

# AGE, GENDER AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2020



Promising Practices from Europe

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**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:**

*Somali refugee, Nasro, 18, waits in a hotel room in Athens with her mother and brother before their relocation flight to Germany.*

*UNHCR / Achilleas Zavallis*



# Introduction

**UNHCR in Europe is committed to age, gender and diversity (AGD) mainstreaming as an essential approach to understand and respond to the needs of all persons of concern and to build on their capacities in its response, as well as to live up to UNHCR’s accountability to affected people (AAP).**

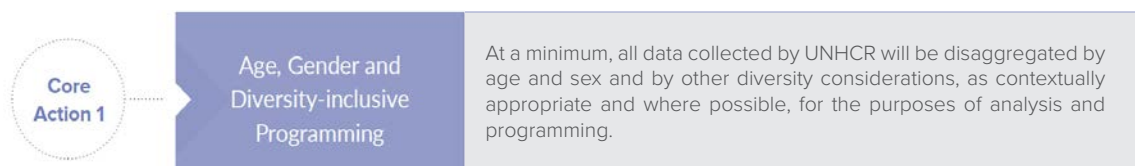
Throughout 2020, country offices in the region continued to make considerable progress in enhancing community engagement and outreach, and in integrating AGD considerations into operational planning and programme implementation, in relation to protection activities, advocacy, as well as legal interventions. In the context of the COVID-19 response, offices significantly stepped up their efforts to ensure timely, updated, and accurate information to persons of concern on risk mitigation measures, changes in asylum procedures and adapted service provision. Across the region, UNHCR and its partners strengthened and diversified its communication with communities, through online platforms and other innovative approaches, in different languages and adapted to specific needs.

At regional level, UNHCR collected and disseminated good practices through a “Starter Kit on Community Engagement and Communication with Communities”, which aims to facilitate exchange between operations and guide the implementation of AAP commitments in Europe, with consideration to the diverse operational contexts in the region. A Regional Survey was also completed in December 2020 to map existing challenges and support needs, and inform the way forward.

This report provides a sample of activities taking place at country and regional level to implement the 10 Core Actions set out in UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity Policy in the Europe region.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bb628ea4.html>

# Age, Gender and Diversity Inclusive Programming



In Europe, data regarding persons of concern is largely collected by governments. UNHCR advocates for such data to be **disaggregated by age, sex, and other diversity considerations**, as well as legal status, where this does not take place already. Moreover, UNHCR actively promotes the early identification and referral of persons with specific needs, including through the use of the Washington Group Questions,<sup>2</sup> to ensure timely access to targeted support and services.

In **Italy**, for example, UNHCR has worked with D.i.Re (Donne in rete contro la violenza), a national service network, to establish a system of data

collection which includes disaggregation by legal status, age, sex and nationality. The new system will enable monitoring and analysis of trends relating to persons of concern seeking GBV services at anti-violence centers throughout the country.

At regional level, UNHCR releases a number of information and data products sharing disaggregated data collected by governments, for example the UNHCR factsheet on arrivals and displaced populations in Europe<sup>3</sup> and the UNHCR/ UNICEF/IOM factsheet on refugee and migrant children.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Washington Group Questions are available online at: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/washington\\_group/wg\\_questions.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/washington_group/wg_questions.htm)

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR RBE, Europe Situations: Data and Trends, Arrivals and Displaced Populations, available online at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84470>

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR RBE, Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe, available online at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85196>



Proliska psychologist Inna Dolia conducts the first stress relief session in the school where children from the frontline villages receive primary and secondary education. Ukraine, January 2021.



# Accountability to Affected People



## Participation and Inclusion

At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes.

UNHCR offices across Europe continue **to use participatory assessments** to ensure that the priorities and capacities of women, men, girls and boys are taken into account in protection, assistance and solutions activities. Over the last two years, a total of **11,940** persons of concern in the region were consulted by UNHCR and its partners through such assessments.

In **Turkey**, for example, UNHCR conducted 55 participatory exercises in 2020, reaching more than 3,700 persons of concern. In addition, an assessment on social cohesion was conducted with 3,814 individuals from both refugee and host communities, in partnership with academia.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of onward movement and limited staffing capacity, many country offices have applied **contextualized approaches to participation**. In **North Macedonia** and **Serbia**, for example, UNHCR is conducting “simplified” participatory assessments in border transit and reception centers, with short interviews on reception conditions and integration/asylum prospects in the country conducted continuously throughout the year. These assessments provide UNHCR with essential information about why and

how people move onwards, complementary to what is gathered in the annual participatory assessment. Similarly, in **Poland**, UNHCR has integrated consultations with persons of concern into ongoing protection activities, such as counseling in detention and reception facilities, and in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR conducts monthly site profiling in Temporary Reception Centers, together with State authorities and other partners, using 85 standards and markers, many of which stem from UNHCR guidelines and policies, including on AGD.

