



HELPING HANDS

How EU staff helped Europe through COVID-19



YEAR 2020

APRIL 2020

Members of EU Staff for Climate agree to create the Fund. All volunteers within the EU institutions with a special interest in environmental issues, they turn to Belgium's King Baudouin Foundation to run the logistics.

MAY 2020

Within weeks, nearly 700 civil servants working mainly in Brussels have contributed **€150,000**.

That allowed rapid grants worth a total of **€85,000** to six charities in Italy and Spain, including vulnerable people sheltering at home in Genoa and the Spanish food banks federation.

EARLY JUNE 2020

Second round of grants worth **€50,000** to five associations in Romania, Greece and Portugal.

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JANUARY 2021

Fund tops **€500,000** with over 1,200 contributors

MARCH 2021

The biggest grant round, donating over **€100,000** to seven organisations, in Czechia, Spain and Greece.

24 JUNE 2021

European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly bestows a Special Award for Good Administration on the Fund. "In addition to the tremendous efforts of our institutions, many EU civil servants feel an obligation to make a personal contribution and help countries and people in need," she says.

30 JUNE 2021

A new record granting round distributes over **€178,000** to 13 organisations in the Western Balkans and the Baltic states.

YEAR 2021





8 JULY 2020

The Fund hits **€275,000**, contributed by some 900 EU employees.

16 OCT 2020

Fund Chair David O'Sullivan, the former Secretary General of the European Commission, chairs an open meeting for donors and selected grantees. Bruno Mola of the Fund Management Committee reflects: "Listening to the stories of those who are on the front lines fighting the effects of the pandemic was humbling and motivated us to take our initiative to another level."

21 OCT 2020

The Fund holds a participatory workshop to discuss how COVID-19 relief can best be applied to "building back better" in Europe.

CHRISTMAS 2020

The Local Staff Committee for Commission staff in Brussels chooses to support the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund as its annual Christmas cause. Despite the closure of traditional canteen collection points, public servants donate over **€50,000** in this seasonal drive.

NOVEMBER 2020

The Fund stands at **€440,000** and has so far assisted 21 organisations in eight Member States.

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

JULY 2021

In response to devastating floods in Belgium, Germany and other nearby regions, the Fund launches a special appeal that raises **€100,000**.

1 OCT 2021

Fund committee hosts landmark conference to review progress and debate the way ahead. Funds raised to date total **€828,520**, from some 1,500 donors. Grants made to 58 organisations in 21 countries.

500 DAYS

Milestones in the Fund's battle against COVID-19



EDITORIAL

A year and a half ago I was approached by the King Baudouin Foundation to join a group of highly dedicated colleagues from EU Staff for Climate to chair the management committee of the EU Staff COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund.

It was a time of turbulence and suffering for Europe and the initiative of EU staff to show our collective solidarity for those who most needed it was a very important signal that Brussels cares. It cares for those who suffer and it cares for the planet.

The Fund initially addressed immediate needs of local organisations around Europe that provided emergency response and socio-economic support to those most hit by the effects of the pandemic. After the pandemic, the fund would support a social and economic recovery inspired by the principles of sustainability, social justice and planetary health.

By the end of 2020, the fund had disbursed €348,000 to fund 28 projects in 10 countries – projects that made a real difference to people who, because of the pandemic, faced challenges when providing health and care services and trying to meet their basic needs: food, mobility, education, housing, basic security and social interaction to name a few. By the summer of 2021, another 20 projects in 11 countries had been funded with €283,500. Thousands of people around Europe received the support they needed thanks to the generous donations of the EU colleagues who committed to the fund.

Over the period, I came to appreciate the engaging, inclusive and participative way the fund has worked with donor communities, including the unions and associations of EU staff. The fund organised a discussion with donors and beneficiaries and benefited from the generosity of the Christmas action of the Brussels Staff Committee, and has been granted a special award in the Ombudsman's Good Administration competition.

As the vaccination campaigns advance across Europe, the challenge of the pandemic changes character and location – although in any disaster those who suffer most are the most vulnerable. The floods and wildfires of this summer have not only put the climate crisis higher on the political agenda, but also highlighted the need for solidarity for our fellow inhabitants of Europe suffering the consequences of climate change, and for those who care about our environment and the climate.

