

Regional Bureau for Europe

UPDATE # 19

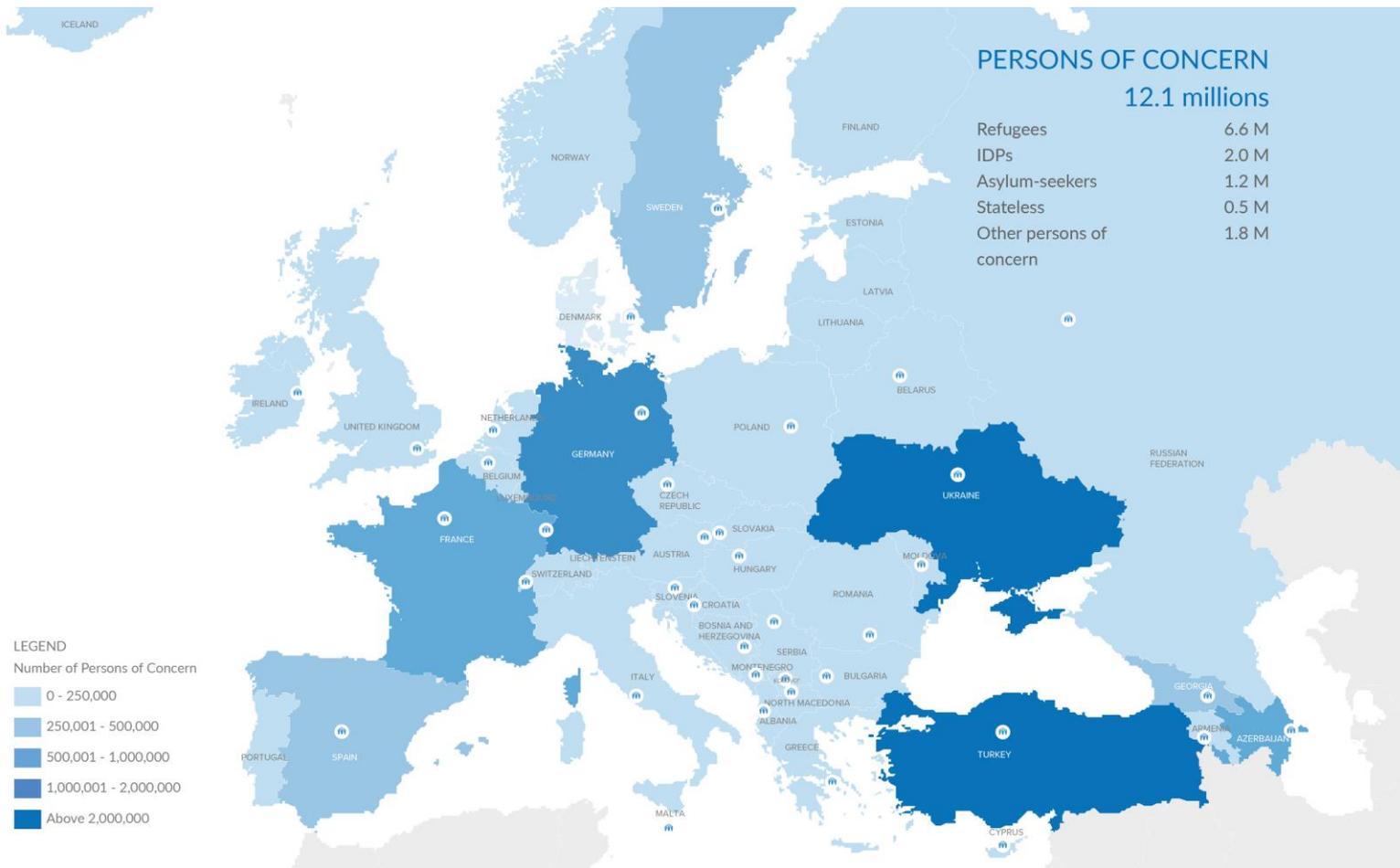
1 - 13 October 2020

With COVID-19 infection rates rising steeply across the region, many countries are progressively reinstating **movement restrictions** or **extending states of emergency**.

