



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

HIAS
Europe



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2023
Annual
Report

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Cover: An associate of Mental Health and Psychological Support Curriculum (MHPSS) programme by HIAS embraced a group of elderly refugees at a shelter in Lviv, Ukraine. (Paula Bronstein for HIAS)

HIAS stands for a world in which refugees find welcome, safety, and opportunity.

Guided and inspired by our Jewish values and history, as well as by humanitarian principles, HIAS provides vital services to refugees and asylum seekers in more than 20 countries worldwide, supports them while they rebuild their lives, and advocates for their fundamental rights.

In addition to its support for worldwide humanitarian operations, HIAS Europe supports European Jewish communities, organisations, and activists in their efforts to welcome and integrate refugees. Furthermore, HIAS Europe adds a Jewish voice to European discussions on forced migration and related humanitarian issues.

This report lays out the impact of HIAS Europe's key activities in 2023:

1. Providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people in 12 countries globally.
2. Supporting Jewish communities to mobilise in favour of refugees across Europe.
3. Advocating for principled EU policies on forced migration and humanitarian crises.

In 2023, HIAS Europe worked in: Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Moldova, Panama, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine.



(HIAS Archives)

Foreword

As 2023 unfolded, the global landscape of displacement and humanitarian crises continued to evolve, presenting new challenges for HIAS Europe and its mission of providing assistance to the most vulnerable populations. **The crisis in Ukraine – the worst displacement crisis in Europe since World War II** – persisted, but now with waning international attention and concurrent compassion fatigue from donors. Amid the dwindling media coverage, we remained committed to assisting displaced Ukrainians – inside Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. Across the European Union, Jewish communities continued to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian refugees through our Welcome Circles project, and assistance to well over 100,000 displaced people was administered through newly established field offices in Moldova, Poland, and Romania.

In April, **a violent conflict erupted in Sudan**, triggering one of the largest and fastest displacement crises worldwide. The repercussions extended beyond Sudan's borders, engulfing neighbouring countries like Chad, where HIAS has maintained a steadfast presence for over two decades. Working in camps in the Eastern border region, home to hundreds of thousands of refugees displaced in previous conflicts, our teams provided mental health support and psychological first aid to a population traumatised by violence.

The Israel-Gaza crisis and the Hamas attacks in October stirred deep concerns among European Jews, exacerbating fears already heightened by rising antisemitism and complicating our work to bring Jewish and migrant communities throughout Europe together in the framework of the Neighbours project. While in Israel HIAS intensified its efforts to support affected communities and displaced people – including refugees and asylum seekers – and collaborated closely with local organisations, at HIAS Europe we focused on renewing our commitment to interfaith cooperation between faith communities across the continent.

Throughout these tumultuous times, **HIAS Europe stayed strongly dedicated to alleviating the suffering of displaced populations worldwide.** Deepening partnerships with Jewish communities across the continent and building on the network of HIAS field offices in over 20 countries, we continued to navigate complex humanitarian landscapes, making a meaningful difference in the lives of forcibly displaced people.

Ruth Ringer, Board Chair

Ilan Cohn, Director

HIAS Europe Global Impact in 2023

Global Humanitarian Assistance to Refugees

738,724 

People reached through services including legal counselling, economic inclusion, protection from gender-based violence, community-based mental health and psychosocial support.

 **214,179**

Individuals to whom food was distributed globally.

180,333 

People reached through community and child protection services.

 **129,888**

People provided cash-based assistance.



Ukraine Crisis Response



168,000

People reached through emergency response, together with local partners, in Ukraine, Poland, Moldova, and Romania.

396



Ukrainians relocated from Poland and Moldova to Europe, Canada, and the US.



789

Ukrainian refugees in Europe integrated with the assistance of 194 Jewish volunteers in 12 countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, and Spain).

Humanitarian Programming Reach

12 

Operational countries with humanitarian programmes support: Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Greece, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Moldova, Panama, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine.



War in Ukraine

In 2023, Ukraine's humanitarian crisis worsened, with 6.4 million displaced people, dwindling aid, and neighbouring countries struggling to support refugees. HIAS provided critical assistance, focusing on long-term support, gender-based violence prevention, mental health support, economic inclusion, and empowering local organisations across the region.

Ukrainian civilians cross the Ukraine-Poland border at the Krakovets border crossing. (AG for HIAS)

Ukraine

From Emergency to Long-Term Humanitarian Crisis

168,000

People reached through emergency response, together with local partners, in Ukraine, Poland, Moldova, and Romania.



A displaced family photographed inside the university shelter where they lived after their home was destroyed in Ukraine's Donetsk district. (Paula Bronstein for HIAS)

In 2023, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine continued to worsen, with nearly 6.4 million people being forced to flee. Humanitarian access in the country remained a significant obstacle due to administrative barriers, landmine contamination, and conflict, all of which impeded aid delivery to affected populations. Neighbouring countries like Romania, Poland, and Moldova continued to welcome people displaced from Ukraine, but experienced difficulties throughout the year in providing them with adequate services and responding to their needs.

