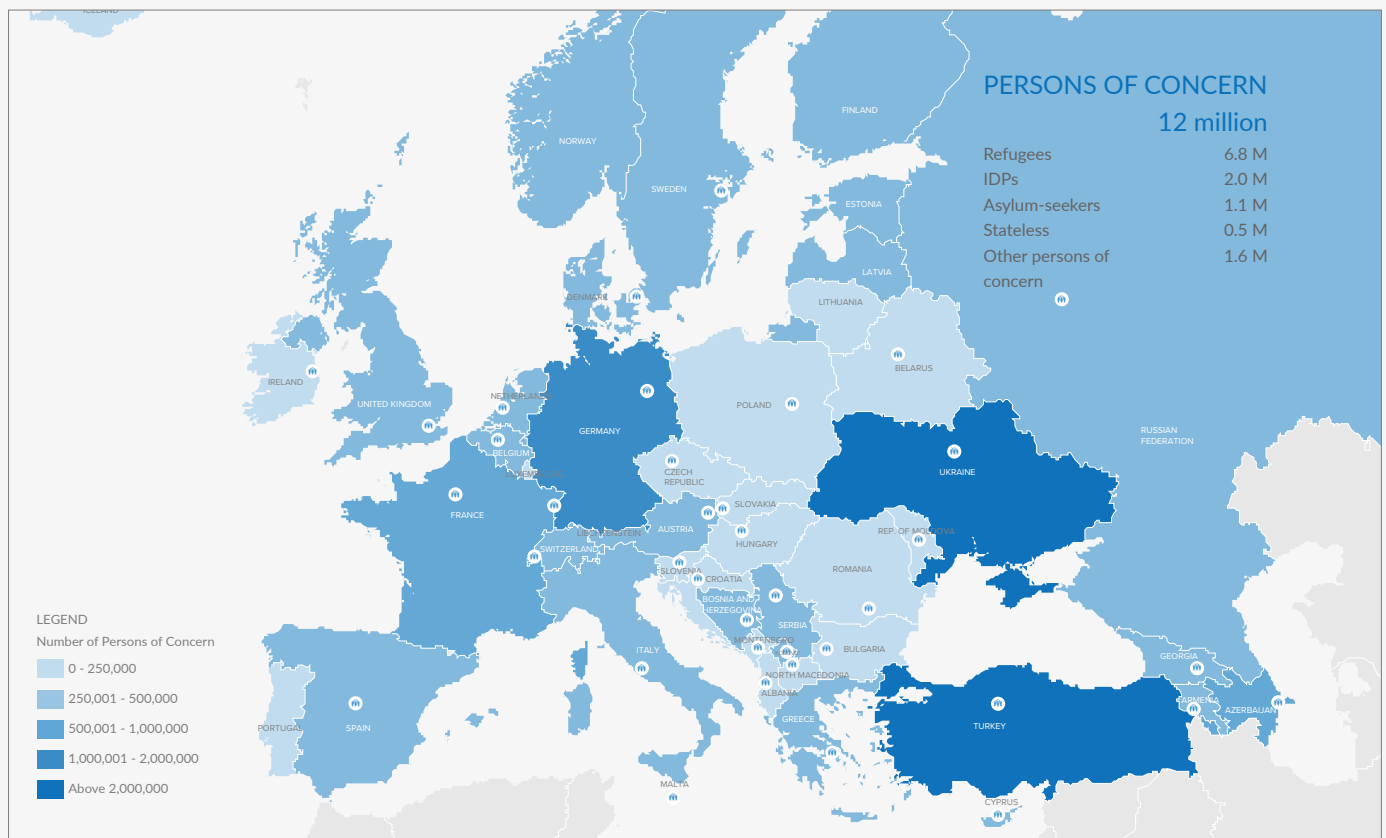


COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Regional COVID-19 infection rates remained on a sharply increasing trend for the second consecutive month reaching an all-time record of 456,000 daily cases on 26 November (WHO). Virtually all countries tightened movement and travel restrictions.

COVID-19 travel restrictions remain 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.



