

ECRE Annual Report on 2021

During 2021, ECRE pursued the agreed objectives set out in its Strategic Plan 2020-2022. Its work covered three activity areas, 1) Legal Support and Litigation, 2) Advocacy and 3) Communications. The Strategic Plan and therefore this report also covers objectives for organisational development.

Summary

Legal Support and Litigation

ECRE continued efforts to effect legal changes through litigation to ensure access to, and the advancement of, the rights of displaced people in Europe. Litigation and legal support remained the key focus and ECRE supported a number of cases before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the UN Treaty Bodies and domestic courts following requests from the ELENA network and ECRE members across Europe. ECRE provided strategic advice on the choice of international avenue and case support, with a view to engage UN mechanisms and refer questions on the interpretation of EU law provisions to the CJEU. Upon request of ECRE and ELENA members, ECRE covered litigation-related costs in 20 cases, where such support was crucial for launching or continuation of legal proceedings.

In partnership with members of the Litigation Task Force comprised of the AIRE Centre, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and the Dutch Refugee Council, ECRE submitted and prepared seven third-party interventions before the ECtHR and national courts. In addition, a submission to the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe regarding the implementation of an impact judgment in the case of *Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary* was prepared.

ECRE's litigation work is closely linked to the efficiency and development of the ELENA network. At the request of members of ELENA, ECRE supported mutual learning between legal professionals via online and in-person legal trainings and the sharing of information by expanding and managing the ELENA Forum. ECRE also advised in cases relating to access to international protection at the European borders and summary expulsions, criminalisation of assistance to migrants, and cessation of international protection. In 2021 the ELENA coordinators and ECRE jointly responded to over 125 legal queries.

Finally, ECRE is completing a redesign and the IT transformation of the European Database of Asylum Law (EDAL) website and revision of its content. EDAL is an essential tool aiming to inform on and harmonise the use of asylum-related case law in Europe.

Advocacy

In 2021, the focus of ECRE's advocacy work was to:

- Actively engage in and influence the negotiations of the Pact proposals: ECRE discussed its analysis and recommendations with MEPs from five political groups and was invited to all expert consultations on the proposals that included civil society; ECRE's position informed the European Parliament's draft reports and related amendments and was used extensively on heavily in two studies the EP commissioned on the Pact; ECRE met representatives of thirteen EU Member States to discuss the Pact proposals;
- Provide comprehensive and up to date information on asylum in Europe via the Asylum Information Database (AIDA): The number of views on the AIDA website reached approximately 880,000, and AIDA outputs were cited in over 700 national court cases, at least 150 policy/academic reports, and around 50 external media articles, as well as

informing ECRE's work on the situation of Syrians and Afghans in Europe and programming EU funding for asylum in Spain;

- Expand the work on deportations to Afghanistan in order to analyse and influence the EU's overall approach to Afghanistan, including through cooperation with Afghan-led organisations in Sweden, Germany, France, Austria, Greece and Denmark;
- Influence policy debates and negotiations on legislation on the different thematic areas of ECRE's advocacy work set out in the Strategic Plan through +100 advocacy meetings, the publication of 12 Policy Notes, two Comments Papers, three Working Papers and the organisation of seven policy roundtables in online format;
- Work with members and support their advocacy by convening twelve meetings of ECRE's working groups, four meetings of Brussels based members and issuing seven internal advocacy briefings;
- Cooperate with and support refugee advocates and refugee-led organisations through seven email updates, organising a briefing on the Pact proposals for them and convening a two-day training seminar on EU advocacy in cooperation with UNHCR which involved 27 refugee advocates from 14 European countries.

Communications

The ECRE Communication Strategy for the period 2020-22 along with the portfolio of strategic documents providing guidelines, templates and procedures is concluded and will be revised in 2022. The following summary is based on the objectives outlined in the current communications strategy, the quarterly reports on communications provided to the ECRE Board, and on statistics compared to the baseline presented to the Board in January 2017.

Objective 1: Increase the understanding and support of refugee rights in the segment of young progressive Europeans engaged in the public debate through traditional media and active on social media.

The ongoing ECRE campaign on the European Pact on Migration and Asylum #HardlyRocketScience has an accumulated reach of 700,000 through ECRE platforms alone, and as 60 organisations have joined the combined target reach of 1 million Europeans is within reach.

