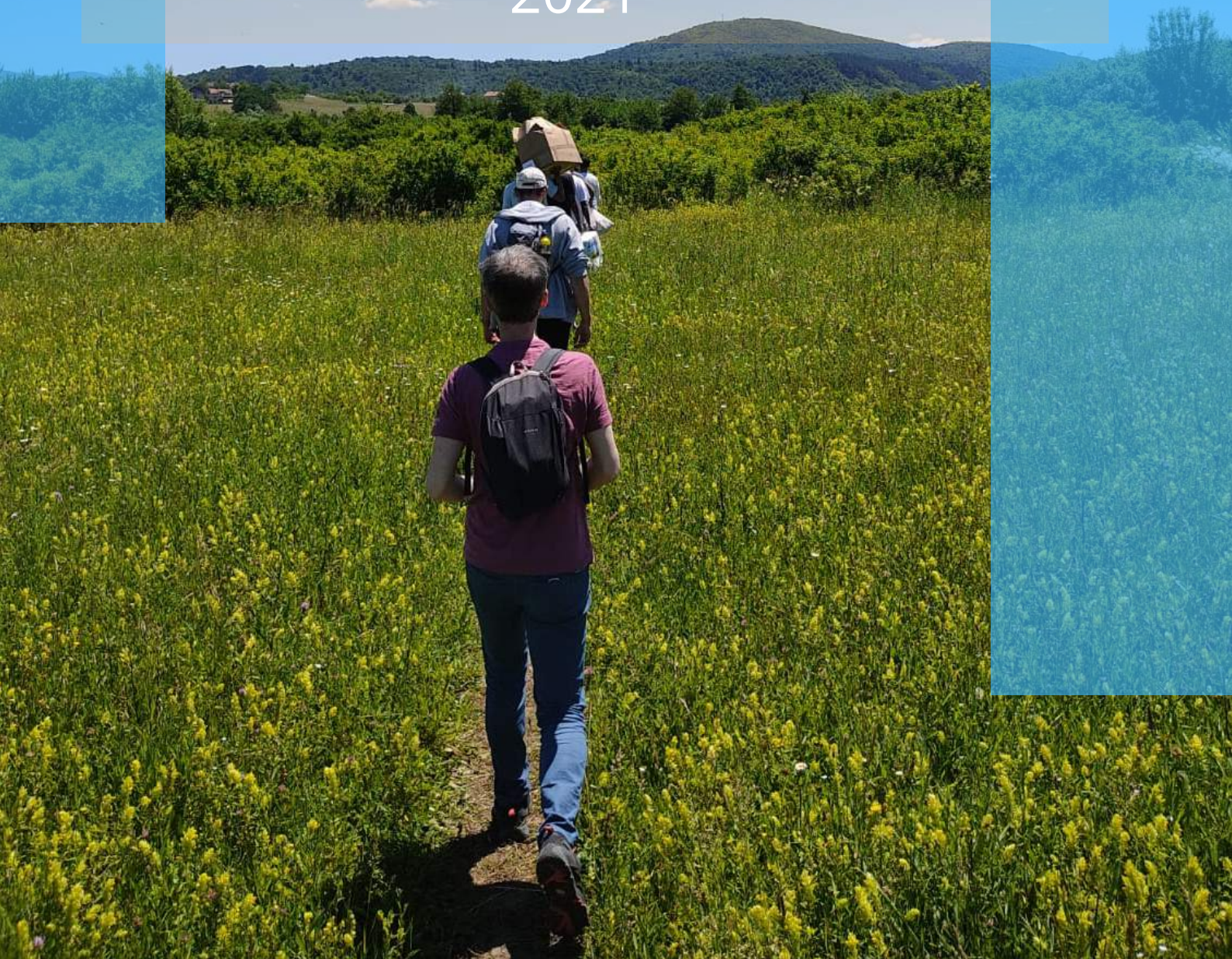




JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

QUARTERLY REPORT

JULY - SEPTEMBER
2021





JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

Jesuit Refugee Service in South-East Europe is a part of JRS International, 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, with offices in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 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 reception centers or outside of them, advocating asylum seekers, helping people in detention centers, to pastoral care and 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

