



Age, Gender and Diversity

Good Practices

UNHCR IN EUROPE

2019

INTRODUCTION

Age, gender and diversity (AGD) mainstreaming has long been upheld as an essential approach to understanding and responding to the needs of all persons of concern. Considerable efforts are made in Europe to integrate AGD considerations in operational planning, programme implementation and while engaging with governments in protection, advocacy and legal interventions. This report highlights a range of initiatives across the region in 2019 to illustrate this.

UNHCR 2018 AGD Policy Minimum Core Actions

AGD Inclusive Programming: The different capacities, needs, and exposure to protection risks of the women, men, girls, and boys with whom we work must be incorporated into assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. At a minimum, all data collected by UNHCR will be disaggregated by age and sex and by other diversity considerations, as contextually appropriate and possible, for purposes of analysis and programming.

In Europe, data regarding persons of concern is largely collected by governments rather than UNHCR. UNHCR advocates for data to be disaggregated by age, sex and other diversity considerations, where this does not take place already. Protection risks of different groups are considered at all stages of the programming cycle, and while advocating for a stronger protection environment for persons of concern.

A number of **information products with data analysis** sharing disaggregated data collected by governments are released, for example fact-sheets on [Refugee and Migrant Arrivals to Europe](#), [Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe](#), and [Key Data in Europe](#).

Consultations with persons of concern using an age, gender and diversity mainstreaming approach take place regularly across the region, including in reception facilities and sites with high concentrations of persons of concern. Country offices across the region, for example **Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Serbia** and **Turkey** integrate participatory assessments into routine reception monitoring exercises. In the **Russian Federation**, the office conducts outreach activities in areas with a high concentration of persons of concern based on Ministry of Interior and partner statistics. Information collected is used to inform UNHCR's advocacy and interventions at the national and regional level.

In **Greece**, data collection for persons of concern receiving UNHCR assistance was expanded in 2019 to include education, employment and skills in order to "match" asylum-seekers with relevant community support activities. The approach intends to build a community workforce to offer social support within communities and address psychosocial needs which cannot be met by existing services.

Participatory research took place in partnership with UNICEF and IOM in **Italy** on the specific needs of unaccompanied children turning 18, knowing this is an often-overlooked age group. The research was facilitated by Fondazione ISMU, in collaboration with the Universities of Catania and Roma Tre. Some 185 youth of concern were interviewed in the three regions of Latium, Lombardy and Sicily, and shared stories of the support received as well as challenges faced during this period of transition. A further 46 interviews were carried out with institutional stakeholders and volunteer guardians working closely with the youth. The resulting report [At a Crossroads: Unaccompanied and Separated Children in their Transition to Adulthood in Italy](#) documented positive practice as well as difficulties faced by unaccompanied children transitioning into adulthood, and made recommendations to various stakeholders including authorities, civil society and international organisations.

Participation and Inclusion: Women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully and are consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions. 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.

Across Europe persons of concern are engaged to ensure the priorities and capacities of women, men, girls and boys are taken into account in protection, assistance and solutions planning and in the implementation of activities.

Training on participatory assessments was jointly conducted with Fedasil, the reception agency in **Belgium**, for UNHCR and Fedasil staff to promote the use of joint consultations and participatory approaches by Fedasil in their operational work.

Throughout 2019, engagement with refugees was expanded in **Bulgaria** through outreach to homes, schools, and companies. UNHCR met with more than 100 asylum seekers and refugees through these visits, using the opportunity to identify problems faced by communities, as well as positive initiatives for integration. In addition, the office organized regular information sessions for over 150 persons on support for integration in all reception centers to bridge the gap between the reception and integration period when rec-

ognized refugees need to find housing, employment and learn the Bulgarian language.

Following a successful pilot period in 2018, partnership continued with INTERSOS in **Italy** in 2019 to support refugee-led organisations and initiatives promoting refugee participation. Aptly entitled “[PartecipAzione](#)”, the programme supported projects which enhance organisational capacity, promote social cohesion and/or strengthen opportunities for integration. The receipt of 92 project proposals speaks to the popularity of the initiative. Of these, 16 received funding for project activities and training, for example in communication, fundraising, project management and international protection. Winning organisations also participated in networking events to strengthen relationships between community-led organisations. Selected projects were diverse, ranging from historical and cultural tours for asylum-seekers and refugees, to information and legal counselling and story-telling events. More information about the 2019 project outcomes can be found in this [video](#).



PartecipAzione networking event in Italy.

A community center run by UNHCR partner Charity Center for Refugees in Chisinau, **Moldova** is an open space for refugees, asylum seekers and local community members, with socio-cultural counselling, mediation, employment advice, awareness raising and skills building activities. Its inclusive approach promotes social cohesion and community mobilization. While refugees and asylum seekers become acquainted with Moldovan culture and traditions, the value of diversity brought by refugees is also evident to host communities. On average in 2019, the center welcomed 120 visitors a month.

