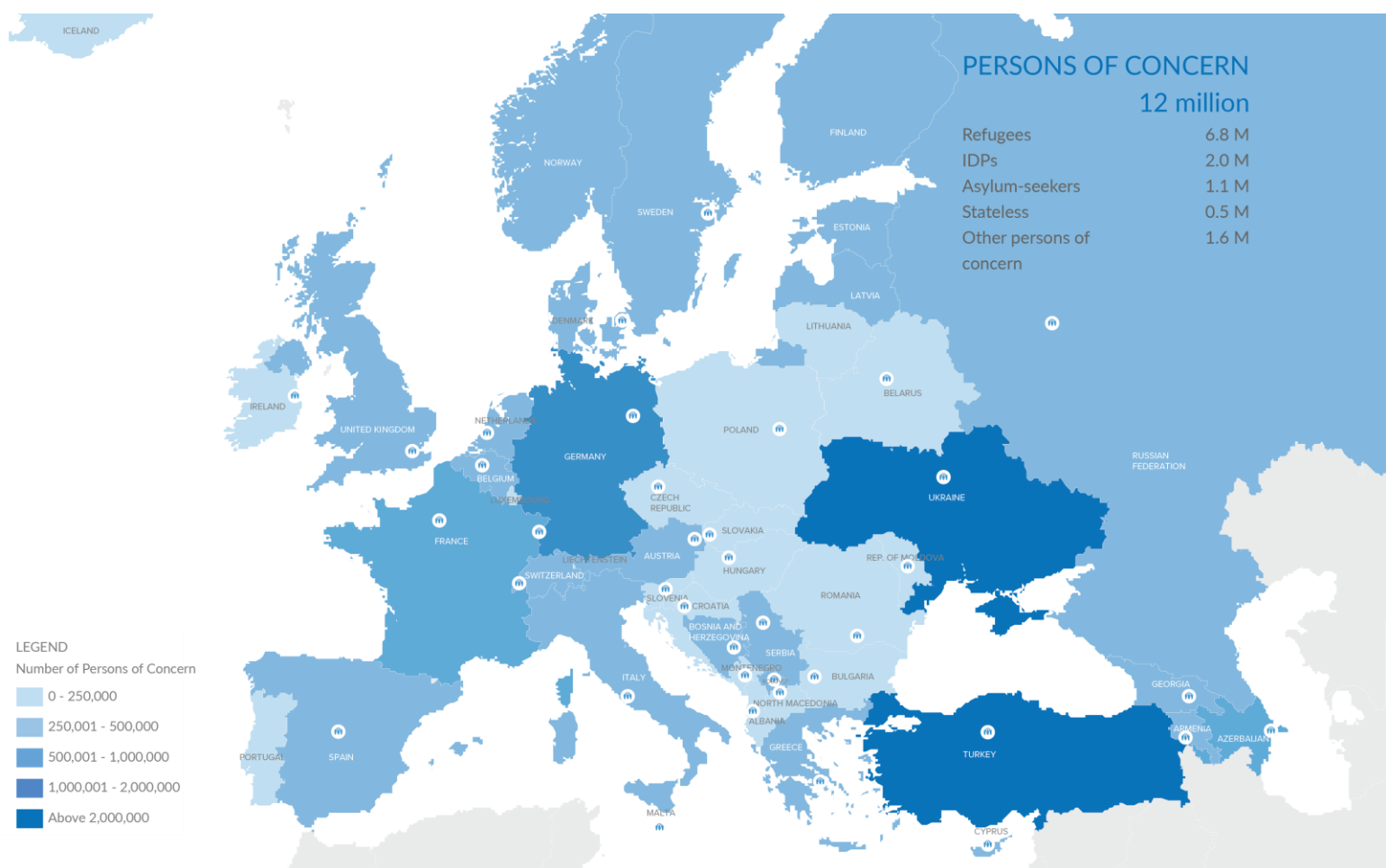
1 – 31 October 2021

Regional COVID-19 infection and death rates increased sharply throughout October. Many countries tightened **movement and travel restrictions**; only three loosened them.

