



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY-JUNE 2021





ABOUT JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

Jesuit Refugee Service in South-East Europe is a part of JRS International, a non-profit humanitarian organization whose mission is to accompany, serve and advocate the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS was founded in 1980, and in our region is present since 1993, and currently it covers Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo.

According to the Jesuit way of proceeding, which emphasizes inculturation and adaptation to the local context, but also a pragmatic and efficient way of dealing with challenges, we seek to operate in the same way. We have adapted and continue to adapt ourselves to the situations and needs in particular countries, and we try to serve the needs of the beneficiaries in a most concrete way, precondition of which is to know well them and their situation. Although the countries in our region are part of the same, so-called Balkan route, in each of them there are different aspects that are still to be developed, and where JRS, again according to its Jesuit inspiration – to be at the frontiers, feels invited to contribute.

That is why, as seen from this report, we operate in a variety of ways: from assisting refugees in refugee camps or outside of them, advocating asylum seekers, helping people locked in detention centers, to caring for comprehensive and fast integration in our societies. The context in which we work is dynamic and challenging, but we continue to strive to live up to the vision of universal brotherhood, as proposed by Pope Francis and our founder Pedro Arrupe.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

 @JRSbih

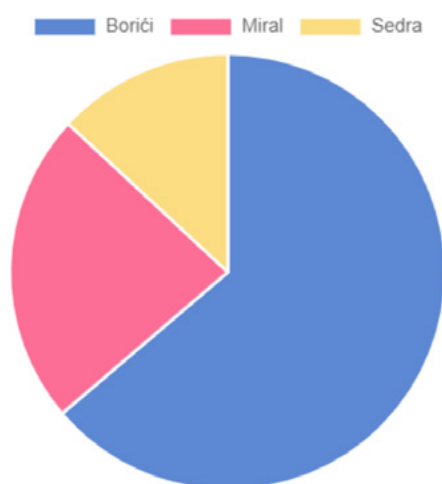
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PROJECTS

MEDICAL ESCORT

As part of the project "Provided access to health services and protection of human rights for asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants in BiH", 16 cultural mediators are working as translators at the temporary reception centers (TRC) Ušivak, Blažuj, Borići, Sedra, and Miral. The Jesuit Refugee Service in Bosnia and Herzegovina has native speakers of Arabic, Urdu, Pashto, Farsi, Hindi, Persian, English, and Bosnian. The total number of transports in June in the Una-Sana Canton (USC) was 298 and in the Sarajevo Canton 58.

In addition to translating in a temporary reception center, we have made our capacities available to public authorities in the USC. We have done translations for institutions such as USC Ministry of the Interior, USC Cantonal Prosecutor's Office, USC Cantonal Court, Service for Foreigner's affairs, Bihać Municipal Court, Velika Kladuša Municipal Court, and the Free Legal Aid Service as well as private lawyers. The total number of hours of translations in June in the USC was 17 hours and 43 minutes.



Value	Frequency	Percentage
Borići	190	63.76
Miral	69	23.15
Sedra	39	13.09

Medical Escort USC May 2021.

FROM HELLO TO GOODBYE

The aim of this project is to support cultural integration, social inclusion, and to improve the quality of life. It also tries to prepare refugees and migrants for the Western labor market. Targeted groups for this project include refugees and migrants from “hello to goodbye” through the “leave no one behind” approach, as well as the local community and the general public.

Currently, as part of the project, we are holding Bosnian language and informatics workshops at TRC Miral, IT workshops at TRC Borići and a sewing course at TRC Sedra. Also, as part of the project, we conduct social workshops on all important dates, and we organize sports meetings in all centers.



Activities in TRC Borići



Activities in TRC Borići

Activities in TRC Sedra



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

After the fire at camp Lipa in December 2020, the number of migrants who were without any fixed accommodation started to grow, and reached in certain periods over 3.000 people in the USC. This situation urged JRS to react, and we've started outreach activities. They consist of distribution of food (FI) and non-food items (NFI), so to restore at least a bit of human dignity to those who are stranded without any means of survival.

The NFIs included clothes, hygiene items, sleeping bags, backpacks, shoes, jackets, and raincoats. In June JRS outreach team distributed 467 FI and 809 NFI kits (each kit is calculated for 5 persons).

Our staff was helped by more than 50 volunteers, mainly from Italy. We've received many valuable donations, principally of food and clothes, but also a car for our activities – Kia Sorento.