In Europe, UNHCR plays an important role in **promoting participatory approaches among government** counterparts at national, regional and local/municipal level, as well as with other stakeholders. While the decisions of such authorities have a significant impact on the lives of persons of concern, persons of concern are rarely consulted on reception and integration issues or offered the opportunity to provide feedback in a systematic manner. Over the last two years, UNHCR offices in 22 countries have therefore provided training on participatory and community-based approaches to government counterparts, partners, NGOs and others.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, Syrians Barometer 2019, A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey (2020), available online (in three languages) at: <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/09/SB2019-ENG-04092020.pdf>



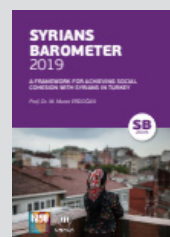
In 2020, UNHCR in **Italy** has produced a video to promote the use of focus group discussions,<sup>6</sup> and UNHCR in **Switzerland** developed an informational booklet on participatory approaches in French and German.<sup>7</sup>

As part of its efforts to promote participation and inclusion, UNHCR also engages with and supports a wide range of **POC-led organizations, committees and advisory boards in the region**. In 2020, 20 UNHCR offices in Europe were partnering with more than 80 different refugee-led organizations, 30 of which were under the umbrella of the PartecipAzione project in **Italy**, supported by UNHCR and Intersos. In Ukraine, over 80 small-scale community-based organizations, some of which are IDP-led, provided assistance, advocacy and community mobilization, many with UNHCR support.

In **Belgium**, UNHCR has engaged in a pilot project to establish an Umbrella Refugee Committee in Brussels, made up of several different refugee committees and acting as a bridge between communities, UNHCR, municipal authorities, service providers and civil society. One of its key objectives is to contribute to a constructive dialogue on refugee integration and welfare in Brussels, as a model for other cities.

Similarly, in **Bulgaria**, UNHCR has supported the establishment of a Refugee Advisory Board with 11 refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. In 2020, the Advisory Board participated in a capacity building programme developed in cooperation with the Bulgarian School of Politics (Dimitry Panitza) and was awarded a grant from UNHCR's Innovation Service for a campaign on the subject of online misinformation and rumors. The Advisory Board regularly participated in advocacy and media events and represented the voice of refugees in Bulgarian society.

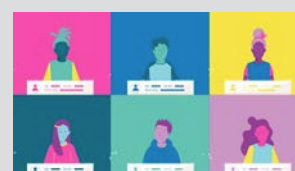
At regional level, UNHCR has entered into a partnership with the **Migration Policy Group** (MPG) to design a practitioners' toolkit for guiding the development and evaluation of refugee integration initiatives at the local level in Europe, highlighting – amongst others – good practices and considerations around consultation and participation. In the context of the COVID-19 response, the Regional Bureau also developed a number of “cheat sheets” on participatory assessments, including on how to conduct online focus group discussions during lockdown and other movement restrictions.



**Syrians Barometer 2019**  
A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey



**Booklet**  
Booklet on participatory approaches in French and German



**Focus Group Discussion:** a useful tool for creating a positive relationship with refugee communities



<sup>6</sup> The video is available online (in English) at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaX3pE707zw>

<sup>7</sup> The booklet is available online in French at: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/qgxbn/pzqb/#p=1> and in German at: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/qgxbn/ebim/#p=1>



### Communication and Transparency

At a minimum, all country-level protection and solutions strategies will detail the operation's approach to communicating with women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds, through means that are appropriate and accessible to all groups in a community.

In Europe, the **information needs of persons of concern grew exponentially across the region in 2020** as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and related government restrictions. To make sure all persons of concern remained aware of the latest information on procedures, services and restrictions, UNHCR offices and partners reinforced and complemented government information efforts.

POC volunteers, outreach workers and POC-led organizations were essential in the development, translation and dissemination of prevention and hygiene messages, and in ensuring that the most vulnerable groups and individuals had access to information. Moreover, several government authorities, UNHCR offices and partners developed new and innovative communication approaches as part of the COVID-19 response, including in the form of digital and online platforms.

In **Turkey**, for example, a **WhatsApp communication tree** reached more than 11,200 persons of concern with instant information about COVID-19 and other relevant issues, while the UNHCR Counselling Line received 335,433 calls and the HELP page was accessed by 239,130 persons. UNHCR's social media accounts, mainly the Information Board on Facebook, witnessed an 87% increase in followers compared to 2019, with a total of 82,643 followers in 2020.

WhatsApp, Viber and Telegram channels were also used to communicate with communities during movement restrictions in **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Poland, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, and the Russian Federation**.

In **Serbia**, eight UNHCR partners developed a joint Facebook page offering information and services to refugees in six different languages.

In **France**, the online platform [refugies.info](https://refugies.info) provided persons of concern with updated information about COVID-19, based on content developed together with volunteers and responding to questions raised by refugees and asylum-seekers. The platform also includes a live multilingual chat-function.<sup>8</sup>

In **Italy**, the information portal JUMA Refugees Map Services and its COVID-19 information pages had more than 133,000 visits during the course of 2020. UNHCR **Italy** also promoted awareness about GBV through a short, animated film and three videos disseminated through social media channels during the 16 days of activism against GBV.<sup>9</sup>

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR's free legal aid partner established an online platform Vasa Prava to streamline the provision of information on asylum and COVID-19, which includes a direct messaging channel for legal advice and is complemented by WhatsApp and Viber channels.<sup>10</sup>

At regional level, in May 2020 UNHCR issued **a compilation of positive practices on risk communication and community engagement** during COVID-19 in Europe, highlighting good examples from governments, UNHCR and partners, and from communities themselves.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The [refugies.info](https://refugies.info) platform is available online at: <https://refugies.info/>

<sup>9</sup> The film and videos are available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYC1dBTLe0>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCBtFye-pnY>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDI2-WFRDdQ>, <https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/violenza-sulle-donne-in-che-stato-siamo-migranti-richiedenti-asilo-e-rifugiate/>

<sup>10</sup> The forum is available online <https://pravnapomoc.app/en>

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, Risk Communication and Community Engagement: Positive Practices from Europe during COVID, May 2020, available online at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/76787>





#### Feedback and Response

At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.