Despite the current trend and measures taken by some states, **access to territory** is generally maintained.

UNHCR staff across Europe has gradually moved back to working in office premises. 37 offices have been **partially teleworking** since 1 October.

Populations of Concern



SOURCE: [UNHCR GLOBAL REPORT 2019](#)

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, 34 countries have reported cases among persons of concern at some point, and some of the concerned individuals have already recovered. However, any figures or estimates need to be taken with caution due to varying approaches to testing, data segregation and reporting.
- As COVID-19 cases continue to increase region-wide, authorities are issuing further movement restrictions and reinstating or extending states of emergency, for example in Italy until 31 January 2021. Some authorities are preparing for second lockdowns should these trends continue, while several countries reported outbreaks in reception facilities for asylum-seekers.
- During its meeting on 13 October, the EU [General Affairs Council](#) adopted a [recommendation](#) for a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As of 1 October, 37 UNHCR offices in the Europe region are on partial telework. Meanwhile, field and on-site visits to reception centres have gradually resumed thanks to protection measures put in place in most of the countries.

UNHCR Areas of Intervention



PROTECTION

- **Quarantine measures for new arrivals:** **Italy** continued to receive new arrivals between 29 September and 12 October, with a total of 2,103 persons arrived by sea, of which 1,137 disembarked in Lampedusa. The COVID-19 prevention protocol in place was implemented, along with mandatory testing. As of 12 October, some 850 individuals were quarantined onshore, and 1,287 offshore in one of the five ferries that have a combined capacity for 2,400 people. However, UNHCR remains concerned about the limited access to medical attention on these ferries, with the reported presence of only one doctor per vessel.
- In **Spain**, during the reporting period 2,771 persons arrived by sea, a 92% increase compared to the same period last year. An extraordinary spike was noted in the Canary Islands specifically, which saw 1,602 new arrivals, a 3,491% increase compared to the same period last year. While many boats were rescued at sea, an increasing number arrived directly to the islands' shores. As a result, central authorities have called for a more coordinated reception response.
- **Onward movements** continue through Central and South Eastern Europe, for example from **Slovenia** to **Italy**. As the current reception and quarantine capacity of the Friuli-Venezia area remains stretched, authorities announced that two new quarantine facilities are being established in Udine province. In the meantime, authorities are no longer using buses as "quarantine areas," and the Italian Red Cross is provisionally setting up tents for this purpose. In Trieste, a mission conducted in early October found that basic services for new arrivals had not yet resumed after their closure in March due to the pandemic.
- **Reception conditions:** As a result of reception centres having to adapt quickly to allow for COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures, offices report mounting levels of anxiety among persons of concern. Elsewhere, overcrowding remains the primary challenge, for example in **Spain's** Melilla centre, where some 1,400 people are hosted without routine testing. During the reporting period, some residents tested positive and were transferred to the Quarantine Centre for Migrants. Lack of capacity for testing is also reported in **Malta**, where health authorities have indicated that there may be more undetected cases in the main reception centre. This has the potential to generate more resistance to voluntary testing, which could result in a heightened infection risk in reception facilities.
- Meanwhile, movement restrictions as well as confirmed and suspected COVID-19 cases at reception centres impacted outreach and information provision to residents in some countries. In **Spain**, UNHCR and the Spanish Red Cross have agreed to conduct online information sessions to ensure continuity of outreach activities to asylum-seekers and persons arrived by sea.
- **Access to procedures:** In **Belgium**, in a positive development, after a group of civil society organisations including UNHCR partner Nansen introduced collective legal action, the Brussels Court of First Instance ruled that the State must

offer reception to people who have electronically informed the Immigration Office of their intention to request international protection.

- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** In **Ukraine**, during the reporting period, the Entry Exit Checkpoint (EECP) in **Stanytsia Luhanska** remained non-operational due to large forest fires that swept through Luhanska oblast and caused significant damage along the contact line. However, some 10,750 persons were reported as having crossed the EECP from 5 to 11 October in both directions. An NGO partner also reported that 3,460 individuals used transportation services provided by the two electric cars operated by UNHCR and Proliska. The **Novotroitske/Olenivka** EECP continues to operate twice a week based on lists pre-approved by the de facto authorities in Donetsk. In total, 343 persons were permitted to cross to the Government Controlled Area (GCA) and 668 to the Non-Government Controlled Area (NGCA).
- Since early October, the entity authorizing NGCA residents to cross the “contact line” to the GCA introduced remote working modalities. All applications must now be submitted electronically. Following the new requirements, UNHCR teams monitoring crossings at the Novotroitske/Olenivka Entry Exit Checkpoint observed a decrease in the number of persons crossing in both directions. This trend is possibly related to lower digital literacy among older persons, who constitute the majority of those crossing.
- In a welcome development, on 7 October, UNHCR facilitated the delivery of COVID-19-related assistance to the Luhansk NGCA, including over 340 kg of oxygen concentrators and medical gloves, which was transferred to one of the hospitals designated to treat COVID-19 patients.
- In the Luhansk NGCA, UNHCR is working to increase the preparedness of social institutions and primary health facilities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the provision of NFI kits for 500 persons with specific needs, as well as hygiene kits, personal protective equipment (PPE) and in-kind assistance to 120 medical centres and persons with disabilities.



HEALTH

- In **Greece**, as of 9 October, 926 persons of concern had tested positive for COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. Out of these, 468 were on mainland and 458 on the islands.
- Some progress has been made in the Government’s preparedness for the 14-day quarantine of new arrivals on the islands and **Evros**. However, protocols and processes continue to lack uniformity, including in screening and testing. In **Kos** and **Leros**, medical areas have been set up but lack the medical staff to be fully operational. In Leros, a container was donated to the local hospital to be used as a screening unit. In **Samos**, the operation has provided three containers, while technical works and the provision of equipment are underway. In **Chios**, UNHCR is awaiting authorization from the authorities to implement its proposed support to the quarantine area for new arrivals. On 7 October, in coordination with authorities, the NGO Med’Equali launched a temporary clinic outside the main gate of Vathy RIC to provide primary healthcare to centre residents.
- As of 13 October, some 7,732 asylum-seekers were hosted in the Kara Tepe emergency site in Lesbos, while several hundred vulnerable asylum-seekers had been transferred to safe accommodations on the island or the mainland. Meanwhile, 25 people remain in quarantine in the site, 18 of which are currently COVID-19-positive and isolated alongside family members, according to authorities. To prevent and mitigate the spread of the virus, asylum-seekers undergo rapid COVID-19 testing by national health authorities before entering the facility. The operation provided and installed one Rubb-Hall for testing and is in the process of partitioning the space to ensure patient privacy.
- To help ensure a safe and effective isolation procedure, the operation is working on temporary fencing for the isolation area. In coordination with authorities, the shelter structures were cleared from the second isolation area in the emergency site, which was deemed inappropriate due to its location by the seashore, among other factors. UNHCR has [raised this issue continuously](#) with the site management authority.
- To support the existing COVID-19-related infrastructure in coordination with the authorities and WHO, UNHCR has transferred two containers from the triage area outside the Moria RIC to be used by the national health agency. Medical

organizations, including partner Médecins du Monde, are working with the authorities to provide medical support in the site and alleviate pressure on the local public hospital.

- UNHCR donated 1,000 medical masks and 50 bottles of hand disinfectant liquid to the Municipality of Athens to support the implementation of COVID-19 precautionary measures during integration and educational activities.
- In **Ukraine**'s Donetsk NGCA, schools were advised to go on a three-week vacation starting on 5 October and education will be resumed through e-learning only, as a preventive measure. In addition, employees were encouraged to telework and reduce physical presence in offices. Similar measures were announced in the Luhansk NGCA where the de facto authorities restricted all entertainment events during the school holidays.
- On 5 October, the de facto authorities of Luhanska oblast have strengthened access restrictions to their territory, especially for persons arriving from countries with an "unfavourable COVID-19 situation." Such persons are placed in observation facilities for 14 days, unless they can present a negative PCR test issued in Russia.



