

Austria

February 2021

Austria as a host country: Austria has been an important host country since the foundation of the UNHCR Office in 1951. Currently Austria hosts **over 160,000 persons of concern** to UNHCR.

Development of refugee population: With over 130,000 asylum claims in 2015/2016, Austria became an EU **top receiving country** compared to its population of 8.9 million inhabitants.

During the pandemic: Especially the situation of subsidiary protection holders and (unaccompanied) children has been in the focus of the Office's advocacy work over the last months.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees	137,928
Asylum-seekers	22,988
Stateless people	1,128

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

	Refugees		Asylum-seekers*
Afghanistan	53,015	Afghanistan	8,387
Syria	38,371	Iraq	4,158
Iraq	8,769	Iran	1,785

Data source: UNHCR 2020 Mid-Year Statistical Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

* Pending applications

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR has been advocating for inclusion of its persons of concern in all governmental COVID-19 support programmes, putting forward the difficult situation of subsidiary protection holders. Another focus has been on unaccompanied children in federal (transit) reception centres, advocating i.a. for quicker transfers to provincial centres as well as adequate care during the waiting period.

Inclusion of persons of concern: All persons of concern are covered by medical insurances and, thus, treated like Austrian nationals regarding health and vaccination schemes.

Communication with Communities: UNHCR complements and summarizes info provided by state actors and NGOs through its [local Help Page](#) and is in regular touch with refugees i.a. through its closed Facebook-group.

HIGHLIGHTS

Capacity building for refugees

UNHCR has [mapped refugee-led initiatives](#) and volunteer groups and supported them through capacity building, e.g. by providing an online lecture programme.

Online events during the pandemic

UNHCR organized a fully virtual **"Asylum Day"** for over 100 first instance decision makers and judges, with introductions by the Federal President and the Minister of Justice. 75 events, both online and offline, took place during the **"Long Day of Flight"**, the Office's flagship awareness raising event.

Increased funding by Government

Austria increased its funding to UNHCR in 2020 to more than **USD 10 million:** the core contribution quadrupled to 2.6 million, the Coronavirus appeal was funded with over 3 million and the Mediterranean situation with over 2 million.



Where is my next clue? UNHCR WebQuest

A digital treasure hunt game where four compelling stories of refugees illustrate the importance of refugee protection: <https://www.unhcr-webquest.com>

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 (see highlights), 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 Austrian-Slovenian border.
- **Advocacy:** Advocacy for more inclusive rights for subsidiary protection holders, relocation from Greece, child protection, notably the early appointment of guardians for unaccompanied children, as well as for increased funding for UNHCR were in the focus during the reporting period.
- **Integration and capacity building:** Mapping of refugee-led initiatives and volunteer groups, support for networking, capacity building by providing an online lecture programme for them: <http://bit.ly/HCR-mapping>.
- **External Engagement:** Focus on raising public awareness with i.a. the 9th edition of the “Long Day of Flight” with 75 events (www.langertagderflucht.at), the production of a “WebQuest” (<https://www.unhcr-webquest.com>, see above) and a series about so-called “Community Heroes” (portraying for web and social media over 20 refugees and asylum-seekers and their efforts to fight the pandemic and to support local communities). Relaunch of UNHCR’s local teaching materials incl. virtual training sessions for teachers.
- **Resource mobilization:** For the first time, donations from Austria exceeded 10 million US Dollar in 2020.

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 still lacks a statelessness determination procedure.
- Stateless persons legally residing in Austria may benefit from a number of rights and entitlements. Stateless persons without a right of residence in Austria, however, are considered irregular aliens without any entitlements. They do not receive proper documentation and lack access to both the labour market and the social welfare system.
- The Offices advocates for the establishment of a proper stateless determination procedure and a residence permit for persons identified as stateless.

UNHCR National Office in Austria

Staff:

- 1 International staff
- 7 National staff (incl. part-time)
- 2 UNOPS staff

Offices:

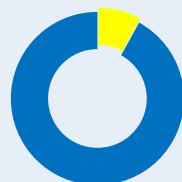
- 1 Country Office in Vienna

Financial information* (February 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
 92%
5.1 M



Funded
 8%
0.4 M

UNHCR is grateful to the major donors of unearmarked contributions* to the 2021 global programmes (USD, as of 28 February 2021):

Norway 80 M | Sweden 66.9 M | Netherlands 36.1 M | Denmark 34.6 M | Germany 22.1 M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Ireland 12.5 M | Belgium 11.9 M

*Unearmarked contributions allow UNHCR for critical flexibility in how best to reach populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Above are donors of USD 10 million or more.