

Austria

September 2021

Austria as a host country: Austria has long been an important host country, and currently hosts **close to 164,000 persons** of concern. UNHCR has been established in Austria in 1951.

Refugee population: Since 2015, Austria has granted **protection to some 120,000 persons** and **received around 210,000 asylum applications** compared to around 8.9 mio. inhabitants.

Focus of UNCHR in Austria continues to be on a quality asylum system, ways to improve protection as well as on raising awareness for the refugee cause.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

Refugees	141,866
Asylum-seekers	20,710
Stateless persons	3,267

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Syria	54,903	Afghanistan	6,473
Afghanistan	40,096	Iraq	3,467
Iraq	9,152	Syria	2,820

*Data source: UNHCR 2020 Global Trends Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR has been advocating for inclusion of all persons of concern in governmental COVID-19 support programmes as well as for easily accessible vaccinations. Quick transfers of unaccompanied children from crowded federal reception centres to provincial facilities and adequate care during the waiting period were in the focus.

Inclusion: All persons of concern are covered by medial insurance and, thus, treated like Austrian nationals regarding health and vaccinations schemes.

Communication with Communities: The newly established refugee team got active in promoting vaccination and tackling fake news in their respective communities with support of UNHCR, i.a. through videos. In cooperation with the Red Cross webinars by peer experts were organized.

HIGHLIGHTS

Report on Best Interests of the Child

The [report](#) analyses the relevant legal framework and practice and provides practical recommendations to ensure that best interests of the child are given primary consideration in asylum-related proceedings and decisions concerning children.

UNHCR Refugee Team Austria

The Office set up a Refugee Team with the aim of a more regular cooperation and two-way exchange mechanism with refugees. The team consists of 10 refugees from main countries of origin, meetings take place every two months

Increased Funding by Government

Austria increased its contribution to UNHCR again, reaching **USD 14 million** by September. Another **USD 10 million** were pledged for the Afghanistan situation.

70 YEARS 1951 REFUGEE CONVENTION



To show the importance of refugee protection and refugee contributions to host society, the Office [portrayed prominent \(former\) refugees](#) who came to Austria, Switzerland and Germany over the last 70 years.

Key Priorities

- **Protection:** Monitoring of developments in asylum law and practice, with special focus on quality aspects in the asylum procedure and reception system. Implementation of the quality assurance project (“Bridge”), co-funded by the Austrian Ministry of Interior and the EU’s AMIF, aiming at supporting asylum decision makers through training activities, events, evaluation of decisions, etc. Visits to reception and detention centres with a focus on vulnerable asylum-seekers and unaccompanied separated children.
- **Access to territory:** Monitoring and follow-up of alleged push-back cases at the border with Slovenia.
- **Advocacy:** Focus on child protection with i.a. the launch of a [report](#) on the best interests of the child in the asylum context. Recommendations for child-friendly asylum procedures, a child rights-based application of the 1951 Convention and best interests assessments by a child protection authority in situations ahead of decisions by the asylum authority to improve protection of children. In the focus were also advocacy for more inclusive rights for subsidiary protection holders, family reunification as well as increased funding for UNHCR. The 70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention was used to promote key messages on protection principles and solidarity to stakeholders and media
- **Integration and capacity building:** Hand-over of the refugee-led initiatives network to a local NGO. Set-up of the UNHCR Refugee Team with 10 women and men from main asylum countries aiming at a more institutionalised, regular exchange with communities.
- **External Engagement:** Focus on raising public awareness with i.a. the anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. [Video series](#) and social media campaign with prominent refugees showcasing the

life-saving and life-changing importance of refugee protection. Re-launch of local education material for children aged 6-10.

- **Resource mobilisation:** Donations from Austria reached an all time high and with additional pledges for the Afghanistan situation will, for the first time, exceed USD 20 million.

Working with Partners

- The Office cooperates i.a. with State interlocutors as Ministries, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA), judges of all relevant courts, Members of Parliament and senior officials in the Provinces. Regular NGO interlocutors are representatives of all main organisations active in the field of asylum and the Asylum Lawyers Network, which engages in litigation. Journalists, academia, actors in the field of education as well as IOM and UNICEF are also important partners.

Statelessness

- Austria acceded to both Statelessness Conventions but lacks a statelessness determination procedure.
- UNHCR advocates for the establishment of a stateless determination procedure and a residence permit for persons identified as stateless, as they are currently considered irregular aliens without any entitlements.
- Another focus of the Office’s advocacy is the right to nationality at birth for children born stateless.

UNHCR National Office in Austria

Staff:

1 International Staff
 7 National Staff
 2 UNOPS Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Vienna

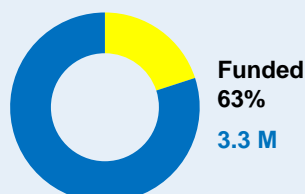
Financial information (28 September 2021)

Information relates to the Representations for Austria and to the European Institutions in Strasbourg, to the Office for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the Liaison Office in Vienna and the presence in Portugal

Financial requirements

USD 5.2 M

Funding gap
37%
1.9 M



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