In Europe, **a number of channels are in place to receive feedback and complaints** from persons of concern, including confidential complaints. These include dedicated email addresses, hotlines and call centres for persons of concern to contact UNHCR and its partners. In 19 countries, **complaint boxes** are available in reception centres or at service delivery points, while in 8 countries UNHCR has such complaint boxes in its offices. In addition, the use of **online feedback and complaint forms**, including through the UNHCR HELP page, expanded in 2020 and is currently available in 11 countries.

UNHCR in **Turkey** conducted a baseline assessment with 576 community members to understand their levels of awareness on UNHCR complaint, feedback and response mechanisms.

A **Complaint and Response Mechanisms Task Force** was established to bring together fraud, PSEA and other complaint and feedback focal points with an aim to assess, mainstream and improve the available complaint, feedback and response channels.

UNHCR offices across Europe also advise government counterparts and partners on feedback and complaints mechanisms, where such mechanisms are not already in place. For example, in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR worked in collaboration with reception authorities to establish community-based complaint mechanisms in two reception facilities and five temporary reception centers.



### Organizational Learning and Adaptation

At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from persons of concern, and document this in Country Operations Plans and Annual Reporting.

In Europe, UNHCR maintains a **continuous and direct dialogue with communities** to ensure organizational learning and adaptation of its programmes and advocacy interventions. As of December 2020, UNHCR benefited from a network of more than **1,370 volunteers**, outreach workers and coordinators across the region, who are engaging with UNHCR and its partners on a regular basis. These networks play an essential support role within their communities, as well as in liaison with UNHCR, partners and government authorities, ensuring that they are keep abreast of the changing needs and protection developments in each country.

In **Turkey**, for example, UNHCR works with a network of 97 refugee volunteers, who are supported through partners. Volunteers and outreach workers/coordinators from communities were also actively involved in the COVID-19 response and other protection activities in **the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Spain and Ukraine** in 2020.

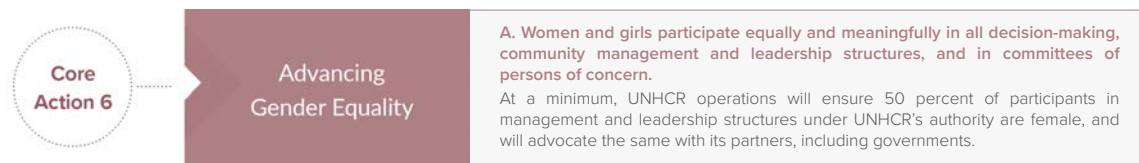
In addition, **targeted assessments were conducted** to monitor the protection situation for persons of concern in the context of COVID-19. In **Spain**, for example, UNHCR consulted 750 refugees and asylum-seekers through an online survey, which allowed UNHCR to reach a broad range of individuals and assess the specific situation of at-risk groups, such as older persons and persons with disabilities.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR conducted a **quick assessment on the information needs** of persons of concern in the context of COVID-19 and, and as a follow up initiated a peer-to-peer education project where persons of concern were trained and engaged to facilitate two-way communication between communities and UNHCR.

Socioeconomic surveys were conducted by phone in **Moldova, Hungary and Slovakia**, in collaboration with UNHCR partners and, in Hungary, with the Outreach Working Group.

In **Turkey**, the Protection Working Group produced two information reports based on the quarterly inter-agency **rapid needs assessments** conducted with refugee populations in July and September 2020. A total of 2,075 individuals (11,579 at household level) took part in these exercises. The assessments were designed with a multi-sectorial perspective to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on the protection environment, identify needs and inform evidence-based programming and advocacy efforts. UNHCR also conducted an assessment of information dissemination and communication preferences with 576 community members, which helped guide and inform UNHCR's awareness-raising initiatives in the context of COVID-19 and other activities.

# Advancing Gender Equality



Advancing diversity and gender parity remains clear objectives for UNHCR's outreach work in Europe.

As of December 2020, **60% of the volunteers, outreach workers and coordinators** engaged with UNHCR and its partners in the region were women. This was in particular due to the strong network of refugee women in **Turkey**, where 67% of all community structures were women (76% of refugee committees and 63% of outreach volunteers). Outside the Turkish context, the rate of female participation is only 38%, and efforts continue to reach gender parity and increase the number of women in representative structures, such as committees and advisory boards. UNHCR also continues to advocate with governments and partners for equal and meaningful participation of women, as well as for the inclusion and representation of LGBTIQ+ persons and persons with disabilities.

