

Croatia: COVID-19 response

In Croatia, refugees and asylum-seekers have access to health services in a non-discriminatory manner and no special provisions have been announced targeting UNHCR persons of concern (PoC).

As yet there are no confirmed cases among refugees and asylum seekers as reported by the Ministry of Interior (Mol). The reception centers for asylum seekers remain calm and safe.

UNHCR and its partners have adapted their activities as per the advice from health authorities. The methods of assistance may have changed but the needs of UNHCR POCs remain the same.

General overview

In the first three months of 2020, Mol registered 521 asylum seekers (top three countries of origin: Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan). In the same period, 13 people were granted refugee status (Iraq, Iran, Syria and one stateless).

As at 14 April, 452 asylum seekers have been accommodated in the two reception centers in Zagreb and Kutina (41 percent children, 38 percent men and 21 percent women).

So far in 2020, 14 families (22 people) were provided with housing solutions under the Regional Housing Programme-RHP (<http://regionalhousingprogramme.org>). Total number of beneficiaries receiving RHP assistance by 16 April 2020 in Croatia stands at 315 families (749 people).

Response

UNHCR is closely collaborating with the government, UN Agencies and partners, including in response to the COVID-19 disease. UNHCR continues regular comprehensive monitoring of the asylum system, reception conditions, integration process, provision of legal aid, and other activities relevant to its mandate. UNHCR advocates for adequate solutions in situations affected by the current restrictive measures, notably education of asylum-seeking children and prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence. To contribute to the government efforts in maintaining adequate hygiene measures, UNHCR procured hand and surface sanitizers for the country's two asylum seeker reception centers, run by the Ministry of Interior in Zagreb and Kutina. The sanitizers were also donated to homes in Zagreb and Split that care for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).



UNHCR delivering sanitizers to Kutina reception center for asylum seekers on 9 April 2020 ©UNHCR/Z.Zeba

Provision of assistance

UNHCR has partnered with civil society organizations in supplementing government activities designed for the protection of persons of concern. Through its partners, UNHCR maintains necessary support services some of which, under changed circumstances:

- The Croatian Red Cross is in regular touch with refugees in private accommodation, supporting their integration efforts, including in cases when they need help to reach doctors, teachers or in their interactions with officials. Red Cross pays special attention to the wellbeing of the UASC and supports authorities in their protection.
- The Croatian Law Centre, working 100 per cent virtual since its offices were damaged in the earthquake, is providing free legal advice to asylum seekers and refugees by phone and social media, with 24/7 availability.
- The Civil Rights Project Sisak introduced a free 0800 legal aid telephone service for the stateless and people at risk of statelessness, as well as beneficiaries of the Regional Housing Programme.
- The Festival of Tolerance is bringing some of the best refugee-related films of recent times to viewers at home via a free online programme. "The coronavirus doesn't discriminate. Why should you?" is the name of the revised film programme available at UNHCR and Festival's social media platforms.
- In Split, Association Mi is maintaining the central resource website for refugees in Croatia, making sure all the latest information on COVID-19 are available online.

CONTACTS