A special collection for victims of the recent floods in the Benelux countries and Germany raised just over €100,000, making the total sum raised €828,520.

The €100,000 has already been earmarked for the urgent needs of schools, food banks and shelters for people in difficulty.

Looking back at this remarkable journey, it is important to reflect on the fund's future direction for giving where the solidarity of EU staff is most needed, whether as a result of the pandemic or any other kind of catastrophe and how this solidarity can most effectively drive sustainability, social justice and planetary health.

This is the topic of an open dialogue with donors and beneficiaries as well as experts.

I cannot but express my thanks and congratulations to all involved, the King Baudouin Foundation, the members of the management committee, the members of EU Staff for Climate and all other colleagues who have contributed to this effort.

David O'Sullivan

Chair of the management committee



**Galatea Foundation:
Counselling for frontline
staff in Spain**

€15,000

“The speed of the grant was important. In the first two months there was a lot of demand from healthcare staff and we had to pay the network of psychologists.”

Project manager Anna Mitjans

RESOURCES

For struggling healthcare workers

Healthcare professionals under extreme pressure from working in the midst of the pandemic found support and practical advice from the Galatea Foundation. The foundation was set up in 2001 to serve health workers suffering from addiction and mental ill health but focused its attention on the emotional trauma and psychosocial problems caused by COVID-19 when the crisis hit.

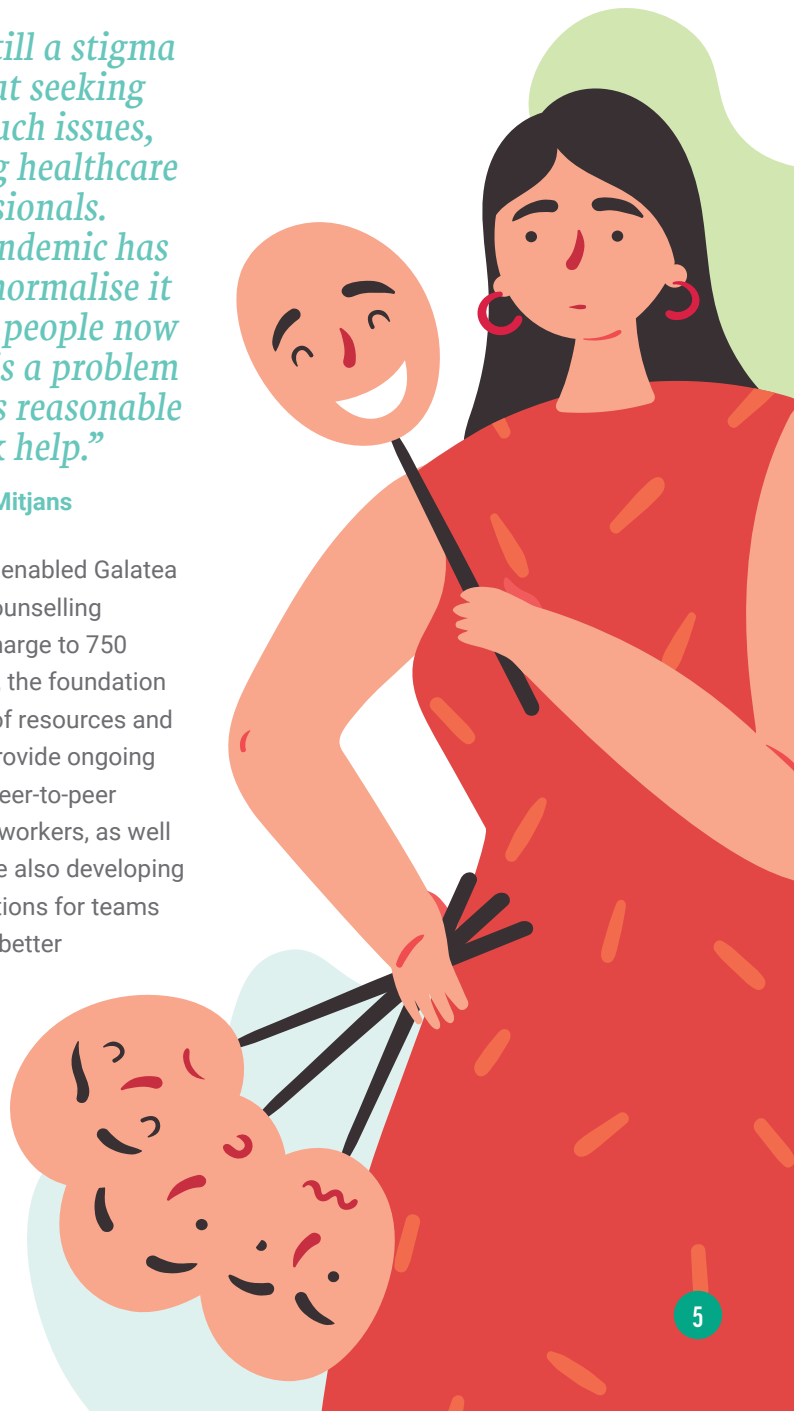
Galatea sprang into immediate action as soon as the scale of the pandemic became clear, in March 2020, and a team of psychologists was quickly recruited to provide video consultations to frontline medical staff. Initially, they presented with high emotional stress, due to the lack of necessary protective equipment and the constant fear of catching the virus and transmitting it to loved ones. As the crisis progressed, the nature of complaints evolved too, to include burnout, exhaustion and anger at people not following the rules.