As part of UNHCR's initiative to create an Umbrella Refugee Committee in Brussels, a **Women's Refugee Committee** was established in March 2020. In addition to regular dialogue and consultation with UNHCR, the Women's Committee engages directly with municipal authorities and local service providers to strengthen integration and improve service delivery for refugee women. In 2020, the Committee launched a Facebook page to reach out to a broader audience and engage more refugee women. Training sessions will be organised in 2021 on women's rights, violence against women, self-employment and entrepreneurship, based on needs expressed by the Committee.

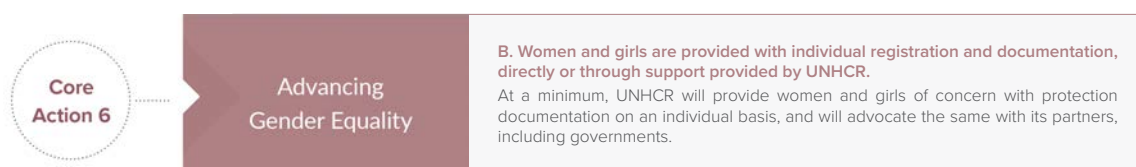
In **Malta**, two remote **workshops on women's leadership and empowerment** were held for women in reception centres. Based on the feedback of participants, further training and workshops will take place in 2021 on empowerment, GBV, and skills to promote economic autonomy for women.

On Chios island in **Greece**, UNHCR supported repair and refurbishment of the Women Friendly Space and provided materials requested by the Women's Refugee Committee for GBV prevention, response and empowerment activities, including computers, books, board games, sewing and knitting material. Community meetings took place to consult and discuss concerns with asylum-seeking women, including on sexual and reproductive health.

In **Kosovo**, UNHCR and other partners increased efforts to promote **women and youth empowerment** and social inclusion through high-level meetings organized with 59 women and youth from different minority groups, as well as focus group discussions. A UNHCR partner also launched a cookbook with 32 recipes from 15 women of different backgrounds.

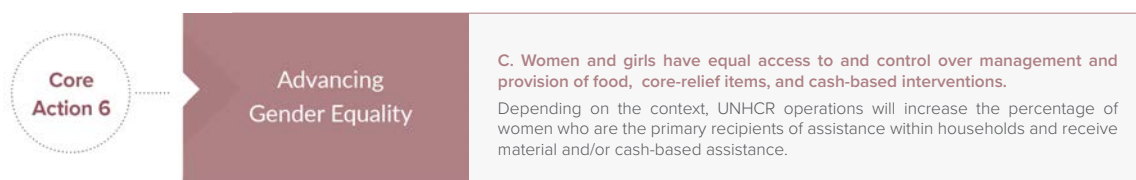
At regional level, UNHCR presented at a conference on the **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** organized by New Women Connectors, an organization led by refugee women. UNHCR's representation to the Council of Europe also participated in the Drafting Committee on Migrant Women (GEC-MIG) and spoke at its opening session in Strasbourg in December 2020.





UNHCR does not provide individual registration and documentation in Europe. Advocacy takes place as required when women and girls do not receive individual registration or documentation.

In **Turkey** UNHCR continued supporting the Directorate General for Migration Management towards protection-sensitive registration at individual level, including identification and referral of women and girls at risk.



UNHCR's approach to economic inclusion in Europe is to advocate for, promote and facilitate **effective access to the market system for refugees**, through complementary mainstreamed and targeted services and programmes. Implementation of livelihoods' activities is considered a measure of last resort to be taken only if inclusion is not possible. Similarly, for education and health, the primary aim is also effective inclusion into existing structures and services. However, opportunities for women and girls are consistently taken into consideration in both operational and advocacy initiatives.

To ensure **equal access to economic opportunities for women and girls**, UNHCR advocates for:

- Economic inclusion interventions to be accompanied by childcare. Especially for trainings, blended options should be considered.
- Interventions to be culturally appropriate and to take into consideration informal rules and social norms. These may include targeted initiatives for women and girls, which can also provide a safe space.
- Strengthening women's and girls' access to

financial products as a basis for empowerment and to facilitate their participation in the economic ecosystem of the country of asylum.

- Promoting women's self-reliance, including as a GBV prevention measure. A protection-sensitive, participatory approach is needed to identify potential risks of interventions and to mitigate these.
- Targeted economic inclusion measures for women to address their participation rate in the job market, as well as underemployment/overqualification through targeted measures such as skills validation, upskilling or job matching, as refugee women are often disproportionately overqualified for their work.

Country operations continue with targeted advocacy and interventions along these lines. In the **United Kingdom**, for example, UNHCR issued a report on the protection and integration of resettled refugee women. The research was carried out through participatory assessment interviews with 143 women and LGBTIQ+ persons, and led to specific recommendations for enhanced language training, mental health support, and improved access to livelihoods, education and health services.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, Safer and Stronger: Experiences of Refugee Women Resettled to the UK, available: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/5f2d47eb4.pdf>

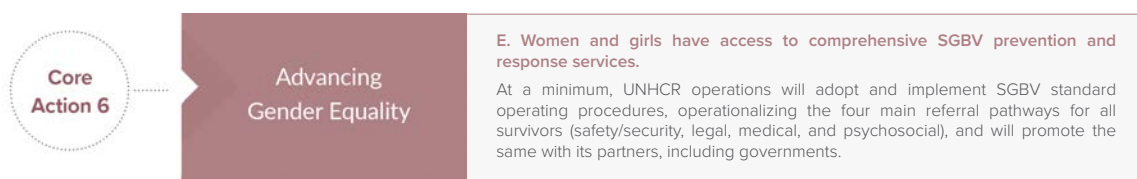
Within health, an example of a targeted programmatic intervention is the communication material on sexual and reproductive health developed by UNHCR in **Greece**, with input from the refugee community. In 2021, an application will be launched to make this information easily accessible in multiple languages (English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashto and Bengali).