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 rates rose sharply for the second consecutive month in November, reaching a record of 456,000 daily cases detected on 26 November. Authorities in virtually all countries tightened measures to mitigate

contagion risks by restricting social gatherings, expanding use of masks and vaccination/recovery certificates, recommending telework and booster vaccinations. With health care capacity overstretched due to surging cases, authorities in **Austria** and **Slovakia** introduced general lockdowns, with **Austria** announcing mandatory vaccinations as of February 2022. Toward the end of the month, numerous countries had introduced travel restrictions amid concerns over the Omicron variant.

Some 63 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: 82 per cent, 82 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively (according to WHO as of 30 November).



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At the end of November, 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 9,500 persons arrived in **Italy** by sea in November (7,000 in October), and some 5,700 persons were either quarantined or being transferred to quarantine facilities as of 28 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. An additional quarantine vessel was moored off the coast of Calabria. Despite a new 120-person tensile structure, onshore quarantine and reception facilities in Calabria and Apulia remained overcrowded. In November, the Lampedusa hotspot worked at times beyond its 450-person capacity.

Some 4,000 persons arrived in **Spain** in November (compared to 5,300 in October), mostly by sea. Of the November arrivals, some 3,500 persons reached the Canary Islands, including 12 who tested positive for COVID-19 and were isolated, as per protocol.

In **Greece**, UNHCR continued monitoring quarantine areas and shared with the Government observations on good practices and gaps, in particular regarding movement restrictions that are more stringent than measures applicable to the general population.

Access to territory and asylum: On 16 November, a legislative act was promulgated in Hungary extending until 31 December 2022 the measures enacted in May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 situation, severely restricting access to territory and asylum.

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, compound-

ing risks of contagion. Outbreaks in reception centres remain a concern, and typically result in restrictions of movement for some centre residents, with additional cases detected this month in centres in Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia and Malta, among others. As a pre-emptive measure, Belgian authorities announced that some of the 700 new reception places to be opened due to the saturation of the reception network would be reserved for isolation in case of outbreaks. In the Belarus border area near Poland, some 1,800-2,000 refugees and migrants were accommodated in a warehouse at the end of November in substandard living conditions. There was no indication that COVID-19 preventive measures were in place and there is no information about vaccination status of the people there. Two persons had reportedly tested positive for COVID-19 at the end of the reporting period.

Internally Displaced Persons: Limits on freedom of movement for persons needing to cross the contact line in Ukraine were eased on 11 November, when de facto authorities in Luhansk NGCA (non-government-controlled area) announced the lifting of additional restrictions in place at the Stanytsia-Luhanska Entry-Exit Checkpoint (EECP) since 12 October. The restrictions, put in place in response to the worsening COVID-19 situation, required those who crossed to register in advance and present a humanitarian justification for crossing, which caused movement across the EECP to fall to one tenth of its previous level. Currently, only one other EECP is functioning on both sides (Novotroitske), which has been operating under similar COVID-19 restrictions since the spring.

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 **Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Romania** and **Serbia**, as well as in **Bosnia** and **Herzegovina**, where interest in vaccination has increased among persons of concern as more vaccine types have become available. In **Greece**, authorities indicated that some 5,100 adults out of the 16,800 residents (in-



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cluding children) of emergency support accommodations had been vaccinated so far by the end of November. Two new government decisions this month facilitate access to vaccination and to the digital vaccination certificate for undocumented refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR estimates that many recently arrived asylum-seekers as well as many residents of registration and identification centres remain unvaccinated. Vaccination of persons of concern in private accommodations and centres reportedly continued in **Armenia**, the northern part of **Cyprus**, and **Montenegro**. In the **Russian Federation**, partners continue facilitating vaccination through the programme offered by the Russian Red Cross Society.

In November, UNHCR initiated a survey on COVID-19 vaccination among refugees and asylum-seekers in Azerbaijan, revealing that of the 700 surveyed so far, 85 per cent had been inoculated through the national vaccination programme, while a similar survey in Turkey showed that 72 per cent of refugee respondents had been vaccinated with at least one dose, consistent with the trend among the general population.