In **Ukraine**, small grants for Peaceful Coexistence Projects and Community Support Initiatives funded projects designed by displaced and local communities. Projects included infrastructure repair as well as community empowerment, including education, skills and capacity development to organise emergency response and advocate with local and national authorities. In 2019, 42 projects were supported including community activities and repairs at 12 community centers; 18 schools; 6 sportsgrounds; 2 playgrounds and libraries; 1 park and 1 football stadium.

Communication and Transparency: Women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds in all operations have access to timely, accurate, and relevant information on (i) their rights and entitlements, and (ii) UNHCR and its partners' programmes. 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.

The help.unhcr.org website is a refugee-facing platform established to provide refugees and asylum-seekers with critical information on their rights and obligations, in reader-friendly language. The site is a one-stop shop hosting information on asylum procedures and the range of available services in a country such as health, legal assistance, SGBV, child protection, LGBTI support, integration, education, birth registration, and support for voluntary repatriation. Sites have been established in **Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Turkey,**

and **Ukraine** in various languages including Arabic, English, Farsi, French, German, Greek, and Turkish. Similarly, in **Romania**, an online platform has been created with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) to provide asylum-seekers with country-specific information on their rights and obligations, including on asylum procedures, available services, and a map with contact information¹. Field testing and consultation with persons of concern takes place to obtain feedback on design and content.



WHO IS WHO IN THE CAMP?

THE KINDER- UND JUGENDHILFE

- Do you have a problem, e.g. with your health or someone has hurt you? Then the Kinder- und Jugendhilfe helps you.
- Later a specific person of the Kinder- und Jugendhilfe will help you. He will be your guardian, in German this is called Obsoengeberechtigter.
- You want to meet the Kinder- und Jugendhilfe? Please ask your care worker.

THE VMÖ FAMILY TRACING

- You don't know where your family is? VMÖ helps you. VMÖ asks questions about your family and tries to find them. VMÖ might find your family. He will tell you how to get in touch with your family or how to meet them.
- Sometimes VMÖ comes to you and asks you about your family. Sometimes the BFA-case worker has advised VMÖ to do so. This is called Family Tracing.
- You want to meet VMÖ Family Tracing? Please ask your care worker.

THE KINDER- UND JUGENDANWALTSCHAFT

- Do you have a major problem and your rights are violated? The Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft helps you.
- You want to meet the Kinder- und Jugendanwaltschaft? Please ask your care worker.

THE VMÖ VOLUNTARY RETURN COUNSELLING

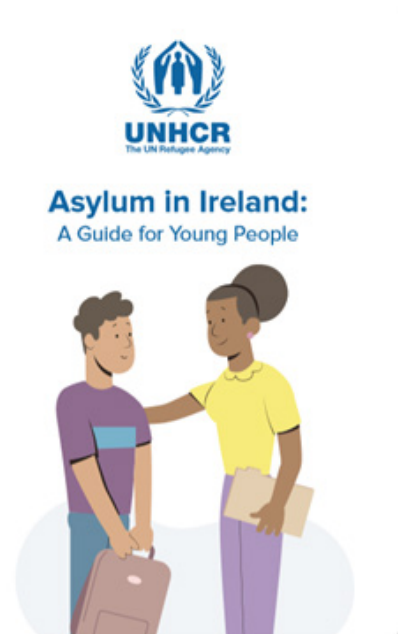
- You want to go back home? You don't want to continue your asylum procedure in Austria? VMÖ helps you, they will explain the procedure and advise you what to do.
- You want to meet VMÖ Voluntary Return Counselling? Please ask your care worker.

THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

- The representative of the Ministry of Interior is the head of the camp.
- The representative of the Ministry of Interior and his colleagues are responsible for your accommodation and care.

PLEASE NOTE: THE PERSONS ON THE FLYER CAN BE MEN OR WOMEN.

BETREUUNGSSTELLE OST



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Asylum in Ireland:
A Guide for Young People

Child-friendly information leaflets

Several offices have produced child-friendly information material, with pictures and simple language to share with unaccompanied and separated children, for example on asylum procedures, their rights within the national child protection system and under Dublin procedures. Written material has been produced in **Austria** and [Ireland](#), and child-friendly videos have been

made in [Ireland](#) and [Luxembourg](#) to prepare children for asylum procedures through animation.

In **Azerbaijan**, an orientation package of information has been developed in partnership with refugees, authorities and other stakeholders to provide information about asylum procedures and services for asylum seekers.

Feedback and Response: Formal and informal feedback from persons of concern is systematically received and responded to, and corrective action taken as appropriate. At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints.

In **Austria**, a qualitative assessment of reception arrangements was conducted with authorities and NGOs of nine provinces. The exercise looked at the availability of information on PSEA counselling and complaint mechanisms, and the existence of Codes of Conduct for reception facility staff. Subsequently, the office has advocated with provincial authorities and service providers to standardize practice relating to PSEA, including the introduction of Codes of Conduct, SOP for response and information dissemination amongst persons of concern.

