

## 2021 UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs Regional Dialogue - 27 May 2021

Organised by UNHCR, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), regional Dialogues with NGOs aim at ensuring regular and two-way communication between UNHCR and NGOs in Europe on topics of common interest, as well as identifying areas for joint and complementary advocacy.

### Agenda

**Participants:** 35 participants

**Item 1:** [Regional developments](#) by the Director of the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe

**Item 2:** [Dialogue](#) between the Director of the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe and NGOs

**21 NGOs:** A World of Neighbours; Amnesty International; Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe; Crisis Response and Policy Center; ECRE; European Network on Statelessness; Greek Council for Refugees; Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; Human Rights Watch; Humanitarian Center for Integration and Tolerance; Hungarian Helsinki Committee; ICVA; International Catholic Migration Commission; Islamic Relief Worldwide; Jesuit Refugee Service; Médecins sans frontières; Menedék - Hungarian Association for Migrants; Oxfam; Refugees International; Romanian National Council for Refugees; Save the Children  
**UNHCR** Regional Bureau for Europe; UNHCR Partnership and Coordination Service (HQ); UNHCR Representation for EU Affairs

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### 1. Key points addressed by the Director of the UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe

The Director opened the Dialogue by highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on protection and solutions in Europe. She then addressed the increasing trends of pushbacks at land and sea borders and attempts by some States to externalize their asylum obligations. The Director also presented her views on the proposed EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and the returns of persons found not to be in need of international protection.

Focusing on specific situations, namely Greece, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ukraine and South-Eastern Europe, the Director described sub-regional trends, priorities and operational challenges.

**Resources:** UNHCR, [Observations on the Proposal for amendments to the Danish Alien Act](#), 8 March 2021 | UNHCR, [UNHCR Observations on the New Plan for Immigration policy statement of the Government of the United Kingdom](#), 4 May 2021 | UNHCR, [Note on the "Externalization" of International Protection](#), 28 May 2021 | UNHCR, [News comment by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi on Denmark's new law on the transfer of asylum-seekers to third countries](#), 3 June 2021

### 2. Topics of interest to NGOs

NGO participants shared their respective views and experience, reflecting on the Director's perspectives, particularly focusing on the following issues:

- **Situation in Greece:** COVID-19 response in reception centers for asylum-seekers; risk of lead-poisoning; UNHCR's advocacy to ensure inclusion is considered as a priority by the authorities;
- **Pact on Migration and Asylum:** UNHCR's views on the Pact including with regard to returns;
- **Turkey:** views on negotiations between the EU and Turkey;
- **Family reunification:** efficiency of existing processes, good practices, gaps;
- **Access to territory and asylum:** documentation of violations, pushbacks across the WB route, cross-border cooperation between stakeholders, use of COVID-19 as an excuse to limit this access;
- **1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness:** commemoration;
- **Integration:** importance of using funding to support integration, key role of municipalities.

### 3. Action points suggested during the discussions

- Organize a dedicated follow-up regional discussion on the situation in **South-Eastern Europe** to strengthen a situational approach, explore complementary ways of working, including in terms of advocacy, and identify concrete recommendations;
- Hold a dedicated follow-up regional discussion on **integration and inclusion** of refugees and others of concern in Europe to jointly identify obstacles and opportunities, including in support to local actors and to strengthen communication with communities.

**Update on the 2021 Regional Consultations with NGOs:** They will be organized based on a three-tier approach: (i) regular thematic regional dialogues along the year, (ii) an EU-centered regional dialogue in July and (iii) a final series of consultations revolving around *Localization of humanitarian action and engagement with communities in a post-COVID-19 context* in September.