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 (TRCs) Ušivak, Blažuj, Borići, and Miral. The Jesuit Refugee Service in Bosnia and Herzegovina employs native speakers of Arabic, Urdu, Pashto, Farsi, Hindi, Persian, English, and Bosnian language. The total number of transports in the Una-Sana Canton (USC) in June was 298 and in the Sarajevo Canton 58. Here is a story of one of our beneficiaries about her experience with JRS medical escort:

"My name is Bita and I'm a nurse from Iran. The political situation in my country forced me to leave my home with my two sons and wife. I left Iran 4 years ago and I have been in Bosnia and Herzegovina for about 2 years. I tried to cross the Bosnian border with Croatia several times and in one of the attempts, I injured my right leg. The pain was not bad at first but quickly spread to other parts of the body. After a while, I had a terrible backache and I couldn't walk properly.

During a detailed medical examination, the JRS team helped me walk, understand my problem, and told me the details of my treatment. Due to the overall situation, I became really depressed; the doctors recommended physical therapy. I received therapy every morning and was accompanied by the JRS team.

In addition to translating, the JRS team did everything they could to make me feel comfortable in the hospital and also helped me feel better mentally. They gave me hope every day by believing that I would be able to move again without a wheelchair.

It has been five months now that I can walk normally, and I am grateful to all the people who helped me - the doctor, the DRC technician, and especially the JRS team. "



Medical transport to Cantonal hospital

FROM HELLO TO GOODBYE

The aim of this project is to support cultural integration, social inclusion, and to improve the quality of life of refugees and migrants. It also prepares refugees and migrants for the Western labor market. The targeted groups are refugees and migrants through the “leave no one behind” approach, as well as the local community and the general public. Over 10,000 camp beneficiaries in BiH had been helped so far.

Here is a story about the hardships that migrants and refugees face on their way to a better future:

JRS team held another workshop for International Friendship Day in TRC Borići. Our youngest beneficiaries were the ones who enjoyed this workshop the most. Colorful papers, pencils, markers, a lot of imagination, and sincere messages were used in creating notes which the beneficiaries sent to their dearest friends. A 10-year-old Maha from Iran said that she enjoyed JRS workshops a lot. She loves to draw, and could not hide her happiness when she wrote a message to her friend in Iran, whom she had not seen in two years. She also told us a little secret: in a few days it was her father’s birthday and she wanted to make a special Happy Birthday card just for him. Our team surprised her with a package of colored pencils, markers, and colorful paper she could use to make the card. After the workshop, she left with a smile on her face to write more thank-you notes to her friends and family.



Workshop in TRC Borići



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

JRS BiH Outreach team continued to provide food (FI) and non-food (NFI) packages to migrants outside the temporary reception centers. The NFIs included clothes, hygiene items, sleeping bags, backpacks, shoes, jackets, and raincoats. On a regular basis, the outreach team disinfects places where migrants and refugees live, as part of the COVID-19 response. During the reporting period, the JRS Outreach team distributed 210 meals (such as rice, chicken, and beans).

Amer Ali is a 32 years-old Pakistani who has three kids back home in Pakistan. Ali left Pakistan in 2018. He crossed five countries until he came to Bosnia and Hercegovina. Ali and JRS team met in February 2021 when Ali just came to Bosnia. He had no clothes, food nor shelter. JRS helped him and his friend by giving them food, clothes, tents, shoes, and power banks. We could see happiness and appreciation on his face. They made a small camp close to the JRS office in Bihać.

They came to our office every day if they needed something. Last week Ali and his friends prepared lunch for our staff because they were going to a "game." JRS staff gladly accepted the invitation and went to the camp to eat with them.

Ali and his friends went to the game the day after. They are still on their way through the jungle, trying to cross the border in the hopes for a better future. Ali said he would inform us when he arrived at his destination.



Outreach activities

CROATIA



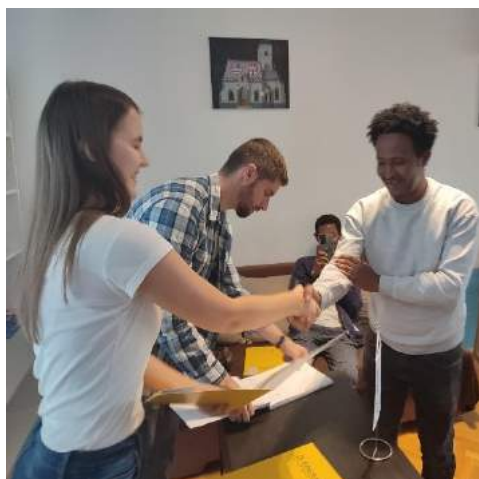
JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
CROATIA