ECREs outreach through newsletters, social media and press has continued to increase in 2021:

- **ECRE Press Review:** increase in subscribers to 3,621 (1/1/2017 baseline: 390) opening rate 32%
- **Weekly Bulletin:** Increase in subscribers to 13,525 (1/1/2017 baseline: 11,500); opening rate 29%
- **Twitter:** Increase of followers to 27,512 (1/1/2017 baseline: 12,400)
- **Facebook:** Increase of subscribers to 28.627 (1/1/2017 baseline: 19,800)
- **LinkedIn:** 11,300 followers (current rate of increase 1000 a month)
- **Instagram:** Strategy and content ready (launch in early 2022)
- **Press:** roughly 200 interviews and background talks in 2021 (up from 100 in 2020).

Objective 2: Contribute to the overall efficiency of ECRE and the organisation's ability to achieve its strategic aims.

Hardware and software have been checked, registered and updated/replaced across the organisation. The work continues to ensure coherence in terms of development, maintenance and security on the ECRE family of websites including the main ECRE website, the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), the European Database of Asylum Law (EDAL), the European Legal Network

on Asylum (ELENA) Forum and the campaign site (hardlyrocketscience.org). With the AIDA website revised and transferred to the regular Wordpress back-end system only the EDAL site remains under development and transfer to be concluded in the first half of 2022. A full training on strategic communication was conducted for the advocacy team, to be followed with a training for the legal team in 2022.

Activity 1: Legal Support and Litigation.

1. *To achieve legal changes advancing the rights of refugees and those in need of or benefiting from international protection in Europe through proactive, coordinated and needs-based litigation at a regional and international level.*
2. *To strengthen and support the relevant work of asylum lawyers across Europe.*

In 2021 ECRE's Legal Support and Litigation work **focused on supporting the European Legal Network on Asylum (ELENA) and ECRE member lawyers**, who were at the forefront providing legal counselling to asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection and mounting legal challenges, particularly linked to the situation at the EU's borders.

The ELENA network coordinated by ECRE facilitated over **60** legal queries including on Dublin transfers, family reunification, access to asylum, and unlawful expulsion practices. ECRE facilitated contacts between lawyers in such cases and provided them with legal arguments. Separately, ECRE responded to **over 65 legal requests** from the ELENA members. These included setting out arguments on cessation of international protection, criminalisation of NGOs providing assistance to migrants, access to the labour market and healthcare. ECRE engaged in discussions with legal partners from across Europe on best legal strategies to employ when challenging violence and lack of access to protection at the borders, unlawful detention, limitations related to subsequent applications, summary returns, and reception conditions for persons with special reception needs.

On top of argumentation and strategy-related advice, ECRE provided lawyers from Lithuania, Hungary, Greece and Malta, with emergency litigation financial support to cover their legal, judicial and travel costs in order to enable legal challenges before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and domestic courts. These challenges related to detention of asylum applicants, Search and Rescue (SAR) and disembarkation, access to international protection at the border following emergency legislation, family reunification, and limitations on subsequent applications. Legal support provided by ECRE was also related to procedural issues relating to procedures before supranational courts and UN Treaty Bodies.

Beyond supporting the ELENA and ECRE member lawyers, ECRE's work included direct interventions before the ECtHR, domestic courts and UN mechanisms. ECRE submitted **3 interventions** before the ECtHR together with Litigation Task Force partners. These included:

- *L.B. v France* concerning an expulsion of an intersex person from France to Morocco following refusal to grant him refugee status due to his criminal record in France. This intervention was joined by ILGA Europe and OII Europe and led by ECRE.
- *Alaa Assad v the Netherlands* concerning a family of Palestinian origin from Syria consisting of a single mother and two children. They had received an international protection status in Greece and their removal to there was ordered by the Netherlands. This intervention was led by the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR).
- *A.R. and others v Greece* concerning the living conditions of the applicants, who have health issues, on the hotspots of Kos, Samos, Chios and Lesbos, and their medical follow-up. This intervention was led by the AIRE Centre.

Two interventions in cases against Serbia and Greece were drafted by ECRE and are to be submitted in early 2022. ECRE also prepared a submission to the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe regarding the implementation of an impact judgment in the case of *Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary*.

ECRE launched **interventions before the Supreme Administrative Court in Poland and Italian Constitutional Court** (jointly with the AIRE Centre and the ICJ) concerning legal assistance in returns proceedings and criminalisation of assistance to migrants.

ECRE prepared the following legal notes:

- On [cessation](#) of international protection and review of protection statuses in Europe, commissioned to Maria O’Sullivan;
- On [Asylum](#) and the UN Treaty System Securing and Advancing Access to Asylum Through the Individual Communications Procedures of the UN Treaty Bodies;
- [On Asylum in Greece](#): A Situation Beyond Judicial Control;
- [Across Borders](#): The Impact of N.D. and N.T. judgment in Europe;
- [Extraordinary responses](#): Legislative changes in Lithuania in 2021.