“There is still a stigma here about seeking help for such issues, even among healthcare professionals. But the pandemic has started to normalise it – lots more people now admit this is a problem and that it’s reasonable to seek help.”

Anna Mitjans

The EU Staff grant enabled Galatea to provide these counselling sessions free of charge to 750 people. Since then, the foundation has created a set of resources and online spaces to provide ongoing professional and peer-to-peer support for health workers, as well as an app. They are also developing specialist interventions for teams to help them work better in a crisis as both individuals and organisations.

fgalatea.org





hROM: Tutoring for Roma youngsters in České Budějovice

€11,000



“We needed to react quickly. We are all volunteers, we don’t need a lot of money to realise our ideas, but we need partners like this who see the problems and understand. This money has given children an opportunity to change their lives.”

Project manager Tereza Koutská

INCLUSION

Tutoring for excluded children

The tiny NGO hROM stepped in during the pandemic to help ensure that disadvantaged children didn’t fall further behind when schools were forced to close. With the help of established relationships with isolated families, two committed teenage tutors and a grant from the EU Staff Fund, they provided equipment, support and a space to learn.

A small group of Roma children of early primary school age joined these informal classes, held twice a week at a community centre in southern Bohemia. Sessions were led by Nela and Nadia, teenage girls keen to play a role in their community and interested in a career in education, supervised by senior mentors with solid teaching experience.

“These children come from socially excluded families – distance learning isn’t obvious for them, they have no money, no chance to get tutoring and can’t take part in other NGO programmes for various reasons.”

Tereza Koutská

As well as sessions on language, maths and IT, pupils learned about nature during weekend activities. “They have academic classes at school but there is another way to study and we want them to enjoy it in interactive ways,” says project manager Tereza Koutská.

The sessions began in April 2021 and have funding until the end of the year. Koutská still hopes to reach more families in the next few months; while the situation is changing as children generally return to classrooms from September, there is still a need to support excluded youngsters. The grant from the EU Staff Fund was vital, not least for the speed with which it was delivered.

hrom9.webnode.cz





**Pe-Stop: Basic support
for marginalised women
in Bucharest**

€10,000

“The grant was a lifeline for us. The moment the pandemic started, work stopped. And people were paid very little to begin with, so it’s not like they had savings to fall back on. When the state of emergency was declared, our priorities changed. We called people to check up on them and see how they were coping, and we were shocked that their children were literally starving. They were desperate.”

Irina Vasilescu, president Pe Stop

SURVIVAL

Essential supplies in desperate times

For two years before the pandemic, Pe Stop had distributed menstrual products to vulnerable girls and women. With lockdown, many people lost their already precarious incomes and access to shelter, making food, water and fuel pressing necessities.

Many worked in the informal sector, without insurance. Many were also homeless, yet the closure of public parks, for example, cut off water supplies for families living on the street. Without official paperwork, others risked fines for breaking curfew to seek medicines.