INTEGRATION STORY

S.I. and Y.B.H. are two friends from Eritrea. They met in Croatia four years ago and soon became great friends. They had similar paths which united them. In 2017, they came to Croatia from Italy through a relocation program. They found a job immediately and they started learning the Croatian language on a conversational level. In the middle of June the same year, S.I. and Y.B.H. came to the JRS Croatia office looking for a job. Thanks to the project “Education for the better integration of migrants” we could offer them an A1 Croatian language and culture course as well as the prequalification for a pastry chef. In the initial conversation, our social worker found out that these friends also became roommates and that they were helping each other.

In September we organized and provided a graduation ceremony for them and for the other five participants of the project. Through this project, they gained their first recognized qualification in Croatia, with which they can compete in the labor market. This will be easier for them as they have also acquired the necessary skills, time and management. The social mentor also prepared them for the job interviews and helped them write new or update the old CV. After the integration process, one of them is now ready to start a new and better job. In the future, he can bring his family from Eritrea and finally find peace and security in Croatia, his adopted country.

This is only one of the many journeys that JRS Croatia has had the privilege to witness, one of the many situations where we could accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of migrants and refugees.



Integration story

DAYTRIP TO RIJEKA

On Sunday, 26th of September, we celebrated the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees at the invitation of the Archdiocese of Rijeka. Msgr. Dr. Matija Matičić welcomed JRS employees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 60 people who found safety and protection in Croatia, and the Rijeka bishop, and an imam.

"This day came as an ideal opportunity to invite JRS. Here, at the Archdiocese, we would like to help with the accommodation and integration of refugees. The main motivation for this decision was this: there is one God who brings us together and we are all primarily directed to each other.", said mons. Matičić.



THE ISLAMIC CENTRE RIJEKA



THE ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL

The gathering started with a lunch and on the menu were traditional dishes of Iran, Syria and Iraq as well as traditional specialities of the Rijeka region. Then we visited the Cathedral which became a place of intercultural encounter, interreligious dialogue and togetherness. Afterwards, we also visited the church of St. Nikolaj where Jovan Galamić, the orthodox priest of Rijeka, welcomed us: "A man in his comfort easily forgets the problems and worries of another. And at the same time, we forget the first two commandments of God: to love God and our neighbour. The question arises: who is my neighbour? Christ said it was the people around us."

Dženan Effendi Čaušević, imam at the Islamic Centre of Rijeka, showed us around the mosque: "I am happy to be here today at the invitation of our dear friend Matija, in company with the JRS and refugees we wish to welcome. Today is an opportunity to remember the messages of all religious prophets - especially Jesus who reminds us that we need to look and see the one who lives next to us."

This trip delighted those whose day we celebrated: "Thank you for creating good and happy moments for families, especially for children. We were together in the spiritual environment of church and mosque and felt harmony and humanity with different religions. Thank you JRS," S.R. wrote. She is a single mother from Iran who spent the trip mostly in the company of T.K., also a single mother. "In JRS we always feel accepted and welcomed. I am glad that they organize such activities. We also get to know Croatia, its great heritage and culture. It's nice to feel accepted here."



THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS



SERBIA



TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

While working with children who would turn 18 during their stay in the Integration House "Pedro Arrupe", we recognized the need for adequate accommodation and support for young asylum seekers in their further development and integration, which is a logical continuation of support for this vulnerable group of young people.

The Integration Program of JRS Serbia is a comprehensive response to the integration needs of young asylum seekers in Serbia. Project of Transitional accommodation for young asylum seekers increases the chances of successful integration of young people after leaving collective refugee centers. In addition to housing, beneficiaries have access to basic services, such as food and material support, education, vocational training, employment services, and emotional and psychosocial support, all according to an Individual Integration Plan prepared and implemented for each beneficiary.

On the referral of a partner NGO, we have met a single refugee girl who is a beneficiary of subsidiary protection in Serbia. After leaving the refugee center she was renting her own flat in Belgrade. However, her income was low because she was on a part-time job. Since the position of cook in our Integration House was free from July, and she was a skilled cook, we offered her that position. As a diligent person, she commutes each morning to the Integration House to prepare food for children. Afterward, she travels home or directly to her second job.