In addition, after a request from Greek partners, ECRE prepared an expert opinion concerning the lawfulness of Greek legislation regulating the registration of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the Registry of NGOs working with refugees and migrants in Greece. Finally, ECRE supported the translation into English and provided comments on the legal notes on the situation in Poland drafted by ECRE member, the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human rights.

(II) The development of the ELENA network.

ECRE continued running and improving the ELENA forum, an on-line tool for legal practitioners where they can exchange information and seek litigation advice. **203** legal practitioners, academics and UNHCR staff from **41 European countries** had access to legal support through the ELENA Forum with a total of **1630 posts** regarding **411** topics answered. The Forum has benefitted from financial support from UNHCR.

The ELENA network sees positive dynamics in national coordination. There are **new coordinators in Austria, Belarus, Finland, Lithuania**. As mentioned above national coordinators responded to over 60 legal requests and took on numerous individual cases upon request of their counterparts in other countries, provided testimonies in the domestic context or referred cases to other national lawyers.

The network held its first hybrid coordinators meeting, organised by ECRE and attended by **28 national coordinators**. The meeting included discussions on the situation of Afghan nationals in Europe, implementation of judgments and decisions, litigation before the ECtHR, an update on important CJEU jurisprudence, as well as consultation on ELENA needs, priorities and activities for 2022. ECRE also contributed to the development of the network in Finland. Finally, through the ELENA Weekly Legal Update, ECRE regularly provided information on legal developments across Europe. **38 issues** were published in 2021 and the EWLU readership reached an audience of almost **6,000** subscribers, an **8%** increase compared to 2020.

(III) Legal training

ECRE continued training activities as planned in 2021, however, moved most of them online due to restrictions caused by the pandemic. ECRE trained:

- **60** legal practitioners on gender mainstreaming and on Article 1D of the Geneva Convention. The events were organised within the framework of ECRE’s Strategic Partnership with UNHCR;
- **45** legal practitioners from across Europe, who attended the ELENA course in Marseille in person. It included sessions on the scope of ECtHR’s Rule 39 and new practices at the Court by Mehveş Bingöllü Kilci from Registry of the European Court of Human Rights and on the European Ombudsman’s investigation mechanism by Marta Hirsch-Ziembńska, from the Secretariat-General of the European Ombudsman. Other topics covered by the course included: cessation of international protection, blockchain, recent CJEU

jurisprudence, age assessment, access to classified information. The course was positively evaluated by the participants;

- ECRE organised an online session on the UN Treaty bodies for +35 ELENA lawyers;
- ECRE trained +80 legal practitioners from across Europe including Greece and Spain through events organised in collaboration with legal partners online.

(IV) EDAL database

ECRE maintained the European Database of Asylum Law (EDAL), an online database containing +1,500 case law summaries from 22 European states and from the ECtHR and EU Court of Justice (CJEU).

- **96,526** users benefitted from EDAL in 2021 with the page views counting at **256,086**.
- **55** summaries were added to the database.
- **14** volunteers from Cologne, Ghent, Leuven Legal Clinics and Queen Mary University were trained and prepared case summaries.
- The EDAL Twitter account gained **294** new followers.
- A plan is being implemented for the redesign and the IT transformation of the EDAL website and revision of its content.

Activity 2: Advocacy

Overall objective 1: To influence EU policy and practice on protection of asylum seekers, refugees and displaced people through development of targeted recommendations and tailored advocacy

1. A functioning asylum system in Europe

ECRE continued its advocacy for compliance rather than reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), with the exception of the Dublin Regulation, where reform is essential. In response to the EU's New Pact for Migration and Asylum (the Pact), ECRE published four detailed Comments papers on the various legislative proposals ([two](#) in [early 2021](#)) which analyse legal provisions article by article and propose amendments, and four Policy Notes ([two](#) in [early 2021](#)) which provide a summary of ECRE's main assessment. The objective is to influence the co-legislators, the European Parliament and the Council (the EU's Member States) and to propose concrete changes in the form of amendments. ECRE also commissioned a [Working Paper on Eurodac](#) to inform policy-makers and civil society.

ECRE's recommendations were discussed with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from five different political groups working on the files and representatives of thirteen Member States. ECRE was invited to speak at all exchanges organised by the LIBE committee of the European Parliament on the Pact. While the EP prepared its reports on the files, MEPs shared draft reports of the record with ECRE, and ECRE was able to provide amendments.