In December 2019, key stakeholders were brought together in **Cyprus**, including refugees, refugee-led organisations, municipal authorities and civil society to discuss opportunities and challenges in relation to integration. The event provided a forum for refugees and refugee-led organisations to provide feedback on existing interventions supporting integration in Cyprus, and to identify joint action to address education, hous-

ing, discrimination, employment and vocational training issues.

In **Greece**, a Communication with Communities Task Force co-chaired by the Greek Reception Authority and UNHCR has centralised and strengthened complaints and feedback mechanisms for persons of concern on the mainland through the establishment of standard operating procedures. Complaints may be received in person or through complaints boxes; the standard operating procedures ensure each organisation working in reception facilities is aware of how to handle complaints received by persons of concern. The task force was established under a technical assistance project funded by the European Commission Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) and formalised through a Joint Declaration of Intent signed by the Ministry of Migration Policy, UNHCR, EASO and DG REFORM.

Organisational Learning and Adaptation: Interventions, planning, priority setting, course corrections, and evaluation are informed on an ongoing basis by the views of persons of concern. 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.

Offices across Europe regularly communicate and consult with persons of concern to ensure the priorities and capacities of women, men, girls and boys are taken into account in protection, assistance and solutions planning and in the implementation of activities. The participation of persons of concern takes place consistently, to seek feedback during the monitoring and eval-

uation of projects and ensure that continuing activities are informed by their views. For example, consultation of youth was a required feature of the small projects supported through the Youth Initiative Fund in Europe during monitoring and evaluation exercises, with adaptation and continuation of activities accordingly. Similarly, views obtained from consultations during the mapping



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Participatory assessments through community outreach in Germany

phase of pilot projects to enhance community outreach were used to inform subsequent measures, and led to different interventions than originally planned, as detailed below.

In 2018, UNHCR entered a partnership with UN Volunteers (UNV) to enhance communication and community engagement (CCE) through volunteer networks observed during the emergency in 2015-16. Four pilot countries (**France, Hungary, Spain and Sweden**) participated with the aim of considering sustainable models of two-way communication with refugees through volunteerism. The project evolved in 2019, based on the findings of an initial mapping exercise, to focus on two-way communication through refugee-led organisations and networks instead. Mapping and assessment took place in pilot countries through surveys, interviews and consultation with asylum-seekers and refugees. The findings were then validated through those consulted and an advisory group of key stakeholders. Each pilot country office will implement different measures based on the findings and recommendations of the mapping in their context.

In **France**, the office linked the pilot project with ongoing efforts through public information and external relations to foster refugee integration and combat xenophobia. Consultations with 200 organisations and 77 refugees took place in eight locations (Alsace, Bouches-du-Rhône, Calvados, Gironde, Occitanie, Paris, Puy-de-Dôme, and Rhône) where UNHCR already implements integration activities. In 2020, the findings of the mapping will be validated, and a refugee volunteer will be engaged and trained to coordinate

and support outreach and communication activities.

Interviews with persons of concern and organisations working with asylum-seekers and refugees in Budapest, **Hungary**, revealed a gap in outreach activities, and the need for a coherent outreach strategy. Consequently, the office employed multiple channels for outreach, systematically involving asylum-seekers and refugees when providing information and feedback. The coordination of outreach activities is now supported through a working group comprised of refugee coordinators from four organisations. The refugee coordinators have received training from UNHCR and the working group meets regularly to plan communication and outreach activities.

In **Spain**, consultation took place with 52 organisations and 39 refugees working with Syrian and Venezuelan communities in Madrid and Barcelona during the mapping phase. The findings suggested a lack of reliable and updated information for asylum-seekers and refugees, including about UNHCR, a limited engagement of refugees in volunteer activities and low rates of refugee consultation by NGOs and service providers. To address these concerns, multiple measures will be taken to strengthen communication with asylum-seekers and refugees, including a service map, newsletter, online dialogue platform and refugee focal point volunteers. The office has also used the mapping as an opportunity to identify organisations engaging with refugees, as well as asylum-seekers and refugees themselves who are willing to coordinate with UNHCR for

consultation and outreach with other community members.

In **Sweden**, the mapping found that many organisations are engaging with refugees, with outreach and communication conducted most effectively through online platforms and face to face interaction such as meetings and seminars. Collaboration between NGOs and associations is strong, however it was widely reported that refugee-led organisations have limited engagement with municipal authorities. In fact, it was found

that there is more advocacy and engagement on refugee issues through organisations which are not led by refugees due to their stronger capacity and sustained funding. For this reason, a second phase of the project has commenced, where the office will assess refugee engagement at the municipal level in four locations with a high concentration of refugees, with the objective of ultimately recommending measures to strengthen community engagement of municipal actors with refugees.



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Discussions during an SGBV Roundtable in Malta.

Advancing Gender Equality

Women and Girls have Access to Comprehensive SGBV Prevention and Response Services: At a minimum, UNHCR operations will adopt and implement SGBV standard operating procedures, operationalizing the four main referral pathways for all survivors (safety/security, legal, medical and psychosocial) and promote the same with partners, including governments.