NEWS FROM THIS PERIOD

- In the first half of 2021, 7,775 new migrant entries were registered (15% more than in 2020), but it is estimated that the number of arrivals in the country - also consisting of people who do not register - is much greater.
- Within the TRCs, the migrant population at the end of May 2021 was made up of 77% single men, 18% families with children, 5% unaccompanied minors. 96% of the population is male. 41% come from Pakistan, 24% from Afghanistan, 10% from Bangladesh, followed by Iran, Iraq, Morocco and Syria.
- As of 23 July 2021, the number of people inside the centers was 3,614, while at least 1,876 people live outside the official system, mostly sleeping in makeshift shelters or occupying dilapidated houses, old factories, etc. Of the people living outside the reception centers, it is estimated that 81% are in the USC.
- The strict border controls by the Croatian police severely limit the possibilities of crossing the border and the violence that migrants face when attempting to do so is widely registered: in 2021 alone, according to the Danish Refugee Council, at least 5,565 people were illegally sent back from Croatia to BiH, by use of force and coercive means, among them also women and children.



TRC Lipa



JRS organized a visit to Orthodox church



JRS humanitarian assistance



TRC Miral - World Refugee Day

- On the occasion of World Mother Language Day, in February, JRS organized workshops for refugee children and their parents in TRC Borići. They taught JRS staff some basic phrases used in everyday communication in Urdu, Pashtu, Farsi, Hindi, and Arabic, while in turn, the JRS staff taught them some basic phrases in Bosnian. The workshop ended with playing fun games, and the minors received occasional gifts.
- On May 13, JRS distributed gift packages for underage camp beneficiaries in TRC Sedra on the occasion of Eid. We also treated minors with traditional cakes of their countries of origin.
- On the occasion of World Refugee Day, in TRC Borići for the youngest beneficiaries, JRS organized activities with the artist Raif Ferhatović from Bihać, who with his tricks and performance brightened the day for all beneficiaries of the camp. The continuation of the activities of JRS followed in TRC Miral where together with the partner organizations IOM and Žene s Une we organized sports activities and the Magic show for the camp beneficiaries.
- In a series of activities on the occasion of World Refugee Day, JRS organized a round table. It was titled "Paths" and was organized in hotel Opal in Bihać. It was the first event of that kind in Bosnia, which gathered all key stakeholders involved with migrants, but also representatives of migrants that live in the camps and outside of them. They all had the opportunity to share their experiences, desires, and problems. With this JRS stated its role as a bridge between beneficiaries and the organizations that help them.
- The temporary reception center Sedra was closed on June 29, 2021, and the beneficiaries were relocated to TRC Ušivak and TRC Borići.



TRC Sedra celebrating Eid



Round table - World Refugee Day

- JRS did Informatics courses for beneficiaries in TRC Borići and TRC Miral. This will aid in their further journey to their destination countries. Some of the most important computer skills to learn to include the following: Operating systems (Windows and macOS), Office suites (Microsoft Office, G Suite), Presentation software (PowerPoint, Keynote), Spreadsheets (Excel, Google Spreadsheets, etc.), Communication and collaboration tools (Slack, Skype, etc.).
- JRS organized Sewing courses in TRC Sedra. Sewing lets refugees express themselves through their creativity. From selecting the pattern and fabric to putting the finishing touches, every aspect of this activity allows them to be creative while designing their own clothing.



Informatics course



Sewing course

CROATIA



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
CROATIA

 @JRSizbjeglice

 @JRSizbjeglice

PROJECTS

JRS AND UNHCR PROJECT OF BRINGING REFUGEES AND LOCAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TOGETHER, BUILDING MUTUAL TRUST AND COEXISTENCE – JUNE 2021. / REFUGEE DAY

On June 10 JRS organized activities in Split which began with a prayer and Holy Mass celebrated by the director Fr. Stanko Perica, SJ. The prayer was intended for the refugees and the local community, in order to raise consciousness among the members of the community, and encourage hospitality and compassion. After the Holy Mass, the employees of JRS presented the project and the work of the organization and answered the questions of the faithful, who were around 100.

Yazdan, a young refugee from Iran, shared his extremely impressive and authentic testimony about his refugee journey and new life in Croatia, which greatly impressed all participants in the event. Young refugees who have been living in Split for four years, have also introduced themselves briefly. Although they are not Christians, they expressed a willingness to attend the event. They wanted to get to know the local community better and to connect with their neighbors. These young men had previously shared their negative experiences in Split, such as discrimination, hate speech, and non-acceptance. JRS encourages long-term cooperation and openness of the local community to refugees so that the community can continue to act independently to reduce negative reaction of the local population to the young refugees living among them, in their city of Split.



