

# Regional Bureau for Europe

## UPDATE #31

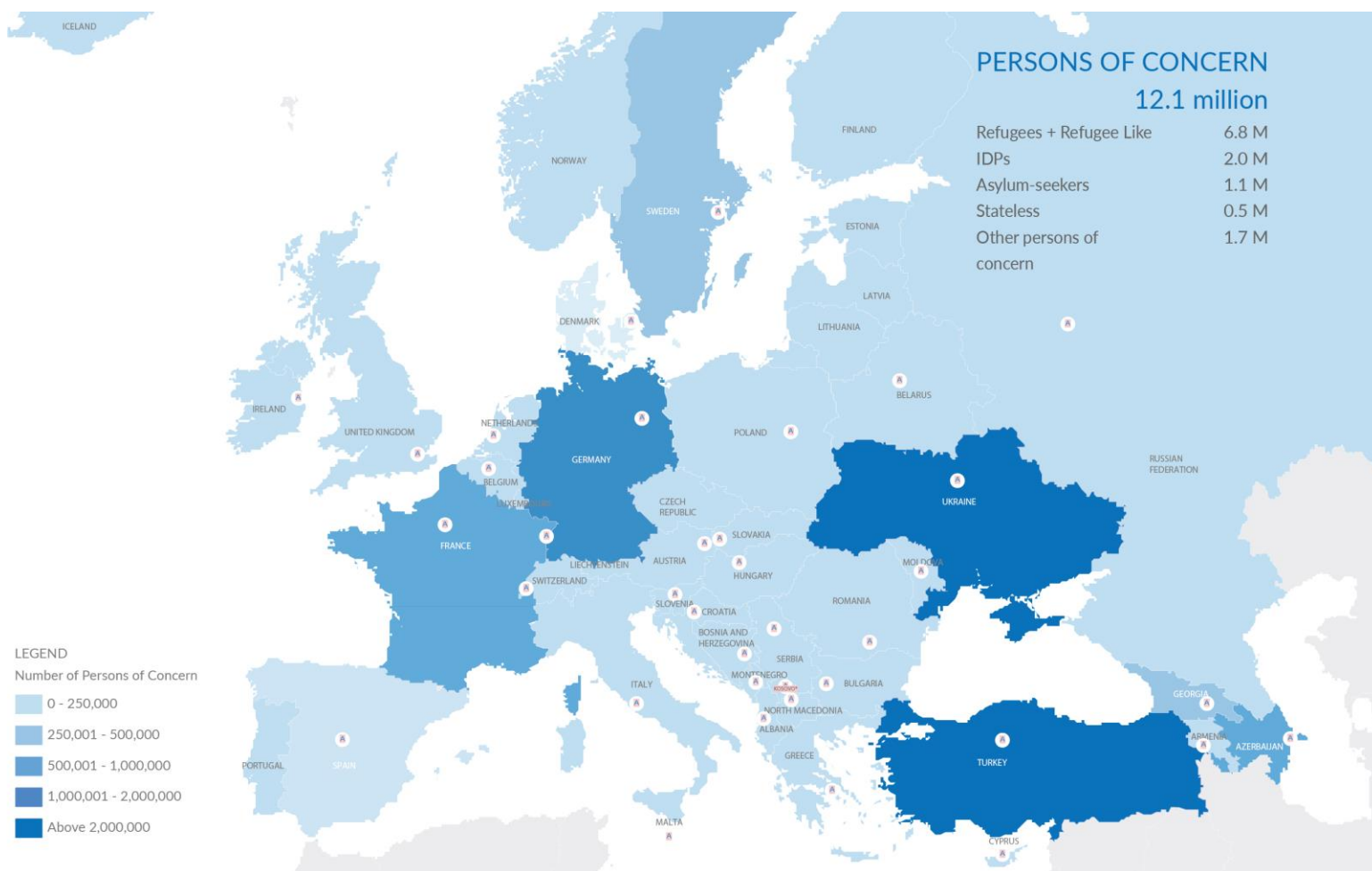
1 – 31 August 2021

Regional COVID-19 infection rates rose moderately throughout August. **Movement and travel restrictions** were generally maintained, and in some cases tightened.