UNHCR takes measures to prevent and respond to SGBV on the assumption that it takes place in all contexts of displacement. In the European context, offices promote safe and appropriate access to national services, effective identification and referral, and coordination between asylum and migration authorities and service

providers in line with concerns reported by practitioners working with survivors and interagency SGBV guidelines. In addition, feedback from communities on the causes of SGBV are consistently taken into consideration when designing prevention activities.

In **Belarus**, training for frontline officials took place in coordination with the Training Academy of Ministry of Interior on gender-sensitive approaches, identification and prevention of SGBV incidents, and to produce SGBV information materials for persons of concern. In 2019, training reached 63 people including immigration officers, border guards, reception staff, social workers, and psychologists who come into contact with persons of concern.

Offices continue to facilitate access to legal assistance for SGBV survivors. For example, in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, legal assistance and representation is provided to SGBV survivors, also in relation to violations which took place during the conflict of the 1990s. In the **Russian Federation**, the office has established a cooperation frame-

work with the national legal assistance network to extend SGBV services to persons of concern.

In **Georgia** a multi-service community center provides SGBV prevention and response activities, including legal and social counselling, cash-based interventions, psycho-social support, life skills and language courses and awareness sessions. In addition, UNHCR and UN Women facilitated a two-day workshop for state asylum, integration and SGBV service providers, civil society and refugee women. The workshop enabled information exchange and the identification of challenges to strengthen a coordinated response. Participants also finalised information material on SGBV services for persons of concern.



Girls participating in SGBV awareness-raising activities in Poland. Photo credit: Fundacja Feminoteka

A series of roundtables on SGBV held with partners in **Malta** in 2018 and 2019 has resulted in the appointment of SGBV focal points in relevant organisations, the mapping and identification of gaps in services, as well as the exchange of good practices and challenges faced by stakeholders. The piloting of a mapping questionnaire by the office has contributed to a centralized directory of services and the establishment of safe referral pathways.

Two SGBV initiatives were implemented with US [Safe from the Start](#) funding in 2019. In **Poland** awareness sessions were organised for asylum-seekers, coaching sessions for reception

staff and a workshop for municipal interdisciplinary teams operating in areas hosting large numbers of asylum-seekers. The sessions were conducted using *Wen-Do*, a form of self-defense for women, integrating role-play scenarios of violence. Going forward, the office will collaborate with authorities to expand such activities for asylum-seekers living outside reception facilities. A peer educator programme in **Serbia** sensitised a group of unaccompanied children on SGBV core concepts and services, to enable them to share information with other children about the types and causes of SGBV.

Women and Girls Participate Equally and Meaningfully in all Decision-making, Community Management and Leadership Structures, and Committees of Persons of Concern: At a minimum UNHCR will ensure 50 per cent female participants in management and leadership structures under UNHCR’s authority, and will advocate the same with partners, including governments.

Ensuring female participation in management and leadership structures in Europe is challenging as most UNHCR offices do not directly coordinate nor organise such structures. Nevertheless, advocacy takes place for the participation of women and girls, and for their views to be heard in all relevant fora, including with government authorities and service providers.

The expansion of a Youth Coalition was supported in **Armenia** in early 2019, to promote youth empowerment and self-reliance as well as a platform for exchange between a group of local and displaced youth. The Coalition initially comprised five members in 2018 and expanded to 30 members in 2019 - 16 female and 14 male participants, aged between 17 and 28 - among them asylum-seeking, refugee, displaced Syrian and local youth. The Youth Coalition has participat-

ed in study visits to state agencies and national institutions, as well as meetings with community leaders. It also carries out self-driven initiatives, for example a voluntary ‘refugees helping refugees’ mentorship scheme.

A Women’s Committee was established on the island of Chios in **Greece** to support SGBV prevention, response and risk mitigation activities at the Reception and Identification Center (RIC). The Committee was formed by 10 women of diverse backgrounds, who met during SGBV awareness sessions conducted at the RIC. The terms of reference of the Committee include facilitating referrals for services, organizing prevention activities, and conducting outreach to raise awareness and disseminate information about services and activities in the RIC.



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Syrian refugee Hadidga, 72, sits outside her makeshift shelter in Vial on the Greek island of Chios.

A series of events were organised in **Kosovo**² to consult women from Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and host communities about protection risks, capacities and solutions for the daily lives of ethnic minority returnee women. The events were attended by the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return, UNDP, UN Women, and partner organisations Advancing Together and the Kosovo Center for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims. Issues that emerged included SGBV, a lack of representation and limited opportunities for economic empowerment. Women who participated in the events welcomed the opportunity to express their views openly to people and organisations considered to be change-makers in Kosovo.