CHANGE: Think, meet, act, change

CHANGE is a project coordinated by JRS Europe and implemented in 9 European countries: Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. The goal of the project is to educate young people on the positive contributions of refugees to society and to encourage them to make a change in their schools and local communities.

CHANGE, through a defined 6-stage educational course, aims to encourage students to think critically on the subject of refugees and migration, to distinguish facts from opinions, and to recognize prejudices and stereotypes. By giving students meaningful knowledge, experiences, encounters, and new perspectives, CHANGE seeks to form young people for the role of building a society in which everyone is welcome and has the opportunity to participate. CHANGE also provides a platform for refugees to share their stories directly with students, enabling refugees to speak in classrooms, share their experience of living in Europe, as well as their hopes and dreams for the future.

In the first 6 months of 2021, JRS Croatia included more than a thousand students. Thirty online meetings were held where students and their teachers had the opportunity to meet young refugees, practice tolerance, critical thinking, empathy, interculturality, and dialogue, which was coordinated by the JRS. More than 20 student activities promoted understanding and welcome for refugees in their schools, cities, and local communities.



EDUCATION FOR A BETTER INTEGRATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

"Education for a better integration of asylum seekers" is a project financially supported by the European Social Fund. The main goal is the inclusion of asylum seekers and people with granted IP into the labor market in Croatia. As a partner on this project, from January till the end of June 2021, JRS Croatia accompanied and supported seven people from Eritrea to finish the A1 Croatian language course and nine people to get their diploma - for pastry cook (6), the assistant waiter (2) and pizza maker (1). Besides Croatian language class and vocational training, the project included cultural workshops about Croatian work law, time and goal management, preparing for a job interview, and writing a CV. Through a six-month period, social workers and translators for Arabic language and cultural mediators visited participants in their homes and assessed and responded to their different needs.



RENOVABIS

In 2020, JRS Croatia was granted financial support by Renovabis for the activities at the Detention Centre „Ježevo“, but the COVID pandemic prevented its realization so Renovabis accepted to relocate finances to the area damaged by the earthquake in December 2020, and other integration activities. JRS staff bought and delivered the first help kits after the earthquake in Sisak as well as psychosocial support. JRS Croatia assisted in apartment reparation for two families as well as in relocation.

Other integration activities:

- legal assistance
- family reunification
- entering IP system
- writing CVs and preparing for job interviews
- mediation between employers and people in need for the job
- paying one piece of tuition fee for one Syrian student
- donation of eyeglasses
- school system assistance
- donation of laptop to one high school student.

SIDRO

“Support to Foreigners in Integration into Croatian Society” - is a project aimed at the returnees that are descendants of Croats in South America.

In order to monitor the provided support as well as possible, the created beneficiary's database was regularly edited. The database currently numbers 37 beneficiaries.

Work with beneficiaries showed that most of them left the country of origin due to life insecurity (crime, kidnappings, corruption) and the precarious economic situation. None of the beneficiaries speak Croatian, so the project activities focus on individual assistance in legal advice, writing letters, and accompaniment to various institutions with translations in Spanish.

Some of the problems that returnees face are:

- dealing with the bureaucracy
- difficulty finding an apartment where they can register residence
- difficulties in finding and enrolling children in kindergarten and paying the full economic amount, which creates a problem for their limited financial resources.

MENTAL HEALTH OF REFUGEES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES HIT BY EARTHQUAKES AND A PANDEMIC

The aim of this project was to advocate for the improvement of mental health services for refugees in integration in Croatia and the provision of adequate professional assistance with the help of interpreters in health care institutions in areas affected by earthquakes.

Project activities included research with 30 refugees in the quake-affected areas of the four counties about their psychological distress. The results were presented to the relevant stakeholders in the fields of advocacy for refugee rights, service delivery, and assurance of health services in local communities.

Research has shown that in certain areas of mental health refugees have an increase in psychological difficulties. They also cited challenges in seeking mental health services, as well as the difficulties they face due to the COVID pandemic and earthquakes. The results of the research showed the need to provide mental health services to refugees and increase the availability of these services. Therefore, there is a need to provide long-term available translators in health services so that they can work well with refugee patients.

EMERGENCY PROJECT

The social situation in times of the COVID pandemic and the earthquake in Zagreb principally affected the most vulnerable people, including refugees and forcibly displaced persons.

In total, implemented activities included:

- online (workshops) and telephone support (call center)
- providing food and non-food items
- accompanying refugees and giving them psychosocial support education (online and live)

In a six-month period, JRS Croatia delivered Food and Non Food Items for a total of 80 people (including women and children) in 28 packages. Besides that, JRS Croatia settled the cost for new identity cards for one single-parent Syrian family as well as assisted in relocation to a new apartment.