CASH-BASED ASSISTANCE

- In **Ukraine**, 51 families received individual protection assistance in the form of cash to help IDPs with specific needs. This measure, introduced in July, aims to help those families better cope with the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. The operation decided to increase the number of beneficiary families from 100 to 160 in light of the pandemic's ongoing impact.
- In **Moldova**, UNHCR will implement a second round of cash assistance for persons of concern who are unable to return to their jobs or find new income opportunities as a result of the COVID-19 situation. The assistance was also extended to vulnerable stateless persons identified in cooperation with the statelessness authority.



COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

- The channels set up during earlier stages of the pandemic continue to be in use. In **Malta**, for example, UNHCR is communicating new information from health authorities on the availability of the flu vaccine for the general public, including for refugees and migrants.



EDUCATION

- In **Turkey**, more students returned to face-to-face education on 12 October, subject to health measures, two days a week and on a voluntary basis, while remote education will continue via web and the state TV channel. Over 12,000 support centres have been established nationwide for students in need of a computer and access to internet, and free tablet computers will be distributed to half a million students in need, including refugees.

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;
- **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.

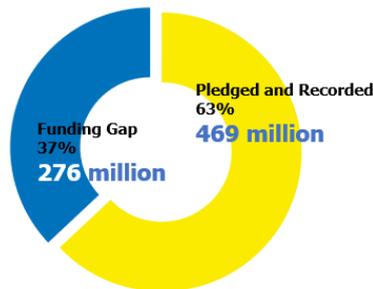
Working in partnership

- UNHCR supports governments' efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through existing coordination mechanisms and by working closely with WHO and other partners. In addition, UNHCR co-chairs 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.
- In **Greece**, UNHCR continues supporting Government efforts by enhancing coordination mechanisms in response to the COVID-19 situation, with a focus on the islands, regarding health, clean water and sanitation, as well as Communication with Communities.
- In **Ukraine**, where the humanitarian programme cycle is implemented, the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team lead the response, with WHO providing lead expertise on public health issues, in consultation with the authorities.

Financial Information

- The **revised COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP)** was released on 7 May, covering the period April-December 2020. UNHCR seeks USD 745 million to boost preparedness, prevention and response activities to address immediate public health needs of refugees and host communities worldwide. The amount presented in the appeal does not represent the full magnitude of UNHCR's engagement to support governments' efforts in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including in Europe.

- 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 until the end of the year:**Total contributed or pledged to UNHCR COVID-19 appeal****USD 469 M (63%)**

Including: United States of America \$186.3M | Germany \$62.7M | European Union \$44.0M | United Kingdom \$25.7M | Japan \$25.1M | African Development Bank \$18.3M | Private donors \$16.2M | Denmark \$14.6M | United Nations Foundation \$10.0M | CERF \$6.9M | Unilever \$6.5M | Canada \$6.4M | Education Cannot Wait \$4.7M | Qatar Charity \$3.5M | Spain \$3.4M | France \$3.4M | Ireland \$3.3M | Sweden \$3.0M | Sony Corporation \$2.9M | Austria \$2.5M | Finland \$2.4M | USA for UNHCR \$2.0M |

Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2020 programme

Sweden \$76.4M | Private donors Spain \$59.9M | Norway \$41.4M | Netherlands \$36.1M | Denmark \$34.6M | United Kingdom \$31.7M | Private donors Republic of Korea \$30.6M | Germany \$25.9M | Japan \$23.8M | Private Donors Japan \$21M | Switzerland \$16.4M | Private Donors Italy \$14M | France \$14 M | Private Donors Sweden \$11.7M | Italy \$10.6 M |

Useful Links[UNHCR's revised Coronavirus Emergency Appeal](#)[UNHCR operations overview in Europe](#)[COVID-19: UNHCR's response](#)

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