Community Support Initiatives took place with nearly 200 IDP and 20 refugee community groups in **Ukraine**, including a range of activities to mobilise and empower communities, building on the education, skills and capacities of affected populations. Skills and experience were shared on a variety of topics, including community mobilization and empowerment, self-management, establishment of an inclusive leadership structure, complaint mechanisms, platforms for exchange with authorities or other relevant

actors, and a mechanism enabling community participation in government decision-making on measures that affect them. Female representation in community management structures is high, comprising at least 50% or more in both IDP and refugee contexts. UNHCR facilitates exchange visits and workshops for communities to learn from each other.

UNHCR conducted a participatory assessment in 2019 with 143 refugee women resettled to the **United Kingdom** within the previous five years through the Vulnerable Persons and Children's Resettlement Schemes and the Gateway Protection Programme. The assessment considered how resettlement has served as a tool of protection and durable solution for women. Participants originated from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, the State of Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Uganda. While recognizing the effectiveness of resettlement as a durable solution, the assessment also noted the need for targeted support for resettled refugee women, enhanced volunteering opportunities and innovative ways to increase accessibility to English language lessons. It also recommended measures to promote more gender-sensitive resettlement processes.

Women and Girls have Equal Access to Economic Opportunities, including Decent Work, Quality Education and Health Services: At a minimum, UNHCR will ensure women and girls have equal access to livelihood, education and health programmes it delivers, and advocate with partners, including Governments, for their equal access to public services.

UNHCR direct implementation of livelihood, education and health programming in the region of Europe is limited, however opportunities for women and girls are consistently considered in both operational and advocacy initiatives.

Between March 2018 and October 2019, UNHCR **Georgia** partnered with UN Women to enhance economic opportunities and self-reliance for women of concern. The project featured a 30-hour course facilitated by the Ministry of Finance Training Academy designed to support women to start their own businesses. Some 37 women attended the course and 23 women were subsequently provided with small grants to support their new business ideas, ranging from USD 450 to 1880. The project responded to findings of the 2018 Needs Assessment of Individuals under International

Protection in Georgia which revealed that there are significantly more male refugees engaged in entrepreneurial activities than females, despite the will to do so.

With training and mentoring support, female community groups in **Ukraine** have established social entrepreneurship projects, sometimes with financial contributions from the local authorities. For example, in Zakarpattia region, a women's club offering life skills training for women from IDP, refugee and local communities has been established with a local employment center. In Kyiv, a group of ten women was trained by a legal partner to offer paralegal support to newly arrived female asylum-seekers. A community tutors' network also provides support to other women in the community to access social and medical services.

Targeted AGD Programming

In addition to ensuring AGD and community-based approaches, offices in the region have implemented and supported targeted AGD programming, taking into account specific needs and protection risks faced by children, youth, stateless and LGBTI populations, amongst others. Below is a sample of activities taken forward by UNHCR offices in Europe.

Activities Targeting Children

Priorities for child protection in Europe include strengthened protection for unaccompanied children and child-friendly asylum procedures, including the provision of child-friendly information. Efforts have been made in collaboration with stakeholders at the national and regional levels, including government authorities, UNICEF and civil society partners to advocate for and strengthen capacity in care arrangements, guardianship, and asylum processes.

With the support of EU DG Justice, UNHCR implemented a project building on the UNHCR, UNICEF and IRC publication [The Way Forward to Strengthened Policies and Practices for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Europe \(2017\)](#) with a focus on western Europe,

including **Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom**. The project was implemented between November 2017 and June 2019, aiming to strengthen best interests' procedures for children of concern and improve reception systems for UASC at regional and national level. Various activities were completed through this initiative including promoting access to national child protection systems, the development of handbooks and training material for guardians, assessment and monitoring of reception conditions and care arrangements, and support for child-friendly asylum procedures. Children themselves were consulted through each stage of the project in all participating countries.



© UNHCR/Daphne Tolis

Syrian children give the thumbs-up at the government-run Vial reception centre on the island of Chios.

UNHCR partnered with the Lumos Foundation, IOM and UNICEF throughout 2018 and 2019 to undertake a mapping and analysis of alternative care arrangements provided to unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in **Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands** and **Spain**, representing countries of arrival, transit and destination. The analysis presents challenges and positive practices, highlighting a high reliance on institutional care in the region, and the need to strengthen access to national child protection systems for refugee and migrant children.

In **Bulgaria**, advocacy and coordination with authorities successfully led to the inclusion of two refugee children in the Children's Council at the State Agency for Child Protection. The Council is a mechanism promoting children's participation in policy making, with representatives from all administrative districts of the country.

An extensive review of guardianship was conducted in **Germany**, identifying several gaps, including knowledge of the asylum system. To address this, the office developed training materials to better explain and illustrate the legal pathways for UASC within the German asylum system. Consultations were held with 16 stakeholders including NGO, youth welfare and asylum authority staff, to identify gaps in the existing curriculum. The resulting training handbook for guardians "Die Vormundschaft für unbegleitete Minderjährige", focuses on the best interests of UASC and asylum related issues. Feedback on this training package was also sought from a range of stakeholders, to ensure its accuracy and clarity of the content.