A grant in summer 2020 from the EU Staff Fund was vital, allowing Pe Stop to pivot and broaden its range of services in the capital.

Alongside menstrual products, Pe Stop began distributing food, water, medicine and baby products to people who simply couldn’t afford them any more. For four months in 2020, they distributed 350 packages a week. They also provided support services, helping people navigate the health system and referring them to other NGOs.

“Most of the people we work with are Roma, they’re not welcome in hospitals and they’re not treated nicely, usually,” says Pe Stop president Irina Vasilescu.

“So we helped people, especially with gynaecological problems, who were afraid to go to hospital. We are trying to create lasting relationships with people, not just show up and give them a package each month, because that’s a very low-impact and high-cost way of doing things.”

By the time Pe Stop applied to the EU Staff Fund, Romania’s public health situation had improved, but the NGO had already diverted much of its resources to this changed focus.

The grant got them back on track – and for Vasilescu, it was an important mark of trust in their work to tackle period poverty and to normalise menstruation.

pestop.org





Next Step

Next Step: Practical skills for asylum-seekers in Budapest

€10,000

“The grant was one of the best things that happened to our community during the pandemic. We are so grateful to have had this support because I don’t know what would have happened to many of these people without it.”

Project leader James Peter

FORWARD *A future for refugees*

Hungary’s Next Step organisation has already pivoted once in its short history: set up in 2009 as MigHelp to provide refugees with conflict resolution skills, it switched to teaching technology, languages and other job-related competences to help refugees build a new life in their new country. With the arrival of the pandemic, it switched again, this time to meet more urgent needs.

The grant from the EU Staff Covid Fund allowed them to deliver food packages, provide equipment for online study and support those forced to isolate after a COVID-19 diagnosis. They enlisted children – refugees and Hungarians – to work on a poster campaign fighting disinformation about the virus. And they recruited lawyers to translate fast-changing legislation related to the pandemic.

“A hungry person cannot pay attention to a computer course or take a driving lesson. People have to have shelter and food before they can study, so we tried to directly help with alleviating that hardship.”

James Peter

It soon became clear there was a mental health crisis occurring too, so Next Step assembled specialists to support people in difficulty.

Thanks to the relationship that project manager James Peter and his team had established with the refugee community, people felt comfortable turning to them to discuss sensitive issues.

“The emotional burden became too much,” he says. “So many people fell into depression, there were all kinds of mental health issues, domestic violence was going on. People needed family therapy, and the news was spreading about what we were doing.”

With refugees facing the choice between putting food on the table or protecting themselves from the virus, the grant was a genuine lifeline.

nextstepeu.org





**BCause Foundation:
Women's shelters across
Bulgaria**

€10,000

“The solidarity shown by the EU staff sends a very powerful message. It was an opportunity for the staff themselves to make a valuable contribution, often in their home countries. This donation makes a big difference, especially in times of crisis.”

Fundraising and CSR expert Iva Petrova

HAVENS *From lockdown violence*

The BCause Foundation's Fund Against Domestic Violence supports shelters for women fleeing violent partners in Bulgaria. Their services were stretched thin even before the pandemic, but the COVID-19 lockdowns saw demand rise as incidences of violence against women in the home increased.

Run by NGOs, with building costs and minimum staff wages paid by municipal authorities, 15 shelters across Bulgaria's 28 regions operate with a budget of just €1 per person per day; all are at full capacity. A rapid grant of €10,000, released by the EU Staff COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund in 2020, was distributed between four shelters in four cities, allowing them to respond to the medical and psychosocial needs of women and children fleeing desperate situations.

The speed of the help from Brussels was vital.

“Immediate support was very important, when it became obvious that COVID was coming, and the country's health and social systems were unprepared.”

Iva Petrova

The problems faced by the shelters were varied and often complex. “Many people who end up in a shelter don't have medical insurance; every health problem that arises immediately becomes the shelter's responsibility, and women living in shelters are rarely in very good health,” says BCause fundraising and CSR expert Iva Petrova.

“For example, one shelter had a client with a heart condition that was exacerbated because of COVID, and they were able to help her by paying for her treatment and for therapy after she left hospital.”