HIAS' response involved life-saving humanitarian assistance, such as cash and emergency housing, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response services, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services. HIAS applied its experience to strengthen the capacity of over 45 local civil society organisations in Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine covering GBV, MHPSS, economic inclusion, shelter, protection, and legal assistance.

Across the region, HIAS transitioned its focus from immediate relief to long-term support for refugees. In Ukraine's hard-to-reach areas, HIAS empowered women-led organisations and built capacity in GBV and mental health support, for example through the Women & Girls Fund initiative, which awarded small grants to local organisations into 2024. Collaborating with partners, comprehensive programmes addressed GBV, mental health, economic inclusion, health, shelter, and water and sanitation needs.

In Poland, HIAS ensured refugees accessed rights and achieved improved mental health and freedom from GBV, offering economic opportunities in urban centres like Krakow and Warsaw, and supporting LGBTQ+ and Roma communities.

In Romania, HIAS prioritised longer-term stabilisation, emphasising community empowerment and economic inclusion. Integrating GBV and mental health services into economic development programmes underscored the commitment to addressing refugees' most urgent needs while fostering resilience and self-sufficiency.

In Moldova, HIAS adopted a community-centred approach to promote the safety and self-reliance of displaced individuals, working with local partners and prioritising economic resilience through employment and entrepreneurship.

Ice-Breaking Bonds

In the heart of eastern Romania, Marina Yaraliieva and her son Varlaam found refuge from the turmoil of the Ukrainian war. Thanks to Help Ukrainians and a partnership with HIAS, Varlaam found solace and integration in Galati's ice hockey community. Initiated by the ice hockey club CSM Dunărea Galati and supported by HIAS, the pilot programme brought Romanian and Ukrainian children together through sports, offering more than just athletic training. For Varlaam and others, hockey provided stability, purpose, and a sense of belonging amidst the trauma of displacement. The programme's success has sparked plans for further integration efforts, with taekwondo, swimming, and chess on the horizon. Through sports and shared experiences, the project offered a template for other communities to follow in welcoming Ukrainian refugees with open arms.



HIAS funded youth hockey groups for Ukrainian refugees in Galati, Romania. (HIAS Romania)



Chad Refugee Crisis

Since Sudan's conflict began in April 2023, 500,000 people fled to Chad, a country with limited resources and already hosting 400,000 refugees. HIAS, with two decades of regional experience, provided essential aid, mental health support, and gender-based violence response, addressing the escalating humanitarian crisis in one of the world's poorest regions.

Hundreds of newly arrived Sudanese refugees wait for the distribution of UNHCR relief kits at the Madjigilta site in Chad's Ouaddaï region, on the border with Sudan. (© UNHCR/Colin Delfosse)

Chad

**Sudan's Long Shadow
A New Conflict in Darfur Fuels Chad's Struggle**

154,700

People reached through emergency response.



Djimié Abakar Yacoub, a Sudanese refugee who came to the Arkoum camp after the violence in Sudan began in April 2023, is a participant in the HIAS livelihood support programme and runs a small business at the camp market. (Moundi Kouakaine/HIAS Chad)

Since conflict erupted in Sudan in April 2023, triggering what by the end of the year was the largest internal displacement crisis in the world with **9 million internally displaced people**, Chad received nearly **500,000 refugees fleeing violence**, primarily women and children. Already hosting 400,000 Sudanese refugees, Chad's resources were stretched thin, as the country was also accommodating 215,000 internally displaced Chadians and nearly 180,000 refugees from other nations. However, the crisis in the region received minimal international attention, exacerbating the strain on Chad's limited resources. Chad's vulnerabilities are compounded by its status as one of the world's poorest countries, where access to essentials like electricity, clean water, and sanitation remains scarce.

In response to the escalating humanitarian emergency, HIAS was actively involved at the Chadian border, leveraging nearly 20 years of experience in the region. Collaborating with organisations like the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF, HIAS was instrumental in distributing food, cash, and essential items to newly arrived refugees. Emergency activities included mental health and psychosocial support, gender-based violence response, child protection, and distribution of crucial items like mosquito nets and blankets.

What set HIAS apart in this crisis is our extensive experience in Chad and deep understanding of the regional dynamics. Operating in multiple locations across Chad, including the east, N'Djamena, and the south, HIAS was able to navigate diverse contexts and provide tailored assistance.

A Dangerous Journey to Economic Empowerment

Djimié Abakar Yacoub, 51, once led a peaceful life in Maragibir, Sudan, with her husband and three children. However, the eruption of conflict in April prompted them to seek refuge in Chad. Amid a perilous journey, tragedy struck as her husband died en route, leaving Djimié to continue with her children alone. After days of travel, they found a place to stay in Adré and later settled in a camp in Arkoum.

Life in the camp was hard but things gradually improved as the family gained UNHCR registration and engaged in community activities. It was through these connections that Djimié encountered HIAS, which offered support to refugee women for income-generating endeavors. Djimié received vital cash assistance, enabling her to start a small business selling tea, coffee, and donuts in the camp market.