Two studies ([here](#) and [here](#)) commissioned by the European Parliament (EP) on the Pact proposals relied heavily on ECRE's analysis and information from the Asylum Information Database, managed by ECRE. ECRE also influenced the position of other bodies on the Pact, including the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, which incorporated ECRE's analysis and recommendations into its position. ECRE provided opportunities for wider civil society engagement in advocacy of the Pact through a briefing for refugee advocates organised in April 2021 and a policy roundtable organised in cooperation with ICVA and UNHCR in July 2021 where representatives of the EP, Council and European Commission spoke.

In 2021, new proposals were presented by the Commission, nominally in response to events at the Belarus border, including proposals for a Council Decision, a Regulation on Instrumentalisation, and amendments to the Schengen Border Code. ECRE prepared detailed comments and summaries, expressing its concerns about the proposals being based on allowing derogation from EU law.

ECRE continues to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on asylum in Europe in the [Asylum Information Database](#) (AIDA), which it manages. The 22 AIDA [country reports](#) published in spring 2021 have been widely cited in reports and publications including by EASO, EP, Council of Europe, UNHCR, academic researchers and think tanks. In 2021, the number of views on the AIDA website reached 880,000, and AIDA outputs were cited in +700 national court cases, at least 150 policy/academic reports and 50 external media articles. ECRE published a [briefing](#) in July 2021 providing an overview of key trends in asylum in Europe in 2020 highlighting the routine violation of rights and the serious gaps in efficiency and quality in national asylum systems. In September 2021, ECRE highlighted the flaws in the current Dublin system with an [update](#) on developments in legislation, policy and practice relating to the application of the Dublin III Regulation in 2020. In light of the recent developments in Denmark (concerning return to Syria) and in Afghanistan (with the takeover by the Taleban), AIDA reports were also used by ECRE to inform stakeholders, in particular the EP and journalists, on the situation of Syrians and Afghans in Europe.

2. European external policies advance rights of displaced people and reduce forced displacement

ECRE closely analyses and influences policy debates on EU external affairs. It published an [overview of changes](#) proposed in the Pact which will have an impact on EU external affairs and commissioned a [working paper](#) which attempts to clarify where, how and on what EU funding for displacement and migration has been spent.

ECRE continued its cooperation with civil society from third countries, with a specific focus on Africa. ECRE established project partnerships with civil society organisations in The Gambia and Senegal to support joint research, policy and advocacy on the impact of EU external action in these two countries. Within the framework of the respective partnerships, information on policy developments was shared and two policy roundtables were organised on the specific countries, bringing together policy makers of the EU and third countries, and civil society experts including Diaspora representatives. During a visit to Dakar, policy discussions on the impact of EU policy on Senegal and the region and of broader migration dynamics took place.

In response to developments in Afghanistan, ECRE significantly expanded its work beyond the longstanding focus of monitoring return agreements and the [call to stop deportations](#) towards the country to cover the [EU's overall approach towards Afghanistan](#) as well as [access to asylum for Afghans in Europe](#). It convened a [roundtable](#) for and with Afghan diaspora in Europe in cooperation with DRC in May which brought together over 40 participants and, following the take-over of Afghanistan by the Taliban, ECRE organised an online roundtable meeting with over 80 participants which focused on EU policy towards Afghanistan with interventions from senior representatives from the EU institutions, the former Afghan government, Member States and Afghan civil society advocates.

Supported by additional funding from Open Society, advocacy has been reinforced at the EU and Member State-level in cooperation with members and Afghan-led organisations in Sweden, Germany, France, Austria, Greece and Denmark. A first round of policy meetings between EU policy makers and Afghan advocates took place in Brussels in December 2021.

3. Countering the disproportionate focus on return and deportation

The progress on the negotiation of the recast Return Directive, which ECRE follows closely, has been slow. In response to the various legislative proposals aimed at merging asylum and return decision making, ECRE published [a Policy Note](#) explaining the related risks of this approach. ECRE analysed and commented on the [introduction of visa sanctions](#) to put pressure on third countries to cooperate with the EU on readmission and is working with civil society and government representatives of countries affected, such as The Gambia.

4. Preventing measures to restrict asylum, use of non-entrée policies and human rights violations at EU borders

In the wake of the increased attention on Frontex operations and the agency's implication in rights violation at the border, [ECRE published a Policy Paper](#) on how accountability of the agency could be increased. It was met with a lot of interest, particularly by members of the EP's Scrutiny Working Group on Frontex. ECRE discussed the recommendations with MEPs from five political groups represented in the Working Group.

ECRE was commissioned by the Heinrich Böll Foundation to prepare a [report](#) on restriction of movement and detention at the EU's external borders which provides an overview of current practice, particularly in Greece and Italy and reflects on the impact the legislative proposals of the

Pact would have on this practice. It was discussed in a closed-door meeting with representatives of Member States and MEPs leading on the Pact proposals.