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, 34 offices are **partially teleworking**, one is **fully teleworking**, and one had shifted **out of telework mode**.

### Populations of Concern



**SOURCE: UNHCR 2020 GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT**

*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, 40 countries and one territory have reported COVID-19 cases among persons of concern at some point. Some of the concerned individuals have in the meantime recovered. However, any figures or estimates should be taken with caution due to varying approaches to testing, data segregation and reporting.
- According to the WHO, regional COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalizations rose moderately throughout August, mainly due to the spread of the Delta variant. While some countries continued cautiously relaxing restrictions at the beginning of the month, other countries introduced requirements related to the extended use of COVID-19 certificates attesting vaccination or negative test results for specific social gatherings. At least a dozen countries had or were in the process of tightening measures at the end of August in response to the trends in infections.
- At the end of August, one UNHCR office remained in full telework mode, 34 in partial telework mode, and one 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. Of the 10,300 persons who arrived in **Italy** by sea in August (8,600 in July), at least 218 tested positive for COVID-19. Arrivals were first screened in hotspots or ports of arrival before being transferred for quarantining on ferries or to large first-line reception facilities. Unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) and some persons with special needs have for the most part been accommodated in dedicated onshore quarantine facilities. Nearly 4,400 persons were either quarantined or being transferred to quarantine facilities as of 31 August.
- Some 4,000 persons arrived in **Spain** in August (3,000 in July), mostly by sea. Of the August arrivals, some 1,600 persons reached the Canary Islands and over 900 the Andalusian coast. Among arrivals in the Canary Islands, at least 46 people tested positive for COVID-19, while in Andalusia at least 32 people tested positive upon arrival and were isolated along with some 273 close contacts.
- All new arrivals in **Latvia, Lithuania** and **Poland** crossing from Belarus were subject to COVID-19 testing and quarantine as per respective COVID-19 protocols.
- At the time of writing, there was no indication of COVID-19 positive persons among the Afghan evacuees who had arrived in the Europe region by the end of August. Based on information available, evacuees were generally tested upon arrival and accommodated in quarantine areas.
- **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. Outbreaks in centres remain a concern and result in restrictions of movements for some centre residents, for example in **Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Spain** and **Switzerland**. Positive cases were also detected this month in reception centres in **Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina**, and **Cyprus**. In **Serbia**, after two months without registering contagions in government centres, 17 cases were detected in August; in all cases, authorities proceeded as per quarantine protocols.
- **Internally Displaced Persons:** In **Ukraine**, due to the proliferation of the Delta variant, border crossing rules at the contact line and the administrative boundary with Crimea were tightened as of 5 August through the reintroduction of requirements to self-isolate for ten days upon arrival in the

government-controlled area using the official government's mobile phone application to monitor the isolation until a negative test is provided. This measure has a particularly significant impact on older persons and others with specific needs who do not have access to smart phones and are therefore required to isolate in a government accommodation until testing is available. There are some exemptions; for instance foreigners and citizens who have received at least one dose of a WHO-approved vaccine do not need to self-isolate.