In **Turkey**, UNHCR continued implementing **cash assistance** for GBV survivors, transgender and intersex refugees, and produced GBV mainstreaming training and guidance for sectors (livelihoods, education and basic needs/cash) to promote mainstreaming and the centrality of protection.

UNHCR Malta and its partner Jesuit Refugee Service supported asylum-seeking women to produce 2,600 reusable face masks. The masks were made according to WHO standards and accompanied by instructions for reception centre residents. Most of the masks were distributed in detention and open reception centres. Similar projects on mask production were implemented in other operations in Europe during COVID-19, including in **Ukraine**.

Hala, one of the first refugee volunteers at UNHCR Spain, visits Eyman's family, refugees from Syria, in the framework of the first Refugee Volunteer Programme led by the Spanish office, in Madrid, December 2020.





In Europe, UNHCR's focus on GBV is to promote **safe and appropriate access to national services**, effective identification and referral, and coordination between asylum authorities and service providers to facilitate multi-sectoral response. Feedback from communities on the causes of GBV is consistently sought and taken into consideration when designing prevention, response and risk mitigation activities.

Funds received from the Safe for the Start programme for the **roll out of the GBV policy** were successfully committed to pilot activities in the region, with a range of activities implemented, including the development of information material on sexual and reproductive health by UNHCR in Greece, support for community awareness raising activities in **Georgia, Malta and Ukraine**, the establishment of a GBV helpline in **Malta**, and GBV safety assessments in **the Netherlands**.

On **Chios Island in Greece**, UNHCR and IRC facilitated a four-day training for 22 existing and prospective members of the **Women's Committee** on GBV and psychological first aid, and the safe identification and referral of survivors. Several risk mitigation measures were also taken, such as the procurement of personal alarms for women and adolescent girls, installment of missing doors in WASH facilities, and a fenced area with tents around the Women's Friendly Space.

In **Italy**, the national anti-violence network D.i.Re and UNHCR continued their efforts to promote the inclusion of refugee survivors within national GBV response systems. Standards for interventions with refugee survivors were finalized, with training for 179 personnel working in anti-violence centers. Training was also provided to 52 cultural mediators in psychological first aid, self-care and GBV.

In partnership with the **Women's Rights Foundation**, a free GBV helpline was established for asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in **Malta**, with interpretation services in the main languages of communication (Arabic, English, French and Maltese). Visibility materials were designed in a child-friendly manner and translated, so as to also reach unaccompanied children.

UNHCR in **North Macedonia** equipped a **space for women and girls** in the reception center Vizbegovo to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 restriction measures and increased risks of GBV, as well as to enhance access to information.

In **Romania**, **safety assessments** were undertaken in partnership with civil society organizations, identifying a number of risk factors contributing to GBV. UNHCR and partners used the findings of the assessment to raise a range of issues with the authorities, from on-site adjustments, such as fixing locks for bedroom doors, to more systemic issues, such as ensuring access to national systems.

In **Serbia**, UNHCR supported the establishment of a **Women's Corner** in one of the asylum centers, where women can socialize and benefit from workshops on issues such as reproductive health, GBV, parenting, and employment. It is run by trained refugee volunteers and is available to other women's NGOs for confidential interviews, psychosocial support, legal counselling and other activities.

In **Turkey**, UNHCR and partners mobilized refugee volunteers and committee members to create and disseminate key messages on GBV, psychosocial support and child protection in response to the



increased risks related to COVID-19. UNHCR reached 153,810 views through its social media accounts, WhatsApp communication tree, HELP page and community networks. The office in Turkey also launched a **GBV counselling hotline** in September 2020 as a safe and confidential way of reporting incidents in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. The hotline operates during weekdays in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Somali, English, and Turkish. In its first four months, the line received 3,979 calls.

Offices across the region regularly support **capacity building initiatives** in GBV prevention, response and risk mitigation. For example, in 2020, a training was facilitated for Afghan community volunteers in the **Russian Federation**, and roundtable events were organised for stakeholders from asylum authorities, NGOs and refugee-led organizations in **France and Spain**. A series of webinars on legal developments and the sharing of good practices took place in **Poland and Romania**.

In **Malta**, two five-day remote trainings on GBV were organised together with the Jesuit Refugee Service for women in the reception centres to become GBV focal points and raise awareness in their communities. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR provided support to GBV victims and other vulnerable persons in a Safe House managed by a local women's association "Zene sa Une" and, together with UN Women and UNFPA, conducted GBV workshops in three reception centres.