Most of the EU staff donation has now been allocated. Among other uses, it has gone on compulsory PCR testing for new arrivals in the shelters, as well as for regular testing and protective clothing for staff. It has also allowed shelters to expand their capacity and support victims of trafficking. The fund's organisers were able to send help where it was most needed, quickly enough to make an immediate and tangible impact.

bcause.bg/en/women-fund.html





GRANTEES

Country



Grantee

Project

Amount

Website

Emergency Italy

Support for the most vulnerable, improving access to healthcare and information

€25,000

www.emergency.it

La Comunità società cooperativa sociale Onlus

Distanti ma Vicini in Genoa: Helps vulnerable people to buy protective equipment and teaches them about health protection measures

€10,000

www.lacomunita.it

CESVI

"We come to you" for elderly in Milan and Bergamo: Enhances home assistance, provides personal safety devices, delivers food, masks and medicines, and coordinates volunteers

€10,000

www.cesvi.eu

Moltivolti impresa sociale

Moltivolti responds to the COVID-19 emergency in Ballarò, Palermo: Multicultural meals for people in difficulty and free internet access

€13,000

www.moltivolti.org

San Gennaro Community Foundation

No one is saved alone: Mobilises entrepreneurs, citizens and non-profits to gather resources for vulnerable families without access to official welfare measures

€15,000

www.fondazioneangennaro.org

Centro Calabrese di Solidarietà

S.A.R.S. (Supporting Additional Recovery Services): Online psychosocial and psychological support for young victims of domestic violence

€15,000

www.ccs-catanzaro.it

Fondazione Domus de Luna

"I hug you". Support for families with children in extreme need: Helps families in food poverty, provides computers for children and organises medical supplies, clothing and games

€15,000

www.domusdeluna.it
www.tiabbraccio.it



Federación Española de Bancos de Alimentos	Seeks deals from the food industry and delivers food to charities for distribution to people in need	€10,000	www.fesbal.org.es
Fundación Galatea	Psychological support to healthcare professionals suffering during the pandemic via an online platform	€15,000	www.fgalatea.org
Cruz Roja	Supports physically and socially vulnerable older people, with telephone support for those isolated	€15,000	www2.cruzroja.es
Albergue San Juan de Dios	Mas Familia: Arranged distribution of food to socially vulnerable families	€15,000	www.alberguesanjuanedediosmadrid.org
Fundacion Prodis	Promotes young people with intellectual disabilities in the face of the digital divide in the context of COVID-19	€16,546	www.fundacionprodis.org



Emergency Food Network	Brings together families in need of food, volunteers who deliver food parcels or cook meals and organisations offering food	€10,000	https://bancoalimentar.pt
ADAAC Tech4Covid19	Student Keep: Platform to provide digital access to education for children and young people studying at home	€10,000	tech4covid19.org



Bodossaki Foundation	Emergency Food Fund: Ensures food security and supports children, the elderly and those living in poverty, those in quarantine or affected by the economic downturn	€10,000	www.bodossaki.gr
Faros	Supports unaccompanied children and young people in urban Athens in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown	€15,000	faros.org
Lesvos Solidarity	Medical, psychological and material support for refugees, locals and NGO field workers during the pandemic	€15,000	www.lesvossolidarity.org





BCause Foundation	Helps shelters finance emergency PCR tests, protective clothing, hygiene supplies and unforeseen medical expenses for women escaping domestic violence	€10,000	www.bcause.bg/women-fund.html
Mission Wings Foundation	Provides refugee families with food, medicines and protective equipment and, for the most vulnerable, finances rent, transport and administrative costs	€10,000	www.facebook.com/MissionWingsStaraZagora
Project Northwest Foundation	Soup kitchen for elderly people in 12 villages in the Bulgarian northwest	€10,000	www.severozapad.net



Asociația Pe Stop	COVID-19 – Support to vulnerable communities: Addresses the effects of the pandemic on women and girls in poverty in Bucharest	€10,000	pestop.org
Asociația Bunul Samaritean	COVID-19 – Support to vulnerable communities: Operates day centre for disadvantaged families, with food, showers, advice, medical help and activities	€10,000	asociatiabunulsamaritean.ro
Carusel Association	Buys hygiene and sanitary products and computer equipment for users of its day centre	€5,000	www.carusel.org/en/home