In the foreseen period we will include her in the other integration support activities foreseen in the project, such as language classes and workshops. Our social workers already arranged vaccinations at the Public Health Institute, where she and other beneficiaries who are over 18 were vaccinated against Covid-19.



INTEGRATION HOUSE "PEDRO ARRUPE"

The project of the Integration House "Pedro Arrupe" - Shelter for unaccompanied and separated children refugees - is our main project since 2017. We educate refugee children in the family environment of our integration house. JRS engagement is not limited to in-house activities, but daily tasks are related to accompanying children to health care institutions, assisting them in education, socialization, and integration, as well as assisting children in administrative affairs and regulating their stay in Serbia. The integration house takes care of children 24/7.

From July 2021, we have extended the activities of JRS in Serbia. Expansion of activities refers to the possibility of transitional accommodation.

Through this project, we helped N.N. and his family who have fled the Syrian war. They spent several years in Turkey. Afterwards, they moved to Greece. While trying to cross the Greece-Northern Macedonian border, he was separated from the rest of his family who failed to continue this journey and remained in the Greece refugee center. N.N. was registered as a minor at the entrance to Serbia and handed over to the care of the local Center for Social Work in a town in the south of Serbia. Social workers from that place contacted our Integration House, and after a negative PCR test on Covid-19, N.N. was admitted to our Integration House.

During the examination, he was diagnosed with certain health problems due to which he is under the regular medical supervision of our team. The desire of N.N. is to continue his journey to Italy, where his family would also like to go for his medical treatment. He hopes that, as war refugees, they will be allowed to seek asylum in that European country. Although he is sometimes worried about the uncertainty of the future, the minor N.N. smiles a lot, and he fits well into the family atmosphere of our house.



Celebrating a birthday in an integration house



KOSOVO



JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
KOSOVO

A NOTE FROM MUSTAFA

Even though there are a lot of cases of refugees who seek asylum in Kosovo, for most of them Kosovo is still a transit country, not a destination. According to the officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the number of asylum seekers is increasing every year and if we take a look at the statistics during the last years, the numbers speak clearly. Legal protection in Kosovo is given to all asylum seekers immediately upon their request for asylum. While the largest number of asylum seekers enter the country legally and thus register themselves at the police stations, there are still cases of illegal entrances in the territory of Kosovo, in an attempt to continue towards Western European countries. Asylum seekers (AS) in Kosovo have restricted movement rights until identity card for asylum seekers has been issued to them. After interviews and obtaining personal data, they are given identity cards and allowed free movement during the day until 10 p.m. when they must return to the AS center. Nevertheless, some of the refugees expressed their interest to live in Kosovo and for 2021 we have 20 cases from the Middle East who granted international protection.

During this year JRS Kosovo is working with 2 Reception Centres located in Magure and in Vranidoll. The center-based in Magure has a capacity to accommodate around 100 asylum seekers and it has a very good infrastructure while the center in Vranidoll can accommodate up to 200 asylum seekers.

Mustafa S.C. was born in Turkey. Throughout his life, he has lived in different countries of the world. Some years ago he came to Kosovo with his parents, two sisters, and two brothers. Because of the political situation, his family moved to Germany leaving him in Kosovo, unable to join them. Mustafa was accommodated in the Asylum seekers center first till he received the status of a refugee in Kosovo. Even though he was only 18 at the time he went through a hard period, feeling alone with no one by his side.

Once he got the status, he was accommodated in a private apartment paid for by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. JRS has been supporting him with food and hygienic packages, psychosocial support, and an Albanian Language course. Two years ago, JRS supported Mustafa in his studies, and he will get his degree in IT Management in a year. Mustafa is currently living in Prishtina, attending his studies and being active in JRS social activities. He hopes to become a Kosovar citizen, employed, and with a bright career in the future.



"Now, while writing this letter I feel so lucky to be in the warm, comfortable library of AAB, where I am currently pursuing my studies. This is because of JRS who is paying for my studies. I met them while I was living in the camp and since then they have made me understand that I am not alone. I cannot express the happiness I got when the kind and helpful staff told me that they would try to help me and not leave me alone. And yes, they did it." - Mustafa



JRS SEE

JULY - SEPTEMBER • 2021

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FR. STANKO PERICA

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