ECRE is closely following and commenting on developments at the EU's border with Belarus. It has commissioned legal analysis on the changes in the domestic legislative frameworks in [Poland](#) and [Lithuania](#) and carried out related advocacy vis-à-vis the European Commission and the European Parliament. In November, ECRE drafted and coordinated the publication of a [joint civil society call](#) on the EU to restore rights and values at the EU's border which is signed by over 120 organisations and translated into 7 languages.

In reaction to the European Commission's proposal for emergency measures allowing for derogations from EU asylum law, ECRE has published [Comments](#) analysing the proposal which were well received by the European Parliament and informed the discussions in Council about the measures proposed.

5. Inclusion through rights, respect and regularization

ECRE continued its work on increasing funding for inclusion in the next EU budget (Multiannual financial Framework – the MFF) as part of its joint project with PICUM until July 2021. A policy roundtable in March 2021 brought together civil society, EU officials and representatives of Member State authorities to take stock of the agreements in the MFF and discuss priorities for the implementation of the funds, where ECRE's recommendations were presented.

Dedicated discussions on the MFF negotiations and national funding priorities took place in Spain in April 2021 in cooperation with CEPALM and Profundo. Informed by the AIDA Spain report, a [Policy Note](#) making specific suggestions on how national programming should be adjusted was published.

In cooperation with Voicify, an [analysis](#) was published of where the EU funding to support the COVID-19 recovery (via the so-called Next Generation EU) could provide an opportunity to support activities that involve refugees and migrants through e.g. support of strengthening the asylum system, improving reception capacity, expanding access to social services.

Overall objective 2: To strengthen ECRE's advocacy team and support influential and effective advocacy

ECRE has maintained and in some cases increased its exchanges with ECRE members in the reporting period, despite COVID. In total, 12 meetings of the three ECRE working groups (CEAS, external affairs and inclusion) took place. In addition, four meetings of the Brussels-based ECRE members were organised. Participation of members in all of the meeting formats remain high and stable, and measures to ensure interactive exchange have been introduced.

Members shaped ECRE's analysis and policy positions by commenting on draft Comments papers, Policy Papers and Policy Notes. Throughout the year, 70 emails with policy and advocacy updates were sent to the working groups in addition to 7 Advocacy Briefings.

ECRE continues to have good access to policy-makers and has introduced mechanisms to support the monitoring of its advocacy activities. In 2021, the advocacy team collectively had over 100 advocacy meetings with EU policy-makers. ECRE received 19 requests to speak at conferences, policy meetings, workshops and trainings. ECRE continues to receive many requests for information and advice from outside the membership, including from researchers, think tanks and other NGOs. We accept these where they strategically support our advocacy objectives and contribute to stronger NGO advocacy. In 2021, ECRE responded and provided information on over 30 occasions.

ECRE regularly communicates with +60 refugee advocates (people with a refugee background working for refugee-led organisations or as individual activists). In the reporting period, six email updates were sent to update them on policy developments and involve them in ECRE's work. Refugee-led organisations have played a leading role in ECRE's work on returns to Afghanistan specifically. In all policy discussion organised in 2021, refugee advocates played a prominent role, either as speakers or moderators or both.

In November 2021, ECRE organised a two-day training seminar on EU advocacy in cooperation with UNHCR. It brought together 27 refugee advocates from 14 different European countries. The evaluation of the training seminar was overwhelmingly positive and included useful suggestions for improvement. ECRE received 250 applications to participate in the training from people with a refugee background, demonstrating the interest in the event. A similar training will be organised again in 2022.

Activity 3: Communications

Objective 1: Increase the understanding and support of refugee rights in the segment of young progressive Europeans engaged in the public debate through traditional media and active on social media.

Outreach digital newsletters, social media, press:

- **ECRE Press Review:** increase in subscribers to 3.621 (1/1/2017 baseline: 390) opening rate 32%
- **Weekly Bulletin:** Increase in subscribers to 13,525 (1/1/2017 baseline: 11,500); opening rate 29%
- **Twitter:** Increase of followers to 27,512 (1/1/2017 baseline: 12,400)
- **Facebook:** Increase of subscribers to 28.627 (1/1/2017 baseline: 19,800)
- **Linkedin:** 11,300 followers (current increase rate 1000 a month).
- **Instagram:** Strategy and content ready (launch in early 2022).
- **Press:** roughly 200 interviews and background talks in 2021 (up from 100 in 2020).