From January till the end of June 2021 JRS Croatia had 107 legal assistances and 73 telephone assistance through a cultural mediator. The types of assistance were: family reunification, mediation between the local police force and other public institutions (health and social institutions), entering the process of granting international protection, residence, and work permits.

NEWS FROM THIS PERIOD

- From January, 10-day self-isolation is mandatory for all asylum seekers in Reception Center Porin, Zagreb. After self-isolation, refugee families are transferred to the Reception center in Kutina. However, more than 90% of procedures are suspended as refugees often leave Croatia soon after self-isolation.
- From March 2020, JRS can't access the Reception center due to COVID measures from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Through brochures and posters, we informed asylum seekers about JRS and our Center for Integration. Only Red Cross, and Médecins du monde can provide services inside the Reception Center, and only basic ones (hygiene, food packages, laundry, medical checkups).
- Through Assisted Voluntary Return project (AVR), IOM has successfully helped 75 refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Tunis, Serbia, Ukraine, Bosna and Hercegovina.
- JRS Croatia set up a good collaboration with JRS Lebanon and JRS Jordan, working on a humanitarian corridor, hoping to ensure a new, safe, and dignified life for several refugee families living in inhumane conditions.
- In the last several months, refugees have been coming to our SOL Center for refugee integration after crossing the border with Bosna and Hercegovina, asking JRS to help them since they were pushbacked several times to Bosnia. We helped more than 40 refugees to access the asylum system in Croatia. JRS also informed other stakeholders about this situation (UNHCR, Ombudsman).
- JRS had meetings with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNHCR, the ambassadors from the United Kingdom and Canada trying to advocate for better treatment of refugees at the border and giving them the possibility to access the asylum system in Croatia.



SOL Center



Activities in Rijeka



- For World Refugee Day, on June 20, JRS organized a theater play "The Beauty of Our Diversity". It was performed in Rijeka by professional actors Ena-Sanan Hdagha and Marin Bukvić. It is a children's play, but it is also for everyone who is willing to recognize the beauty of differences and humanity through physical theater and the joy of playing. The reactions of the audience, especially the children, who later enthusiastically spoke to the journalists who followed the play about the positive impressions, showed once again that this play is a great way to understand the path that refugees take through art. Afterward, Holy Mass was held in the Rijeka parish of the Holy Cross at 6 p.m. It was celebrated by the coadjutor archbishop of Rijeka, Msgr. Mate Uzinić. The mass was attended by refugees from Iran, Pakistan, Eritrea, Syria, and other countries, to whom Croatia has become a new home. After the Mass, JRS work was presented, and an intercultural meeting was held where parishioners of Srdoči and other citizens of Rijeka had the opportunity to meet people who were forced to leave their homes and find safety and protection in Croatia.
- Every month, JRS broadcasts its long-running radio show "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" on Radio Marija, in which current reviews of recent events in the field of refugees and migration are brought, with the help of diverse, professional, and eminent interlocutors and guests.
- In the first half of 2021: 900 asylum applications, only 9 new international protection (IP) - the majority from Afganistan (60%), Iran (15%), Irak, Turkey and Pakistan.



Activities in Rijeka

SERBIA



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SERBIA

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 @JRS_Serbia

PROJECTS

INTEGRATION HOUSE "PEDRO ARRUPE"

- Integration House "Pedro Arrupe" – Home for unaccompanied children refugees in Belgrade – is the main project since 2017. Since then, JRS Serbia has provided accommodation, education, and integration to more than a hundred children refugees from Middle East, Asia and Africa, who arrived in Serbia over the Balkan Migrant Route. Many children were identified as victims of violence, exploitation, potential victims of human trafficking, and other criminal abuse.
- The project's main goal is to provide direct assistance and protection to vulnerable unaccompanied children, to improve their health and well-being, to facilitate education and social integration, and to prevent their exploitation. Team of Integration House "Pedro Arrupe" is 4th year now implementing a full spectrum of services for our beneficiaries:
 - shelter and care 24 h a day, 7 days a week,
 - material assistance in the form of food, hygiene items, clothing, etc.
 - medical and psychosocial assistance,
 - legal advice and representation aimed at securing legal status and/or remedies,
 - education and workshops in the house, and enrollment of children to school,
 - socialization and integration support,
 - assistance with family reunification.
- During this year, with the assistance of the UNHCR, we were engaged in preparations of two teenage beneficiaries, who started and finished secondary education in Serbia, to be enrolled in a faculty in Belgrade. We hope that these two hard-working young teenagers will be the first refugees without Serbian citizenship to enroll in college in the country. Their enrolment exams started last week of June. Many unaccompanied and separated children had finished elementary and secondary school while being hosted in our Integration House, and many have slept in a safe place for the first time and received psychosocial and socialization support on their long travel that started months or years ago.