In addition, many offices organised events to mark the **16 days of activism against GBV**. In Greece, podcasts with survivor stories were shared through a radio event, while videos on GBV were produced in **Kosovo, Malta, Spain and Ukraine**.

In **Turkey**, a total of 116 activities together with 37 partners, including refugee-led organizations, reached 84,972 individuals, and campaign images for the theme "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect" were displayed on nearly 300 billboards in more than 20 municipalities.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR together with UN Women and UNFPA, conducted the #TURNOFFVIOLENCE campaign targeting more than 4,000 refugees and migrants in reception centres.

In **Ukraine**, refugee, IDP, Roma and local youth in Odesa set up an #OrangetheWorld photo zone, inviting people to take photos with the campaign banners for a prize.

**Service provision for GBV survivors was maintained** in most operations in Europe despite the movement restrictions put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. 34 UNHCR offices reported that such services were fully available and 7 offices that services were partially available, with adaptations to service provision. In 7 countries, information about GBV services was not available to UNHCR.

To address the specific GBV risks faced by children, a project to develop **child-friendly information material** on GBV – including a video, leaflet and service directory – was initiated by the Regional Bureau to support country offices in disseminating information material at the national level.

# Targeted AGD Programming

## a) Activities in support of children

The **relocation scheme for unaccompanied children** and other vulnerable asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection from Greece has been a remarkable achievement towards durable solutions for those relocated, particularly in the context of the challenges of COVID-19. The scheme has particularly benefitted unaccompanied children, with 583 children relocated to other countries by the end of 2020, and more to be relocated in 2021. UNHCR has coordinated closely with the European Commission, relevant ministries in Greece, IOM and UNICEF to operationalise the relocation scheme, including through the development of SOPs, best interests' procedures and identification criteria. In the early stages of the relocation, UNHCR coordinated with IOM and UNICEF to produce minimum standards for the protection of children in the relocation scheme.<sup>13</sup>

Country offices across the region also implemented targeted activities in support of stateless, refugee and asylum-seeking children. For example, in **Bulgaria**, UNHCR undertook consultations with 105 refugee children and youth from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Egypt in reception centers and urban areas. The feedback was summarized in a report which will be presented at a roundtable event in 2021. In follow up of the consultations, a **Child Network** has been established for regular exchange of information

through social media channels. Two refugee children, selected as members of the national **Bulgarian Child Council**, were included in the network, thus also enabling the voices of the network to be raised at the national level. In response to the gaps identified, an application will also be developed in 2021 to share and exchange information.

In **Serbia**, to combat increasingly negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees in public discourse, as well as misinformation and xenophobic incidents, partners formed a "Coalition for Protection of Migrant and Refugee Children against Abuse and Neglect" to raise public awareness and improve identification and referral of children at risk, as well as capacity building of employees who work with refugee and migrant children. UNHCR partners also developed an online platform to support language learning for asylum-seeking and refugee children in the context of COVID-19.

In **Ukraine**, members of the community created a safe space within a school for psychosocial activities for children and their families from five villages close to the contact line (Opytne, Ivanhrad, Otradiivka, Kodema, Zaitseve). UNHCR provided material which school staff, students and their parents used to refurbish a psychologist's sensory room which had been affected by shelling in 2015. The room can now be used for education and recreational activities, as well as therapeutic sessions for parents and children with UNHCR partner Proliska.

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM, Minimum Child Protection Standards for Identification of Unaccompanied Children to be Relocated from Greece to other countries in the European Union, available online at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Minimum-Child-Protection-Standards-Identification-Unaccompanied-Separated-Children.pdf>

In **Albania**, UNHCR supported the refurbishing of a child-friendly room in the National Reception Center for Asylum-Seekers. An online training module was created in **Italy**, in collaboration with CNOAS (the National Order of Social Workers) to present the views of unaccompanied children regarding the role and support of social workers from arrival to integration.<sup>14</sup> The project promoted child participation by sharing children's voices to influence the provision of services intended to support them. Tips for social workers from the children included using simple language, clarifying the role of social workers, having authentic relationships, meeting frequently, listening to children and maintaining confidentiality.

Animated child-friendly webpages were launched in **Italy**<sup>15</sup> and **Spain**<sup>16</sup>, with the aim of having dedicated spaces for children and child-friendly information in different languages. In **Switzerland**, a video has been produced for children on family reunification and made available in six languages.<sup>17</sup>

In light of the need for child-friendly information across the region, development of animated products on asylum procedures and GBV has been initiated by the Regional Bureau and will be finalized in 2021.

## b) Activities in support of youth

Through its regional partnership with the European Youth Parliament (EYP), UNHCR facilitated the participation of refugee and stateless youth in national events in **Cyprus** and **Serbia** in 2020, and presented during two international events to raise awareness on issues of statelessness and mental health. All events led to recommendations to policy makers on behalf of the youth that participated.<sup>18</sup>

The office in **Serbia** concluded a 3-year project, jointly implemented with UNDP and UNV, which supported the placement of 65 young Roma in local government institutions and NGOs through UNV contracts, with the dual impact of offering an employment opportunity and promoting integration and inclusion of Roma youth. Among those that participated, 26 were retained for employment by the entity they were placed with. In addition, the youth established a network called the **Association of Young Volunteers** which is now a formal entity able to apply for funding and take forward their own projects. The Association has organized various events, including joint sessions with refugee youth.