COVID-19 travel restrictions are broadly protection-sensitive and in general include exceptions enabling **access to territory** by persons seeking international protection.

Movement restrictions continue to impact UNHCR staff in country offices. To date, 33 offices are **partially teleworking**, one is **fully teleworking** and two had shifted **out of telework mode**.

## Populations of Concern



**SOURCE: UNHCR 2021 MID-YEAR TRENDS AND ANNEX TABLE**

*Includes Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)). The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

## Operational Context

- All 49 countries and one territory in the region have reported COVID-19 cases among the general population. To date, at least 40 countries and one territory have reported COVID-19 cases among persons of concern at some point, and many have in the meantime recovered. Any figures or estimates should be taken with caution due to varying approaches to testing, data segregation and reporting.
- According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), regional COVID-19 infection and death rates increased sharply throughout October (daily infection rate doubled within the month). Authorities in many countries in the region reintroduced measures to mitigate contagion risks, expanding remote education, use of masks and vaccination/recovery certificates, as well as recommendations to telework. In several countries, vaccination is or will become mandatory at least for certain public service workers. In some locations, specific restrictions are applied for unvaccinated persons. Only **Malta, Portugal** and **Sweden** loosened some of the measures in place, due to lower contagion rates and high vaccination rates.
- Some 60 per cent of countries in the region have vaccinated 50 per cent or more of their general population. **Malta, Portugal** and **Iceland** had the highest share of fully vaccinated population: 81 per cent, 81 percent and 76 per cent, respectively (according to [WHO](#) as of 2 November).
- At the end of October, one UNHCR office remained in full telework mode, 33 were in partial telework mode, and two had shifted out of telework mode altogether. Visits to reception centres are strictly regulated, and outbreaks in collective accommodation or detention centres continue to temporarily limit the ability of UNHCR and partners to access persons of concern in some countries.

## UNHCR Areas of Intervention



### PROTECTION

- **Quarantine measures upon arrival:** Testing and quarantine measures are in place in all countries registering significant numbers of sea arrivals. Some 7,000 persons arrived in **Italy** by sea in October (6,800 in September), where some 3,400 people were either quarantined or being transferred to quarantine facilities as of 2 November. With the exception of unaccompanied and separated children and some persons with specific needs, all arrivals in Lampedusa and Sicily usually observe quarantine on offshore ferries. The shortage of quarantine facilities on land continues to pose challenges, resulting this month in a delay in assistance provision to some 100 new arrivals in Calabria. UNHCR visited Calabria's Crotone quarantine facility, where conditions remain critical, and will continue monitoring the situation, following up with authorities, and provide on-the-job training and information on access to procedures to staff of the managing entity.
- Some 5,300 persons arrived in **Spain** in October (compared to 8,000 in September), mostly by sea. Of the October arrivals, some 3,600 persons reached the Canary Islands, including at least 22 who tested positive for COVID-19 and were isolated.
- **Access to territory:** On 13 October, **Hungarian** authorities submitted a draft proposal to Parliament to further extend the measures enacted in May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 situation severely restricting access to the territory and asylum until 31 December 2022.
- **Reception conditions:** Lack of sufficient reception spaces, overcrowding and inadequate facilities in a number of locations in Europe continue to pose challenges for residents to follow physical distancing, hygiene and other preventive measures, compounding risks of contagion. The lack of facilities in some areas, for example along the **Italy-France** border, continues to leave persons of concern exposed to protection and health risks, and hinders their access to health services, including related to COVID-19. Outbreaks in reception centres remain a concern, and typically result

in restrictions of movements for some centre residents, with additional cases detected this month in centres in **Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia** and **Cyprus**, among others. This month, the **Austrian** Constitutional Court ruled that a spring 2020 district decree limiting freedom of movement for asylum-seeking residents of the Traiskirchen reception centre lacked legal basis and proportionality. The case had been represented by the Austria asylum lawyers network of which UNHCR is a strategic partner.