Association MoSt	Supports homeless people in Split and surrounding areas during the COVID-19 pandemic	€10,000	www.most.hr
Brave Phone	A confidential hotline for children suffering violence, rape or violation of their rights, with phone support for parents.	€10,000	hrbritelefon.hr
Spolecnost pro ranou peci, pobočka Ostrava	Help for families with children with visual impairments during the pandemic	€7,600	www.ranapece.cz/ostrava
Loutky v nemocnici	Puppets in Hospital: Uses drama therapy activities to enhance psychosocial care for children	€19,800	www.loutkyvnemocnici.cz
I MY	We will back up families - Intensive support for families of babies and young children with disabilities or delayed development	€19,780	www.imypomahame.cz
hROM CB	Big brothers, big sisters for distance learning: Provides equipment and mentoring in Roma families where school closures have a greater impact on education	€11,000	www.facebook.com/hromcb



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Fundacja Ocalenie	Welcome Home programme: Offers rent subsidies, Polish lessons, psychotherapy, help finding a job, educational support and legal assistance for refugee families	€15,000	ocalenie.org.pl
Fundacja Pokolenia	Uses cargo bike to transport books, mail, food, medicine and hygiene products to isolated people during the pandemic and promotes cycling as a healthy and safe means of transport	€20,000	http://fundacjapokolenia.pl/





Karpatská nadácia	School Despite Corona: Supports alternative education for Roma children without access to school or distance education due to the coronavirus	€20,000	www.karpatskanadacia.sk
Community Center for Minorities, Veľký Krtíš	Distributes medicine, hygiene supplies and mobile phones and offers advice on employment and social issues to households in Veľký Krtíš	€10,000	
Divé maky	Provides cheap laptops or tablets, software, antivirus programs and internet access to socially disadvantaged students to allow them to study at home	€10,000	www.divemaky.sk



Next Step Hungary Association	Emergency cross-community COVID-19 impact mitigation through emotional, practical and financial support	€10,000	nextstepu.org
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Estonian Food Bank (Sihtasutus Eesti-Hollandi Heategevusfond)	Distributes weekly food packages to people in need during the pandemic in Tallinn	€20,000	www.toidupank.ee
Estonian Refugee Council	Provides material and mental health support to refugees to boost their post-COVID recovery	€12,400	https://www.pagulasabi.ee





LMAB Dace	Mobile e-class for Latvian countryside	€16,500	www.lma-dace.lv
Association MARTA Centre	Safe + Free in Latgale	€15,000	www.marta.lv
Asociācija "Supolka"	Psychological, physical and peer support to refugee children from Belarus, impacted by both COVID-19 and the Belarussian crisis	€5,095	supolka.lv



Crisis Intervention Center	Psychological support for people experiencing emotional crises during the pandemic	€10,000	www.krizesiveikimas.lt
Lietuvos Raudonojo Kryžiaus Draugija	Warm Visits: Trained Red Cross volunteers visit isolated, mainly elderly, people, to reduce loneliness and improve well-being	€10,000	www.redcross.lt



The Timok Club	Distance Learning for All	€19,870	www.timok.org
Centre for Youth Integration	Back on Track	€15,000	www.cim.org.rs