UNHCR in **Turkey** launched a **mentorship programme** for Syrian DAFI scholars and students in university preparation with a platform for coaching and experience-sharing. UNHCR also implemented online focus group discussions and surveys with 227 young refugees and host community members and, based on their feedback, developed youth empowerment projects for 2021 with three governmental counterparts.

UNHCR and its partners in **Serbia** advanced its **youth peer educators project**. In 2020, the peer educators completed a number of trainings, introduced their initiative to the Ombudsman's office, were involved in the design and filming of educational movies, and took part in a multi-cultural exchange with students of the Legal Clinic in Belgrade and a Summer Camp organized by Roma youth.

In **Georgia**, a **youth-led group** of refugees, IDP and host community youth was established with the support of UNHCR and World Vision to facilitate integration and links with the host community.

<sup>14</sup> The video can be accessed online at: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/sl19khfrtbnxz65/esportazione\\_prova.mov?dl=9](https://www.dropbox.com/s/sl19khfrtbnxz65/esportazione_prova.mov?dl=9)

<sup>15</sup> The webpage can be accessed online at: <https://www.unhcr.org/it/informazioni-a-misura-di-bambini-e-ragazzi/>

<sup>16</sup> The webpage can be accessed online at: <https://www.acnur.org/es-es/ninos-y-ninas-no-acompanados-y-la-proteccion-del-asilo.html>

<sup>17</sup> The webpage can be accessed online at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_HiNrmUlnA&list=PLCBUGtQyGCytxQ...eqD2qexmffCQR5UcFj&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_HiNrmUlnA&list=PLCBUGtQyGCytxQ...eqD2qexmffCQR5UcFj&index=2)

<sup>18</sup> For more about the European Youth Parliament, see their website online at: <https://eyp.org/>





The group created an online platform as a space for interaction and events on cultural diversity. During the 16-days of activism against GBV, the group organized an event with prominent women leaders as guest speakers, and created an awareness raising brochure. The group has also produced videos with phrases for daily life (e.g. how to take a taxi) and messages on cross-cultural communication.

Following consultations with 105 children and youth in Bulgaria, 10 youth leaders were identified to participate in information and training sessions on rights and obligations in **Bulgaria**, GBV response and referral pathways, educational services, the right to family reunification and information services. In 2021, capacity building for youth leaders will continue through peer-to-peer knowledge transfer.

### c) Working with LGBTIQ+ persons

In the **Netherlands**, UNHCR engaged with a large network of LGBTIQ+ persons of concern through the organization 'LGBT Asylum Support'. Regular meetings took place to discuss individual cases and identify priorities, as well as coordinate

activities surrounding the Pride 2020 event. UNHCR in **Spain** coordinated a LGBTIQ+ working group, which serves as a discussion forum on reception and integration issues for LGBTIQ+ persons. UNHCR also took part in seven training activities in Madrid, Melilla, Barcelona and Alicante, and actively promoted different LGBTIQ+ support groups led by different organizations and LGBTIQ+ oriented NGOs, including refugee-led organizations.

Together with UNFPA, UNHCR in **Turkey** co-leads coordination platforms with local NGOs and key refugee groups (LGBTIQ+, sex workers, persons living with/at risk of HIV) on capacity development, advocacy and awareness raising to enhance solidarity between local and refugee communities.

In **Montenegro**, UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Interior and NGOs to draft a leaflet on the rights of LGBTIQ+ asylum-seekers and refugees, and in the **Russian Federation**, UNHCR cooperated with LGBTIQ+ organizations that offer legal support, counselling, medical and psychological support and shelter to LGBTIQ+ persons of concern. In **Belgium**, a committee of LGBTIQ+ refugees was established as part of the pilot project for the Umbrella Refugee Committee in Brussels City.

**UNHCR and the Council of Europe** conducted a joint training on asylum applications based on sexual orientation, gender identity and religion, together with the Swiss Refugee Council and the Berner Rechtsberatungsstelle für Menschen in Not, with more than 185 legal professionals.

Training activities were also conducted by UNHCR **Italy**, which works closely with LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organizations and conducts advocacy work with UNAR (Italian Equity body), and by UNHCR **Austria**, where training was conducted for case workers, with the participation of LGBTIQ+ persons. A training for employees of the National Employment Service (NES) took place by UNHCR's partners in **Serbia**.

At regional level, the Bureau for Europe facilitated a session at EASO's Thematic Webinar on "The Protection of Applicants with Diverse Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" on 2 December 2020 and contributed to the "SOGICA Asylum Policy Roundtable" which took place on 15 September 2020.

#### d) Working with persons with disabilities

Support to persons with disabilities is mainstreamed into UNHCR's protection activities in the region. UNHCR also actively promotes the **early identification and referral of persons with disabilities** by government authorities, including through the use of the Washington Group Questions.

In **Spain**, UNHCR has initiated a collaboration with the Spanish committee representing persons with disabilities (CERMI) on referral, advocacy and adapted information provision. A survey to collect relevant information regarding the situation of persons of concern with disabilities has been designed together with CERMI and will inform the way forward for this work.