Campaigning: Building on previous experience of joint campaigning and the network infrastructure established (including the ECRE Media Officers Network (EMON), ECRE launched a campaign in 2020 which continued into 2021 under the tagline: Human Rights Compliance - #HardlyRocketScience. The campaign aims to ensure public support in reminding politicians to uphold human rights during negotiations on the European Pact on Migration and Asylum. The campaign has been joined by +60 organisations and artists and performers (with different backgrounds) from 20 Member States. Through the campaign ECRE has continued to broaden its reach and partners in relevant target groups beyond the regular human rights/refugee sector in segments, organisations and movements with a focus on race, social justice and cultural activism. While the campaign is ongoing, the initial evaluation reveals an accumulated reach of 700,000 through ECRE platforms alone, suggesting the combined target reach of 1 million Europeans will be exceeded.

Presswork: in 2021 ECRE continued to be a key reference for leading national, European and international media on developments related to our mandate. Compared to previous years ECRE roughly doubled the number of conducted interviews and responses to background information requests by media to almost 200. This includes only direct contacts from editors and/or journalists not simple references to ECREs work or publications. The media outlets requesting interviews included the Economist, Politico, CNN, NY Times, Washington Post, BBC World, Le Monde, Deutsche Welle, El Pais, Al-Jazeera and numerous others. The main topics covered included the EU response to the crisis generated by the regime change in Afghanistan, the humanitarian crisis at the European borders, along Belarus as well as pushbacks and human rights violations in Greece and the Balkans, and plans for externalisation of protection in the UK and Denmark.

Newsletters: outreach through our main newsletters continue to increase. The weekly production cycle includes the compiling of media references for the ECRE Press Review (90+ media sources); getting latest updates from member organisations and other relevant organisations, agencies and institutions; drafting a Weekly Bulletin topic list; conducting the Weekly Bulletin editorial meeting with representatives of all ECRE teams to select topics for in-depth articles; writing/editing the Bulletin. This ensures that we are always on top of key-developments and able to offer latest news on EU and member state policies, procedures and legislation as well as corresponding ECRE positions and analysis.

Social media: Social media outreach and engagement continues to increase. However, this requires a constant strategic evaluation of challenges and potential in the ever changing reality of

social media. The relevance of Facebook is decreasing as many in our target audience are either leaving the platform or limiting their engagement and algorithms increasingly favor pages defined by large spending on ads and light – often populist – content. Accordingly, we are changing our strategy to include more targeted content to be featured mainly on Instagram (set to be launched in early 2022). The inclusion of LinkedIn in the communication portfolio continues to pay off with an exponential increase of followers and interaction. Twitter remains the absolute stronghold for the organisation with an accumulated reach of 500,000 a month in the last quarter of 2021 and almost 40,000 engagements over the full quarter. We have increased the number of Tweets as well as the focus on Tweet threads and breaking news over the course of 2021.

Objective 2: Contribute to the overall efficiency of ECRE and the organisation’s ability to achieve its strategic aims.

Hardware: all ECRE equipment and computers are now accounted for in a detailed inventory list that is updated on a running basis to ensure an organisational overview and replacement of outdated hardware. All computers have gone through maintenance or been replaced where urgently needed.

Software: all ECRE computers have been updated with recent versions of regular software and relevant specialised software for design has been installed for the communication team and Director.

Websites: the work to ensure coherence in terms of developments, maintenance and security on the ECRE family of websites including the main ECRE website, the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), the European Database of Asylum Law (EDAL), the European Legal Network on Asylum (ELENA) Forum as well as our campaign site hardlyrocketscience.org continues. With the AIDA website revised and transferred to the regular Wordpress back-end system only the EDAL site remains under development and transfer to be concluded in the first half of 2022.

Training: A full training on strategic communication has been conducted for the advocacy team and we will follow up with a training for the legal team in 2022.

Organisational Development

Underlying objective:

To ensure that ECRE:

1. performs effectively, meeting objectives in each of the three areas of its activity
2. is efficient and provides value for money, including compared to other organisations
3. applies its strategic priorities in all areas of its work.

Strategic Priority 1 To promote visions of an inclusive Europe where people seeking protection are welcome and their rights protected, including proposing legal and policy alternatives.

ECRE presented alternative policies, legal frameworks and practices in all its publications and presentations, rather than simply criticising the situation or proposals..

Strategic Priority 2 To mobilise ECRE as an alliance to advocate collectively for change.

Despite shifting work online, ECRE continued to expand member involvement in its work. It organised 17 meetings of members to discuss joint advocacy work; ECRE prepared six joint statements that members and other NGOs signed up to; five board meetings and two (online) ECRE General Assemblies took place to get member input and decisions; members were part of the joint #HardlyRocketScience campaign, and frequently contacted for communications purposes. The ELENA network which includes members as well as independent asylum lawyers had training events and coordination meeting on line and in-person.