- **Internally Displaced Persons:** Freedom of movement was also further limited for persons needing to cross the contact line in **Ukraine**. The introduction of new COVID-19-related restrictions at the Stanystia-Luhanska Entry-Exit Checkpoint (EECP) on 10 October contributed to a significant drop in crossings. Previously, Stanystia-Luhanska was the only EECP fully functioning on both sides of the contact line. Now, however, people are required to present proof of residence (proof of residence in the non-government-controlled area (NGCA) for those crossing into NGCA and a Ukrainian residence permit for those travelling the opposite direction) or obtain special humanitarian permission in advance, which can be granted in case of death of a family member, to seek medical treatment (including for COVID-19 vaccination), for study and other exceptions.



## HEALTH

- **Inclusion in vaccination plans:** Persons of concern are generally included in national vaccination plans on par with the general population. As a result, persons of concern have generally been receiving the vaccination along with priority groups by age, profession or accommodation in collective shelters.
- Vaccinations progressed in reception centres in **Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, Serbia**, as well as in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, where monthly vaccination days were established to ensure best outreach to reception and asylum centre residents. In **Greece**, the vaccination rate among persons of concern has unofficially been estimated to be as high as 48 per cent, a positive development given the alarmingly low vaccination rate in previous months. In addition, to ensure that more persons of concern and undocumented persons can access the vaccine, a new law was passed this month authorizing administrative structures to issue temporary documentation necessary. Vaccination of persons of concern was also reported in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Bulgaria**, including those in private accommodations in some cases. In the **Russian Federation**, partners continue facilitating vaccination through the programme offered by the Russian Red Cross.
- A few offices report vaccine hesitancy among some persons of concern, for example in **Lithuania**, where only a fourth of asylum-seeking and migrant centre residents have so far been vaccinated.
- **Advocacy** for inclusion of all persons of concern in vaccination plans and roll-out continues where needed, for example in **Montenegro**, where UNHCR, WHO and a health centre are working on resolving technical issues at the vaccination locations that had resulted in temporary denial of access to vaccines for refugees and asylum-seekers. The UN Country Team in **Croatia** sent a letter to the Minister of Health on 11 October advocating for access to COVID-19 vaccinations for stateless people and people at risk of statelessness, after UNHCR had raised the issues with other stakeholders.
- In **Ukraine**, while all regularized foreigners, including asylum-seekers, are included in the free vaccination campaign, lack of specific documents poses a challenge for many, including in registering for vaccination and having it certified. UNHCR's NGO partners continue promoting vaccination among refugees and asylum-seekers and intervene with health authorities as needed.



### CASH-BASED AND IN-KIND ASSISTANCE

- Where needed, UNHCR continues delivering COVID-19-related cash and in-kind support to persons of concern or authorities working with them. UNHCR in **Greece** delivered 51,639 core relief items and PPE this month to authorities supporting persons of concern on the islands and mainland, as well as 7,208 personal hygiene items to reception centres in Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros and Fylakio, to help refugees and asylum-seekers meet their basic needs. Amid the deteriorating COVID-19 situation in **Romania**, UNHCR delivered 9,000 masks and procured 875 litres of anti-bacterial soap, 485 litres of hand sanitizer and 285 litres of surface disinfectant to meet urgent needs raised by NGOs in the country's six reception centres.
- In **Ukraine**, UNHCR provided cash assistance to ten vulnerable IDP households impacted by the pandemic. Meanwhile, in **Azerbaijan**, UNHCR distributed 20 individual food parcels this month (2,219 food parcels to date) and in **North Macedonia**, 8 asylum-seekers received one-time cash assistance as part of the COVID-19 project under the EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (48 since mid-February).