In **Ukraine**, UNHCR's partners work with **IDP-led organizations** who are supporting persons with disabilities and their families. This includes capacity building activities and mentoring. As part of the

COVID-19 response, IDPs with disabilities also received individual cash assistance.

In **Turkey**, UNHCR collaborated with a civil society organization for persons with disabilities at local level for small scale activities to support their access to services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In **Croatia and Montenegro**, assistance with access to services and rights is provided to refugees and asylum-seekers with disabilities, including psychosocial support and legal assistance. In Montenegro, refugees with disabilities from former Yugoslavia are also included in the Regional Housing Program, one which offers different kinds of housing solutions throughout the country.

In **Ireland**, UNHCR is engaged in the development of **reception standards and capacity building** activities of the authorities, which includes considerations for persons with disabilities in reception.

#### e) Working with older persons

UNHCR collaborates with the Directorate General for Disabled and the Elderly in **Turkey** to provide specific material support to older persons, as requested by the Directorate. UNHCR also provides cash support to older persons with specific needs.

In the **Ukraine**, older refugees and asylum-seekers have access to a medical assistance program and individual cash support. UNHCR also conducts targeted advocacy on access to pensions for IDPs.

Psychosocial support, legal assistance and, if needed, assistance with access to services, is available to older persons in **Croatia**, and UNHCR monitors and advises on the implementation of Regional Housing Programme, which has one sub-project targeting older persons of concern.

For older refugees from the former Yugoslavia, the Regional Housing Program in **Montenegro** includes the construction of two homes for older persons, one which is already completed. UNHCR also supports older stateless persons to obtain civic status documents through the Ministry of Interior.

## f) Working with stateless persons

In the **United Kingdom**, UNHCR collaborated with the Liverpool Law Clinic to interview 12 persons who have or are undergoing statelessness determination procedure to document their experience and seek feedback on how to improve the process.

UNHCR **Hungary** conducted a **mapping of the protection needs** of stateless persons and formulated policy recommendations to address the key gaps identified, including: access to economic and social rights, work and health care; lengthy statelessness determination procedures; lack of information on the protected status; and unfamiliarity regarding the documentation issued to stateless people.

In **Spain**, a stateless person is working with UNHCR as part of the **volunteer programme** and

has supported the mapping, assessment and engagement with the stateless community in Madrid. Some of the challenges identified through interviews with stateless persons included lengthy procedures; lack of information about the rights granted; limited access to legal assistance; and lack of work authorization. These will form part of UNHCR's ongoing advocacy efforts with the authorities.

In **Albania**, UNHCR's partner Tirana Legal Aid Society continued to provide legal support to stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness in pursuit of acquisition or confirmation of nationality.

UNHCR **Bulgaria** launched a website for stateless persons living in Bulgaria with the aim to provide specific information about the statelessness determination procedure in various languages (Bulgarian, Russian, English and Arabic), in addition to general information and information on legal assistance.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The webpage is available online at: <http://statelessness.bg/>

Sergio, 74, reviews invoices at the construction company his sons founded in Ibiza. Thanks to his current documentation as a stateless person, he is currently able to legally work in the company and is self-reliant. Spain, October 2020.





# Recommendations

In order to further strengthen AGD interventions across Europe, and with due weight to the 10 Core Actions of the AGD Policy and the need to adapt working modalities to the current context of COVID-19, the Regional Bureau and country offices will continue its efforts to:

1. Advocate for the **early identification and referral of persons with specific needs**, including through the use of the Washington Groups Questions, and for data collected by governments to be disaggregated by age, sex, legal status, and other diversity considerations.
2. Further **enhance participation and inclusion** through contextualized and adapted approaches to participatory assessments and by promoting participatory approaches to government counterparts and other stakeholders. UNHCR will also seek to strengthen its strategic engagement with refugee- and other POC-led organizations at regional and national level through providing visibility, networking and capacity building, where appropriate.
3. Continue to **strengthen communication and transparency** through the expansion of regional good practices and the use of digital/online tools, as well as through further piloting of information and communication needs assessments and the provision of (or advocacy for) information adapted and accessible to children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
4. Review and improve existing **feedback and response mechanisms** at country level and the information provided to persons of concern about such mechanisms, where needed.
5. Reinforce **organizational learning and adaptation** through more standardized approaches to the recording, compilation and response to requests, feedback and complaints from persons of concern, as well as by **sharing innovative and good practices across country operations**.
6. Under the commitments to advance gender equality:
  - A. Advocate for **gender parity and diversity considerations** (in particular the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons and persons with disability) among the POC volunteers, outreach workers, networks, and POC-led organizations that UNHCR engages with.
  - B. Continue to advocate for the **economic and financial inclusion of women and girls through an inclusive approach** for skills recognition, upskilling and job matching, as well as access to financial services, as part of RBE's integration strategy.
  - C. **Roll out the UNHCR GBV Policy**<sup>20</sup> in a manner adapted to the diverse operational contexts in Europe, with particular focus on: safety assessments; awareness raising; inclusion and access to national services; and enhanced data.

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence, 2020, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/5fa018914/unhcr-policy-prevention-risk-mitigation-response-gender-based-violence.html>

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Promising Practices from Europe

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