NVO Mladi Romi-Herceg Novi	Provides mentorship support for Roma children in the 9th grade	€19,950	www.mladiromi.me
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NGO Rritu- Termokiss	Termokiss's Response Against COVID-19: A community-run centre in Pristina providing a welcoming space for everyone, including those whose voices are not always heard	€15,000	www.facebook.com/Termokiss
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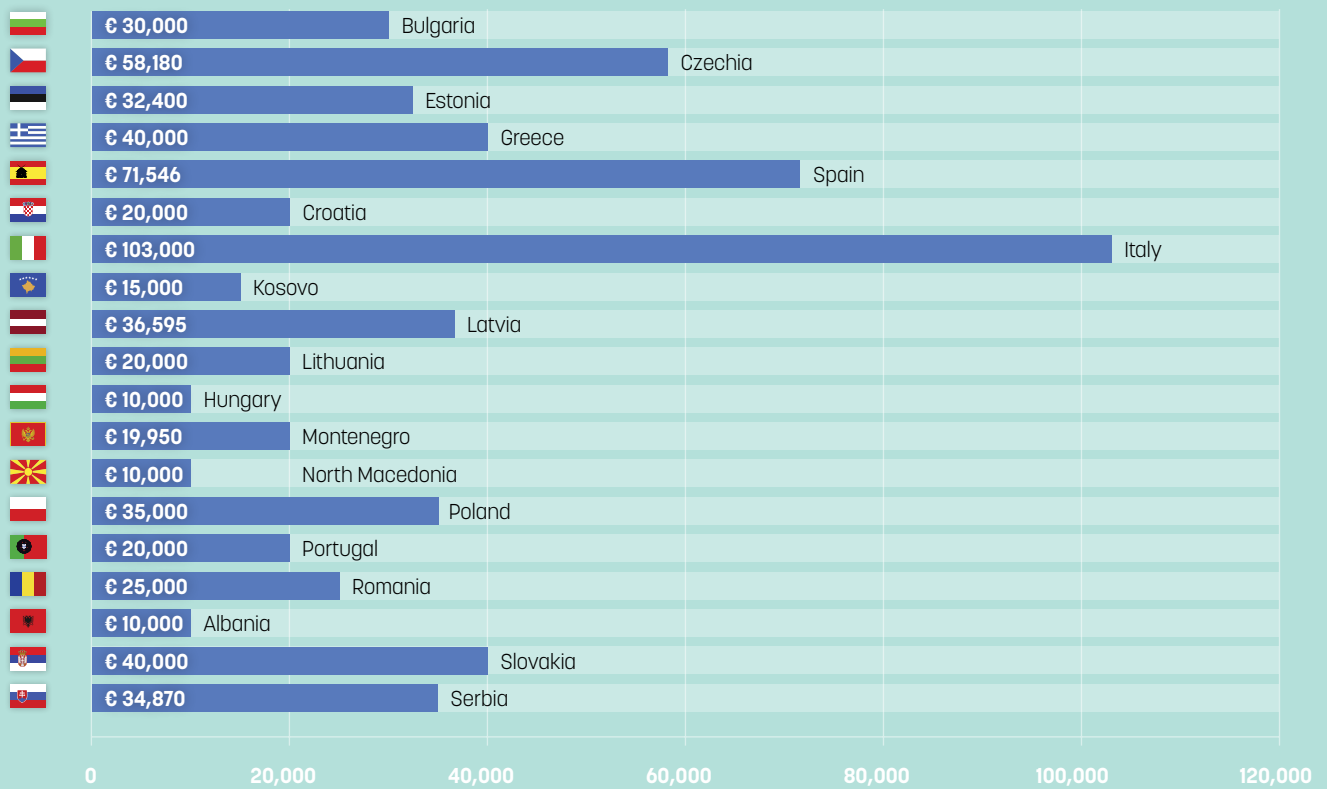
Svetulka Nora Skopje	Retweet a Meal: Citizens and companies provide weekly meals for vulnerable people	€10,000	https://www.facebook.com/retvitniobrok/
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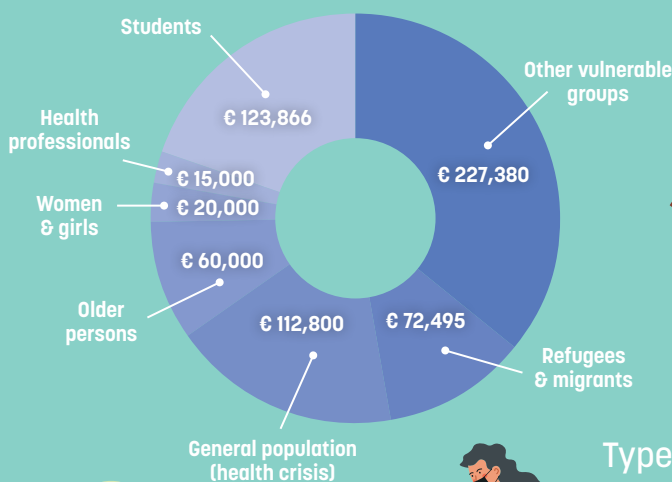
Woman Center for Development and Culture Albania	Psychological and vocational education support to women and children victims of violence	€10,000	wcdc.al
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SPENDING BREAKDOWN

Countries that received support



Type of group supported



Type of project supported