### UNHCR Response in Europe

UNHCR's response to the COVID-19 situation is focused on:

- Continuing to **provide protection assistance**, including legal aid, support to registration, documentation, refugee status determination, protection counselling, prevention and response to gender-based violence, as well as child protection services;
- Supporting national authorities in setting up **preparedness and response plans**, including improving access to water and sanitation where possible and enhancing reception capacity post disembarkation by establishing quarantine and isolation areas in reception centres to better monitor and isolate confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, as necessary;
- Enhancing national and community-based **communication platforms** to interact with refugees and displaced communities and transmit quality information on hygiene, access to health care and other essential measures in a culturally appropriate manner and in relevant languages;
- Supporting authorities, in some operations, in identifying alternative **accommodation** or bringing current housing for asylum-seekers up to acceptable protection and hygiene standards;
- Ensuring the inclusion** of persons of concern, host communities and service providers in the provision and distribution of adequate hygiene items;
- Advocating continuously** to ensure the inclusion of persons of concern in national COVID-19 preparedness and response plans, including vaccination campaigns;
- Providing additional one-off cash distributions** to persons of concern, to allow them to cope with the adverse economic impact of COVID-19 and related measures on their livelihoods and self-reliance.

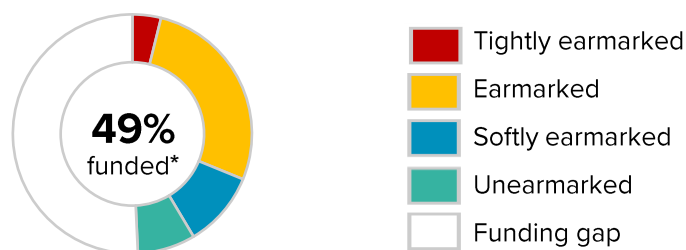
### Working in partnership

- UNHCR supports governments' efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through coordination mechanisms and by working with WHO and other partners. In addition, UNHCR co-chairs with UNDP and IOM the Issue-Based Coalition on Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience, steering collective advocacy efforts on COVID-19-related issues affecting persons of concern.

## Financial Information

- For 2021, USD 469 million of UNHCR's COVID-19-related needs has been mainstreamed into its Global Appeal and USD 455 million are supplementary needs bringing the total COVID-19-related requirements in 2021 to USD 924 million. The [supplementary COVID-19 response](#) focuses on exceptional socioeconomic and protection impacts related to COVID-19 as millions of refugees, internally displaced and stateless people fall into conditions of extreme hardship.
- The UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe is grateful to donors who have provided generous and timely support for the Coronavirus Emergency Situation response globally, and in Europe in particular, including for non-COVID-19-related interventions, which are critical to ensure business continuity.

**Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally in 2021: USD 924 M**



**Total contributed or pledged to UNHCR COVID-19 appeal as of 1 November 2021: USD 455,194,309**

including: United States of America | Germany | African Development Bank Group | European Union | Canada | Unilever (UK) | Austria | China | Education cannot Wait | Japan | France | USA for UNHCR | UN Covid-19 MPTF | UNO-Fluechtlingshilfe | Country-Based Pooled Funds | Australia for UNHCR | UN Conflict-Related Sexual Violence MPTF | Swedish Postcode Lottery | Japan Association for UNHCR | Private donors China | Private donors Republic of Korea | Sunshine forever Limited | Luxembourg | Sweden for UNHCR | Private Donors Canada | Private Donors USA | UN Programme On HIV/AIDS | Spain | Other private donors

### Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2021 global programme

Norway \$80M | Sweden \$75.4M | Private donors Spain \$62.6M | United Kingdom \$40.4M | Netherlands \$36.1M | Denmark \$34.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea \$31.9M | Private donors Japan \$27.7M | Germany \$26M | Japan \$23.4M | France \$20.2M | Switzerland \$16.4M | Private donors Italy \$15.7M | Private donors Sweden \$14.4M | Ireland \$12.5M | Belgium \$11.9M | Italy \$10.7M

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contributed USD 10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

## Useful Links

[UNHCR's revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal](#) | [UNHCR operations overview in Europe](#) | [COVID-19: UNHCR's response](#) | [Previous issues of Europe Region COVID-19 updates](#)

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