Strategic Priority 3 To empower refugees, channel their views into the policy and practice that affects them, and promote their inclusion in ECRE's work and across the sector.

ECRE strove to include people with a refugee background and refugee-led organisations in all areas of its work, as staff members, Board members, members of the alliance, and as key speakers in events. Recruitment of staff members with a refugee background continued with four of twelve staff members being people from situations of displacement by early 2022. ECRE provided advocacy support and small grants to refugee-led organisations, in particular in relation to work on inclusion and on Afghanistan.

Strategic Partnerships

1. Renew UNHCR Strategic Partnership every year for 2020 – 2022.

ECRE worked with UNHCR within the Strategic Partnership between the two in 2021, despite the challenges posed by COVID. One in-person event took place, a training on EU advocacy, in November 2021. Other activities were transferred on line or adapted to be delivered in different forms due to COVID. The continuation of the Partnership for 2022 was confirmed and a contract signed at the end of 2021. In addition, in 2021, ECRE cooperated with UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe in Geneva, which may continue in 2022.

2. Develop strategic partnerships with other agencies and institutions, including EASO and FRA.

ECRE continues to manage the four-year Framework Contract signed with EUAA which covers review of EUAA products, including training modules and analysis. ECRE maintained contact with FRA. In addition, ECRE developed contact with the new Fundamental Rights Officer at Frontex, including discussions with the FRO and the provision of a briefing to the newly recruited Fundamental Rights Monitors, managed by the FRO.

Finances and fundraising

1. Maintain a positive asset balance.
2. Establish a reserve fund of EUR 150,000 by 2022.

ECRE ended 2021 with a positive asset balance of EUR 372,000 (confirmed by its auditors), this figure constitutes its full available reserves and is the second best position it has been in since 2009 (it had larger reserves at the end of 2020 which have been partially spent). There is still a funding shortfall for 2022, so some of the reserves may be spent, although fundraising is likely to cover the gap. In any case, ECRE will end 2022 with reserves of at least EUR 207,000 (the current projection).

3. Approve budgets with no more than a 20% shortfall.

The budget for 2022 was approved with a 31 % shortfall however the final position at the end of 2021 was better than expected. Additional grants were confirmed at the start of 2022 and the shortfall is reduced to 11%.

4. Grants from four core donors.

5. Bring in revenue of at least EUR 1.6 million/year.

ECRE continues to have funds from four core donors and in 2021 revenue was EUR 1.12 million.

Organisational structure

1. Maintain a clear organisational structure capable of being expressed in an organigram with teams and line management.

ECRE employs 12.2 Full-Time Equivalents, and 3 to 4 assistants (paid interns under the Belgian government's "Immersion Professionnelle" scheme). The staff are organised into three teams, one for each of the three activities, with all staff allocated a line manager. In December 2021, ECRE started a review of the organisational support side of its staffing to ensure that it has the staffing it needs, covering finance, administration, human resources, fundraising and project support.. Previously the positions were Director, Head of Finance and Administration, and a project officer who provided organisational support (included in the 12.2 FTE). In early 2022, it will recruit to ensure it has the organisational support it needs. The structure appears in an organigram which is always available on the ECRE website.

Membership

1. Retain at least 100 members losing no more than 2 members per year.
2. Confirm that a majority of members demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with ECRE's work as per membership surveys or other consultation.

ECRE ended 2021 with 105 members in 39 European countries, with 2 members joining and 3 member leaving during the year. A membership survey was planned for 2020 but had to be postponed due to the pressures of COVID; it will be carried out at a later stage.

Partnership

1. Work in cooperation other networks working on asylum and migration issues, including PICUM and refugee-led networks.
2. Cooperate with European think-tanks working on asylum and migration with at least 4 invitations to present at think-tank events per year.
3. Cooperate with academic networks, including participation in one research project per year and invitations to at least 2 academic conference per year.

ECRE concluded the project that it worked on with PICUM on EU funding and the two organisation prepared an application for a renewal of the project (which has since been accepted and will re-start in 2022). ECRE also worked with ICVA on the consultation series between UNHCR and civil society.

ECRE works with think-tanks and was invited to speak at eight think-tank events in 2021. ECRE is involved in various academic networks, with the ECRE Director on the advisory boards of two H2020 projects. ECRE staff received ten invitations to major academic conferences or academic network meetings.