In **Greece**, UNHCR works with EKKA, the child protection authority, and METAdrasi, a Greek NGO, to support guardianship services for unaccompanied children. 45 guardians and related support staff were supported in 2019 in the six Reception and Identification Centers on the islands (Chios, Evros, Kos, Lesbos, Leros and Samos) and Athens and Thessaloniki on the mainland. The guardians serve as an authorized representative for unaccompanied children in relation to administrative processes and ensuring best interests are considered in all actions con-

cerning the child.

In May 2019, UNHCR **Italy** published the outcomes of their partnership with the Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents (AGIA), the Ombudsperson for Children, to promote child participation. Joint participatory assessments were conducted with over 200 unaccompanied children in 11 regions across Italy, including children residing in reception facilities. Information and recommendations from the children were presented in AGIA's Annual Report to Parliament, including in relation to the right to participate, age assessment, and reception conditions for UAC. Further information about the initiative and children's views can be found at this [link](#).

Capacity building events were held with key stakeholders in several countries to raise awareness and share good practices in child protection. In May 2019, the Council of Europe and UNHCR organised a two-day seminar in **Portugal** on the "Effective Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children in Portugal" to raise awareness and share good practices amongst key stakeholders. The event was attended by Portuguese authorities, including asylum, migration and child protection officials, civil society and legal representatives. Topics discussed included age assessment, best interests within asylum procedures, child-friendly information, guardianship, as well as jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights.. In Serbia, a roundtable was organised jointly by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, UNHCR and UNICEF in March 2019 entitled "Protection of Unaccompanied and Separated Refugee, Asylum Seeking and Migrant Children – A Call of Action". The roundtable covered several issues relating to unaccompanied children, including age assessment, care arrangements and guardianship.

In **North Macedonia**, strong efforts have been made to include asylum-seeking and refugee children in national child protection systems. Following consultations with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, UNICEF and civil society, UNHCR supported training and the development of a handbook to provide a common framework for implementation of best interests' procedures for social workers in the country. The handbook was



UNHCR Netherlands event to highlight the situation of unaccompanied and separated children, featuring a screening of a documentary about a young refugee adapting to life in Hungary, after fleeing forced marriage in Somalia, followed by a panel discussion. Photo credit: UNHCR/B. Routledge

finalised by the Ministry, in coordination with the Institute for Social Affairs, in December 2019.

Activities Targeting Youth

UNHCR continued its partnership with the [European Youth Parliament](#) (EYP), an organisation which brings together young people from across Europe to debate current affairs in a parliamentary setting. The EYP is a network of independent associations present in 40 European countries, which organises over 500 events every year. In 2019, UNHCR supported the participation of refugee youth at EYP events in **Armenia, Germany** and **Spain**, while also providing technical expertise on topics discussed by youth related to UNHCR's mandate.

UNHCR's **Youth Initiative Fund** was launched for the second time at the regional level in Europe in 2019. Small grants were awarded to 11 youth-led projects implemented in 8 countries across Europe: **Armenia, Italy, Georgia, Greece, Kosovo², Serbia, Spain** and **Ukraine**. Projects were innovative and dynamic, including for example formation of a youth coalition in Armenia, journalism workshops and income generation initiatives in Greece, and creation of an IT hub in Ukraine. Requirements for project submissions included a strong component of community engagement, with youth leading every stage of project management from design to monitoring, to ensure projects related to the needs and interests ex-

pressed by youth, but also to build upon their skills.

Educational Activities

In 2017, a set of **teacher training materials** was developed on the topic of refugees, asylum and migration, in order to encourage the inclusion of asylum-seeking and refugee students in their classrooms, offering support to address psychosocial support needs, language and cultural barriers. The toolkit has been further disseminated, with a particular focus on Central Europe in 2018 and 2019, including translation into Bulgarian, Czech, Romanian and Slovak. Teacher training took place in **Bulgaria, Romania** and **Slovakia**, in collaboration with national Ministries of Education³.

In **France**, UNHCR has developed a project in Calvados region middle schools with refugees and in collaboration with a wide range of local partners including local authorities, school staff and local NGOs. The project comprises a one-day program of activities in each middle school during which students interact and listen to refugee stories, eat a meal cooked by refugee chefs, and participate in different workshops led by refugees in their fields of expertise for example music, drawing, journalism and cooking. The activities reached 3,267 students in 2019, strengthening understanding of the importance of refugee protection and integration. UNHCR

provided school staff with training material and guidance to equip them to speak about forced displacement in their classes. The material was developed in collaboration with teachers and refugee volunteers. UNHCR will work with the Ministry of Education to expand the project at a national level⁴.

In the **Russian Federation**, access to education can be challenging for children in regions such as Moscow, where enrolment takes place through an online portal requiring comprehensive information including tax references and social security numbers, which asylum-seekers may not have. UNHCR regularly intervenes to support individual access to education for children through schools' visits and outreach to school management.