## 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 of persons of concern residing in collective shelters progressed in several countries, for example in **Bulgaria, Montenegro** and **Serbia**, among others. In addition, vaccinations started this month in temporary reception centres in **Bosnia and Herzegovina's** Una Sana Canton, with 69 refugees and migrants vaccinated as of 23 August, while inoculations are expected to commence in Lipa camp and other reception centres in other cantons in the coming weeks.
- In several countries, efforts were made to ensure inclusion of people at risk of facing obstacles in accessing vaccinations. In a welcome step, authorities in **Italy** issued a circular calling on regional authorities competent for the administration of vaccines to ensure administrative flexibility for the full inclusion of temporary documentation holders in the vaccination campaign. Throughout August, UNHCR observed promising practices in some Italian regions, such as provision of administrative support to registration in informal settlements, inclusion of asylum-seekers and other foreign nationals in the vaccination lists independent of their residence status, or the proactive approach taken by a local health clinic to engage authorities in promoting increased access by involving reception centres. In **Cyprus**, people outside the national healthcare system are able to access walk-in centres. In addition, mobile units will offer vaccinations in reception and detention centres.
- A number of countries offered the COVID-19 vaccine to Afghan evacuees, for example the **Czech Republic, Italy, North Macedonia** and **Ukraine**.
- **Advocacy** for inclusion of all persons of concern in vaccination plans and roll-out continues as needed, for example in **Croatia**, where stateless persons or persons at risk of statelessness are not included in free vaccination programmes otherwise available for foreigners; or in **Greece**, where practical and formal obstacles to start the vaccination of undocumented migrants remain unaddressed. The UNHCR Office in **Austria** is advocating for inclusion of subsidiary protection holders who have only limited access to social welfare and, as a consequence, cannot benefit from many COVID-19-support measures. UNHCR also continues advocating with authorities in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** to facilitate vaccination of persons of concern residing in private accommodation in Sarajevo Canton, as well as in **Slovenia** to ensure vaccination of those in the immigration detention centre.



## 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.

- In **Georgia**, as UNHCR and partners guide refugee communities through the registration process and provide counselling and assistance as needed, community attitudes seem to be changing, with more refugees willing to vaccinate. Efforts by UNHCR and partners to enhance information sharing on vaccination with refugees and asylum-seekers continued in **Greece**, where the national health agency launched a helpdesk to inform on vaccinations in the reception centre in Mavrovouni, Lesvos. Upon new guidance by **Maltese** authorities for pregnant women, UNHCR produced leaflets and pushed translated information on the most used information channels. This came in addition to the dissemination of printed material on walk-in centres, issuance of vaccine certificates and preparation of a poster with general information on the vaccination roll-out tailored to the needs of people without residence permits.



### CASH-BASED AND IN-KIND ASSISTANCE

- UNHCR continues delivering COVID-19-related **cash and in-kind support**, where needed, including in **Armenia**, where the Office provided cash assistance to some 700 people in the first half of 2021 to cover COVID-19-related needs. In August, UNHCR in **Ukraine** provided cash assistance to 18 vulnerable IDP households impacted by the pandemic. In **Greece**, UNHCR delivered 24,654 core-relief items and PPEs this month to authorities supporting persons of concern on the islands and mainland, as well as material assistance to persons affected by the recent wildfires.

## 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.

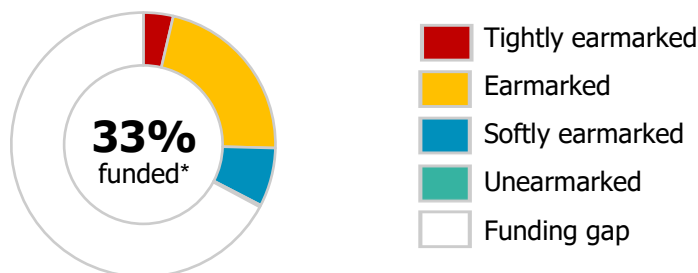
## Working in partnership

- 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 31 August: **USD 301,075,677 (33%)**

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 | UN Conflict-Related Sexual Violence MPTF | Swedish Postcode Lottery | Private donors China | Sunshine forever Limited | Japan Association for UNHCR | Luxembourg | Australia for UNHCR | UNHCR Insamlingsstiftelse | Private donors Republic of Korea | 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 \$66.9M | Private donors Spain \$49.7M | Netherlands \$36.1M | Denmark \$34.6M | United Kingdom \$28.4M | Germany \$26M | Private donors Republic of Korea \$25M | Japan \$23.4M | Private donors Japan \$20.7M | France \$20.2M | Switzerland \$16.4M | Ireland \$12.5M | Private donors Italy \$12.3M | Belgium \$11.9M | Private donors Sweden \$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](#)

To subscribe to the mailing list of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe, please click [here](#).



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