Ukrainian refugee Anastasiia (R) visits her host in Brussels, Talia Dan, after having moved out and found her own apartment. (Justin Jin for HIAS Europe)

From Crisis to Community

European Welcome Circles for Ukrainian Newcomers

Fleeing from home due to war and starting afresh in a completely new place where everything is unfamiliar can be incredibly difficult. But that's where the Welcome Circles project comes in. Originally set up to help Afghan refugees in the United States, it was successfully adapted to assist Ukrainians in Europe, starting in March 2022.

Welcome Circles are groups of volunteers from Jewish communities across Europe who assist newcomers with everything from securing a place to live to getting into language classes, finding work, and tapping into social services until the refugees can stand on their own. In 2023, HIAS Europe gave communities and volunteers high-level training, making sure they had all the skills they needed, and set up a resource hub that offered personalised support.

Results showed more community involvement, better education opportunities for children, more people getting access to healthcare, and, perhaps most important, an overall feeling of community and safety.



Local students visit the Keren Or synagogue in Lyon, France. (Keren Or Lyon Congregation for HIAS)

Breaking Down Barriers and Fighting Hate

The Neighbours Project

In response to the concerning surge of antisemitism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia across Europe, HIAS Europe, alongside the European Union of Progressive Judaism and eight Jewish congregations spanning six countries, launched the Neighbours project in April 2022. Funded by the European Union, the project focused on combating hate and harmful stereotypes between Jewish communities and their Muslim and migrant neighbours. By opening the doors of synagogues to groups of youngsters, Neighbours promoted mutual understanding, reduced prejudice, and facilitated local integration. Partner congregations created interfaith coalitions, each tailoring unique activities to combat bigotry, from bringing together Holocaust survivors with young migrants to exchange experiences to hosting interfaith dance workshops and educational workshops on Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

Neighbours showed promising results in shifting attitudes towards Jewish people and developed coalition-building guides and educational resources, laying the groundwork for sustained interfaith dialogue and solidarity.

HIAS Europe Programmes & Activities in 2023

Legal Services

12,693



People offered legal counselling, advice, and training.

Gender-Based Violence



84,334

People reached through GBV protection and prevention activities.

Economic Inclusion

8,568



People offered training and support for self-sufficiency, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Mental Health & Psychosocial Support



144,198

People provided with mental health support, counselling, and training.

Community Engagement

789



Ukrainian refugees in Europe integrated with the assistance of 194 Jewish volunteers in 12 countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, and Spain).

1,780



Youths took part in synagogue visits in the context of the Neighbours project, and all 8 partner congregations created interfaith coalitions.

Refugee Resettlement

396



Ukrainians relocated from Poland and Moldova to Europe, Canada, and the US.

Emergency Response



378,900

People reached.

Advocacy



HIAS Europe's advocacy focuses in 2023 included: the situation in the EU of third-country nationals who fled Ukraine following Russia's invasion; the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive; refugee resettlement in the EU; EU budget reform; and the EU asylum reform.

Financial Report

Balance Sheet 2023

ASSETS

Fixed Assets	5,163 €
Financial Assets	9,000 €

Current Assets

Income Receivable	400,638 €
Cash at Bank	1,785,562 €

TOTAL ASSETS	2,200,362 €
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LIABILITIES

Capital and Reserves	511,604 €
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Current Liabilities

Deferred Income	1,506,655 €
Payments Due to Suppliers	126,193 €
Accrued Staff Costs	55,910 €

TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,200,362 €
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Profit and Loss 2023

Balance Brought Forward	605,332 €
Revenue 2023	5,127,752 €
Expenses 2023	5,221,481 €
Surplus Carried Forward	511,604 €

REVENUE

Funding from HIAS Inc., Grants and Donations	5,125,056 €
Revaluation USD Reserves	2,697 €

TOTAL REVENUE	5,127,752 €
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EXPENDITURE

Donations to HIAS Country Offices and Other Beneficiaries	3,872,389 €
Staff Costs	967,333 €
Services and Other Goods	324,743 €
Asset Depreciation	3,841 €
Bank Charges and Currency Exchange	53,174 €

TOTAL EXPENSES	5,221,481 €
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How You Can Help

Donate

Visit: Donate Europe
hias.org/donate-europe

Stay Informed

Sign up for our Newsletter
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Volunteer

For more information, send us an email at:
hiaseurope@hias.org

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Leadership

Ilan Cohn (Director); Board Members: Ruth Ringer (Chair of the Board); Bill Echikson, Donatella Soria, Jonathan Faull, Yohan Benizri, Robert Kregel

Donors

Institutional Donors: Airbnb; Alfred Landecker Foundation; Choose Love; Circle of Service; Dutch Council for Refugees; European Commission; Foundation Open Society Institute; Genesis Foundation; HIAS Inc; International Rescue Committee; Islamic Relief USA; JDC; La Luz Philanthropy; Lauder Foundation; Mackenzie Scott

Foundation (formerly Scott Jewett Foundation); Melissa; Network of Migrant Women in Greece; Morningstar Foundation; Rockefeller Foundation; Save the Children; Shapiro Foundation; The Jewish Federations of North America; US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor; US Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; US Embassy in Greece; World Vision Finland.

Private donors: Thank you to the numerous private donors, including many members of the Belgian Jewish community, who donated money for emergency response activities.