In 2019, 899 refugee youth received [DAFI scholarships](#) in the region (17 in **Azerbaijan**, 20 in the **Russian Federation**, 852 in **Turkey**, and 10 in **Ukraine**) to pursue higher education opportunities. DAFI is UNHCR's tertiary education scholarship programme for refugee youth to study in their countries of asylum, empowering young women and men equally to contribute knowledge, skills and leadership to their communities.

In September 2019, UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM released an **interagency advocacy brief** on

[Access to Education for Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe](#), calling on European States to increase resources and practical support for school systems to ensure refugees, asylum-seeking and migrant children can access and remain in quality education. Obstacles highlighted in the brief include insufficient financial resources, limited school places, language barriers and limited psycho-social support and remedial classes.

Activities Targeting Stateless People

Two country-wide status verification exercises were conducted in **Albania** and **Montenegro**, to take stock of persons at risk of statelessness. The exercise facilitated the identification and follow-up of individual cases, as well as broader advocacy with local and national authorities.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNHCR actively engaged members of Roma communities to build trust and facilitate identification of individuals requiring assistance in obtaining birth registration and confirmation of citizenship. In cooperation with municipal level authorities, the legal aid NGO Vasa Prava BiH and Roma representatives organized focus group discussions to emphasize the importance of birth and citizenship registration for all persons at risk of statelessness. Roma mediators conducted outreach, providing infor-



Awareness sessions led by refugees in French schools. Photo credit: UNHCR France

mation and awareness raising, as well as identifying and referring undocumented individuals for legal assistance.

In November 2019, on the occasion of the 2019 #IBelong Campaign anniversary, a new report [The Impact on Statelessness on Access to Human Rights in Italy, Portugal and Spain](#) was launched, drawing on testimonies of stateless persons, persons at risk of statelessness and formerly stateless persons, as well as contributions by civil society and authorities in **Italy, Portugal and Spain**. The report highlights the positive efforts made by these countries to end statelessness, as well as the continued challenges faced in accessing rights and services.

In the **Russian Federation**, coordination took place with the Ministry of Interior and legal assistance partners to facilitate the release and regularization of the status of almost 300 stateless persons in detention. In addition, the office partnered with the Moscow State University to raise awareness of statelessness and procedures available to regularize status during two short courses, reaching 40 professors and 120 students from different universities.

Activities Targeting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex Individuals

Within the framework of the quality assurance project “Bridge – Cooperation in Asylum Matters”, UNHCR **Austria** facilitated three trainings for adjudicators in 2019 on claims to refugee status based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. The first training targeted judges of the Federal and Supreme Administrative Courts and was facilitated in cooperation with the Austrian NGO Queer Base, which offers legal advice and dedicated housing facilities for LGBTI asylum-seekers. The remaining two workshops targeted officials of the first instance asylum authority and were conducted in cooperation with UNHCR Strasbourg and the Council of Europe. Presentations and working groups at all sessions focused on UNHCR Guidelines and international standards, terminology, credibility assessments, and relevant judgements of the European Court of Justice, the European

Court of Human Rights and national Supreme Courts. The training received positive feedback, and the asylum authority has requested similar workshops over the next three years, in order to train as many asylum officials as possible. The project is co-funded by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

Through the European Youth Initiative Fund, a project entitled “Deconstruct the Difference” was developed by the LGBTI NGO ACATHI in Barcelona, **Spain**, creating a safe space for LGBTI youth. The space is used for activities to develop capacities, self-awareness and interpersonal skills, to enhance confidence and the engagement of LGBTI refugees.

The Bureau for Europe co-facilitated a EASO consultative forum on gender-related persecution in July 2019. The forum was an opportunity to learn about challenges and positive practices experienced by front line service providers, and to share information and tools about UNHCR guidelines and international standards on sexual orientation and gender identity, and sexual and gender-based violence.

Activities Targeting Other Persons with Specific Needs

In **Azerbaijan**, support continued for urban refugees through multi-purpose cash grants, applying criteria to target the most in need in accordance with standard operating procedures. Cases are assessed individually on an annual basis, or if specific needs arise in the interim, following which there may be an eligibility verification through the national Cash-Based Interventions Commission. Post-distribution monitoring takes place to seek feedback and enhance targeting in future.

The office in **Turkey** supported the Directorate General of Migration Management to register and verify Syrian nationals under temporary protection in 2019, including the implementation of a functioning system for the identification and referral of persons with specific needs. Protection Desks at provincial offices for registration are jointly run by government and UNHCR staff

and facilitate referrals and the provision of information to persons of concern. The office also worked with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) to expand national support schemes for persons with specific needs to include refugees. Taking into account the broad scope of the Emergency Social Safety Net scheme (ESSN) implemented by the MoFLSS, UNHCR revised its cash-based interventions to target a smaller number of persons with specific protection needs, who would not be covered by the ESSN.