Advocacy and support for inclusion of all persons of concern in vaccination plans and roll-out continue, where these are not equally applied to all population groups, for example in **Ukraine**, where undocumented persons cannot access vaccination, except in Luhansk oblast GCA (government-controlled area) and only if they have a birth certificate. UNHCR in **Italy** is advocating with the Ministry of Interior to ensure early vaccination of persons of concern in quarantine facilities, as some local health authorities, for example in Crotone, have decided not to vaccinate persons of concern in light of their limited stay in quarantine upon arrival and high mobility. Asylum-seekers in **North Macedonia** have previously faced obstacles in accessing vaccination but, in a positive development, following joint efforts by UNHCR and reception centre management, a systemic solution was found in November, and seven asylum-seekers were able to get vaccinated this month.

COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

Communication with communities of concern continued on vaccination campaigns across the region, making use of different channels, in line with the needs and preferences of communities of concern. UNHCR and partners have delivered information and awareness sessions in collective accommodation facilities on COVID-19 preventive measures and vaccination, for example in Armenia, Bulgaria and Romania, where UNHCR also responded to numerous inquiries through its hotline on COVID-19-related topics, including travel information, restrictions for unvaccinated people and access to vaccines.

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. In Turkey, UNHCR's new round of COVID-19 cash assistance started on 16 November, targeting 85,000 vulnerable refugee and asylum-seek-

ing households. By 28 November, 31,804 households had collected their cash cards from the service provider. This month, UNHCR in Ukraine distributed COVID-19 cash assistance to 61 vulnerable IDPs and reimbursed the costs of COVID-19 medical treatment of seven refugees and asylum-seekers. In North Macedonia, two asylum-seekers received one-time cash assistance as part of the COVID-19 project under the EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (50 since mid-February).

In Greece, UNHCR delivered 80,623 core relief items and PPE this month to authorities supporting persons of concern on the islands and mainland, as well as 79,486 personal hygiene items the emergency shelter programme partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers meet their basic needs. UNHCR in Serbia delivered 6,000 masks, 1,000 personal hand sanitizer bottles, 60 litres of hand sanitizer and 60 litres of ethanol disinfectant to government social workers/outreach officers working with unaccompanied and separated children, as well as 20,000 masks for Roma Associations for their COVID-19 immunization campaign in informal Roma settlements. UNHCR in Georgia provided logistical support for a visit of WHO experts and delivery medical supplies to Abkhazia.

In response to new COVID-19 lockdowns in the Russian Federation, UNHCR purchased smartphones for 17 vulnerable families to ensure their children's access to online classes. Similar connectivity assistance is planned for the recipients of the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) scholarship as well as for vulnerable adults to be able to work remotely.

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.

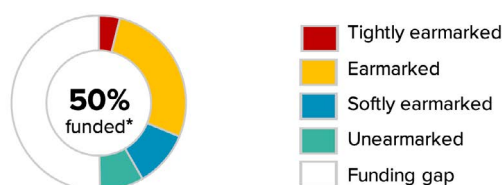
The UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe is grateful to donors who have provided generous and timely support for the Coronavirus Emergency Situation response globally, and in Europe in particular, including for non-COVID-19-related interventions, which are critical to ensure business continuity.

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.

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



Total contributed or pledged to UNHCR COVID-19 appeal as of 29 November 2021: USD 460,080,112

including: United States of America | Germany | African Development Bank Group | European Union | Canada | Unilever (UK) | Austria | China | Education cannot Wait | Japan | UNO-Fluechtlingshilfe | France | USA for UNHCR | UN Covid-19 MPTF | Country-Based Pooled Funds | Australia for UNHCR | Japan Association for UNHCR | Private donors Republic of Korea | Swedish Postcode Lottery | Private donors China | Sunshine forever Limited | Luxembourg | Sweden for UNHCR | Private donors Canada | UN Conflict-Related Sexual Violence MPTF | Qatar | Private donors United Arab Emirates | Private donors USA | Republic of Korea | 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 \$69.3M | United Kingdom \$40.4M | Netherlands \$36.1M | Private donors Republic of Korea \$35.3M | Denmark \$34.6M | Private donors Japan \$30.9M | Germany \$26M | Japan \$23.4M | France \$20.2M | Private donors Italy \$17.6M | Switzerland \$16.4M | 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.

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[UNHCR Global COVID-19 Response](#)
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