
Romania: asylum applications on the rise. 2020 marks highest number of refugees in the past 3 decades. 62% of minors are unaccompanied

Despite the travel restrictions due to the pandemic, over 6,000 asylum applications were recorded in Romania in 2020 - the highest number in the last three decades. More than 1,500 applications were from minors, of whom 62% were unaccompanied. And this trend is continuing in 2021, according to the organizations Save the Children Romania and JRS Romania. Indeed, over 5,000 asylum applications have been received so far, mainly from refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen and Eritrea. "We must remember these brothers and sisters of ours in our prayer intentions", the Romanian Bishops' Conference (CER) said in a statement, inviting Catholics across the country to support the efforts of the local Church by "raising public awareness of the plight of the people who are forced to migrate". The World Day that the Church dedicates to migrants and refugees was celebrated last Sunday, 26 September, with a Mass at Saint Joseph Cathedral in Bucharest presided over by Fr Marius Talo?, director of JRS Romania. Cultural and linguistic diversity has characterised both the celebrants and the assembly, which brought together migrants and refugees from Belgium, Cameroon, India, Ireland, Italy, the UK, Nigeria, Poland, Spain, Sri Lanka and the US. Among the gifts at the Offertory was a cross made with wood from Lampedusa's migrant boats. "Besides the liturgical organization and ecclesial synergy, it was very emotional to see an osmosis of hearts taking place through prayer and faith, acceptance and respect, solidarity and generosity", Fr Talo? concluded.

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