The suspension of pensions and social benefits for persons believed to reside in non-government controlled areas in **Ukraine** has had a negative impact on persons with specific needs, particularly older persons, persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and female-headed house-

holds. UNHCR provides support to persons with specific needs, including case management, referral, and one-time material assistance, based on established standard operating procedures.

The **United Kingdom** introduced a pilot Alternatives to Detention programme in 2019, which was rolled out for vulnerable women detained in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Center. UNHCR worked closely with the UK Home Office and their partner the Action Foundation on the design and implementation of the projects, advocating in particular for the use of alternatives for vulnerable persons of concern, as well as stronger systems for identification of individuals with specific needs, including through systematic use of vulnerability assessment tools.



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Maya Ghazal, 20, pictured before her first solo flight, at The Pilot Centre, in Denham, United Kingdom.

Five Priority Areas to Further Strengthen AGD Interventions in Europe

1. AGD Inclusive Planning: Disaggregation of Data

While UNHCR is not the primary actor collecting information in Europe, the need for data to be disaggregated to reflect diversity, and the specific risks and needs of persons of concern is consistently reported across the region. The extent of certain protection risks, for example sexual and gender-based violence and child detention, remain unknown in the absence of such information. Advocacy will continue for the collection of disaggregated data to better understand the protection needs of persons of concern and consequent interventions required.

2. Approaches to Sexual and Gender Based Violence

While many operations have prioritised and deployed efforts on SGBV prevention and response, there remain gaps in contextual awareness and specific challenges faced by persons of concern in order to tailor UNHCR interventions more effectively. A compilation and analysis of information collected at the country level shared by offices in 2019 will take place in early 2020. In addition, UNHCR's new SGBV Policy will be rolled out, in a manner suitable to the context in Europe, through pilot safety assessments and the implementation of small projects in a selection of countries.

3. Equal Access to Economic Opportunities, including Decent Work, Quality Education and Health Services for Women and Girls

Comprehensive information is not available regarding women's and girls' access to education, health and economic activities across Europe. While UNHCR has limited direct programming related to such services in the region, an enhanced analysis is needed for the organisation to target its interventions and ensure equal access for women and girls.

4. Communication and Community Engagement

A variety of initiatives have taken place in several countries to engage communities using participatory and AGD approaches. Reflecting the diversity of contexts within Europe, a wide range of approaches have been adopted. It is important that all UNHCR offices take steps to reinforce direct and two-way communication with persons of concern, reflecting global strategic priorities, and to ensure that our work - including advocacy interventions - is informed by the views of persons of concern. Despite the precariousness of their circumstances, refugees - and refugee communities - often manifest a profound sense of agency, both in terms of initial decision-making and in managing future aspirations. The emergence of strong refugee networks and refugee-led organizations in many parts of Europe is testament to their collective resilience and potential to influence action at local and municipal levels. UNHCR, by virtue of its protection mandate and a depth of institutional good practice in diverse contexts, is uniquely positioned to amplify refugee voices and support their direct engagement with local authorities. In the second half of 2019, the Division of International Protection of UNHCR supported a mapping initiative in the region to understand how UNHCR currently engages with refugees and refugee-led networks. This exercise will inform the way forward at a national and regional level, and in collaboration with persons of concern, in 2020.

5. Access to National Systems and Targeted Approaches for Persons with Specific Needs

Access to national systems for persons of concern with specific needs continues to be a challenge noted across the region for a range of reasons, including language barriers, practical obstacles such as transportation, and availability of information. Further reporting is required on measures being taken to strengthen and facilitate access to national support systems for persons with specific needs, including persons with disabilities and the elderly. Child protection systems are also of critical importance in relation to unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR will continue to take measures, along with relevant partners such as IOM and UNICEF, to address this challenge.

While noting areas requiring improvement, it is worth highlighting that many UNHCR country offices in Europe operate in largely urban contexts where authorities are the main or only actors delivering assistance to persons of concern. Community management and leadership structures are not as apparent or accessible as they tend to be in camp-based contexts. UNHCR resources are limited, with some countries completely covered through Regional Representations, and others with small numbers of staff. Consequently, community-based approaches and direct engagement with communities is more challenging than in contexts where UNHCR staff engage with persons of concern for direct service provision. Nevertheless, while engagement has traditionally targeted authorities for advocacy on a range of legal and policy issues, a shift towards more operational and community-based approaches both directly and within existing advocacy efforts has been made over the past few years, and should be sustained. Engagement with communities is increasingly perceived as an essential part of our daily work, also by ensuring advocacy interventions are informed by the views of persons of concern.

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Endnotes

1. The platform, available in English, French, Arabic, Pashto and Kurdish, can be accessed at <http://jrsromania.ro/>
2. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence
3. The teacher toolkit is available at www.unhcr.org/teachers-toolkit.html
4. Further information can be accessed at <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2018/10/5bd7210e4/syrian-duo-teaches-french-schoolchildren-rapping.html> and <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/11/5a0adb334/food-festival-gives-french-schoolchildren-taste-refugee-life.html>