NEWS FROM THIS PERIOD

- A total of 5,603 refugees was counted in Serbia in May. 4,550 of them were accommodated in one of 19 government refugee centers. (Three of these centers that are used for families are under renovation and will be fully operational in autumn.)
- From the total number of refugees in May, 3,182 persons were newly registered persons (comp. to 4,344 in April). Most new arrivals transit through North Macedonia, but also through Albania, Bulgaria, and Montenegro. The main countries of origin of arrivals to Serbia remain Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, with nationals of Somalia and Eritrea also in the top five.
- According to UNHCR's monthly update for Serbia, the month of May saw 1,186 (1,148 in April) pushbacks from neighboring countries to Serbia (29% from Romania, 59% from Hungary, 8% from Croatia, and 4% from Bosnia and Herzegovina). Nationals of Syria make up 42% of all the pushbacks, followed by nationals of Afghanistan, Morocco, Libya, Palestine, etc. Pushed-back persons are mainly younger men, a few women, and a dozen children (mainly unaccompanied boys from Afghanistan).
- On 26 March, Serbian authorities began a campaign of vaccination of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants accommodated in 19 governmental centers across the country. Serbia became amongst the first countries in Europe to start vaccinating both refugees and asylum seekers in the centers and those accommodated privately. Five hundred and fifty refugees and migrants in government centers expressed interest in vaccination and 309 have been vaccinated by the end March. Additionally, 32 privately accommodated refugees have also been vaccinated against COVID. To promote vaccination, Batut Institute for Public Health, UNHCR, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), and WHO sensitized the refugees and migrants in terms of health promotion and protection from COVID.



JRS Serbia activities



Vaccination of refugees

- Children who have completed primary or secondary school are now on vacation, and spend time on the unofficial language classes, and having art workshops, sports, and field trips.
- To protect children from mosquitoes in extremely hot and humid weather, our Arrupe House is now equipped with collapsible nets on windows and doors.
- In June, for World Refugee Day, our children attended an event organized by the UNHCR.
- In addition, JRS Serbia is implementing activities focused on Strengthening of Integrated Protection System for Refugees and Migrants in Serbia. These are activities directed to improving position and access to government services for refugees of both genders, especially to vulnerable UASC, women, single mothers, and families with children.
- Exchange of information and knowledge with colleagues from other NGOs and government institutions, defining risks (including the risk of trafficking in persons or any type of exploitation as priority), and solving problems for each individual child is creating a path more efficient assistance in the future.





KOSOVO



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
KOSOVO

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PROJECT

- JRS Kosovo is running a single project, funded mainly by Renovabis, whose overall goal is for the asylum seekers in Kosovo to be respected and have access to fair and efficient asylum procedures. More generally, through this project, JRS aims to improve the lives of asylum seekers in Kosovo. We aim to achieve sustainability through the capacity building of the staff of the centers. This is the only way that refugees are going to be respected and receive quality services and that is why we insist on this long-term goal.

NEWS FROM THIS PERIOD

- JRS Kosovo organized and distributed:
 - Medical Support for every asylum seeker (as foreseen in the regulation of the Ministry of Interior Affairs) when they arrive at the reception center,
 - Winter clothes and shoes, especially for women and children,
 - Hygienic packages for asylum seekers,
 - Food items for asylum seekers, detainees, and refugees.
 - Psychological support for refugees, detainees, and asylum seekers.
 - Computer Course for asylum seekers in reception center Magure twice a week.
 - Albanian Language Course for asylum seekers in Magure twice a week.
 - Activities in the JRS Office twice a week.
 - Social/ Cultural activities for asylum seekers and refugees.
- From January 1 to June 30 we have been supporting:
 - 217 asylum seekers (210 Males 27 Females)
 - 23 detainees (17 Males 6 Females)
 - 18 refugees (13 Males 5 Females)
- Challenges:
 - COVID is the main challenge for the moment.
 - Kosovo is seen as a transit country so we can not talk about sustainability when it comes to the activities we organize with asylum seekers.
 - The Kosovar community is not very open to accepting refugees. They see them as a potential threat to society.





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