Board

1. Maintain diversity of the Board to reflect ECRE's membership, taking into account geographic diversity, gender, ethnicity, refugee background, sexuality, and any other factor that may be relevant.
2. At least 3 Board members should be female.
3. Ensure the Board plays a consistently active role in ECRE's governance as per ECRE's statutes, and effectively represents the interests of membership in its decision-making.

The Board includes members with a refugee background and representing sexual and ethnic minorities. It includes representatives of all regions of Europe and at the end of 2021 5 of 7 Board members were female.

The Board had 5 meetings in 2021 of which 4 took place online due to the health emergency and 1 took place in person; there were also 4 meetings of the Finance Committee (composed of ECRE Treasurer, a Board member, the ECRE Director and ECRE Head of Finance and Administration).

Annex 1: ECRE Publications 2021

ECRE Policy Notes

- ECRE, Policy Note 31: [Moving on with the EU Asylum Agency](#), January 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 33: [Alleviating or Exacerbating Crises? The Regulation on Crisis and Force Majeure](#), February 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 33: [The regulation on Asylum and Migration Management: Giving with One Hand, Taking Back with the Other](#), February 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 34, [Tightening the Screw: Use of EU External Policies and Funding for Asylum and Migration](#), March 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 35, [The JDMC: Deporting People to the World's Least Peaceful Country](#), March 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 33 (Spanish version), [The regulation on Asylum and Migration Management: Giving with One Hand, Taking Back with the Other \(ESP\)](#), May 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 36, [Playing the Visa Card Assessment of the EU'S Plans to Use Visa Leverage to Increase Readmission to Third Countries](#), June 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 35 (Dari version), [The JDMC: Deporting People to the World's Least Peaceful Country \(Dari\)](#), July 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 37, [ECRE Policy Note: Boosting Asylum in Spain – Making the Most out of AMIF Funding](#), July 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 37 (Spanish version), [ECRE Policy Note: Boosting Asylum in Spain – Making the Most out of AMIF Funding \(ESP\)](#), July 2021
- ECRE, Policy Note 38, [ECRE Policy Note: A Seamless Link?](#), November 2021
- ECRE Policy Note 39, [EU Support to Afghanistan: Scoring High on Humanitarian Assistance and Low on Protection in Europe?](#), December 2021

ECRE Policy Papers

- ECRE, Policy Paper 7, [Holding Frontex to Account](#), May 2021

ECRE Legal Notes and interventions

- ECRE Legal Note 7: [On the Cessation of International Protection and Review of Protection Statuses in Europe](#), February 2021
- ECRE/ELENA Legal Note 8, [On Asylum and the UN Treaty System Secring and Advancing Access to Asylum Through the Individual Communications Procedures of the UN Treaty Bodies](#), March 2021
- ECRE Legal Note 9, [On Asylum in Greece: A Situation Beyond Judicial Control](#), June 2021
- ECRE/ELENA Legal Note 10, [Across Borders: The Impact of N.D. and N.T. in Europe](#), July 2021
- ECRE Legal Note 11, [Extraordinary Responses: Legislative Changes in Lithuania, 2021](#), September 2021
- ECRE intervened in following cases:
 - Alaa ASAAD and Others v. The Netherlands, Application No. 31007/20 (not publicly available yet)
 - A.R. and Others v. Greece, Application Nos. 59841/19 and 7 other applications (not publicly available yet)
 - L.B. v. France, Application No. 67839/17 (not publicly available yet)
 - Ilias and Ahmed, Application no. 47287/15, Execution of judgment communication (not publicly available yet)

ECRE Comments Papers

- ECRE Comment Paper, [ECRE Comments on the Commission Proposal for a Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management COM \(2020\) 610 2020/0279 \(COD\)](#), February 2021
- ECRE Comment Paper, [ECRE Comments on the Commission Proposal for a Regulation Addressing Situations of Crisis and Force Majeure in the Field of Migration and Asylum COM \(2020\) 613](#), February 2021
- ECRE Comment Paper, [EC Proposal on Emergency Measures Latvia, Lithuania and Poland](#), December 2021

ECRE Working Papers

- ECRE Working paper, [Transforming Eurodac from 2016 to the New Pact From the Dublin System's Sidekick to a Database in Support of EU Policies on Asylum, Resettlement and Irregular Migration](#), January 2021
- ECRE Working paper, [EU External Expenditure on Asylum, Forced Displacement and Migration 2014-2019](#), March 2021
- ECRE Working paper, [National Recovery and Resilience Programmes](#), December 2021

ECRE statements

- Joint Statement: [Call on the EU: Restore Rights and Values at Europe's Borders](#), November 2021
- Joint Statement: [Current priorities for an EU response to the situation in Afghanistan](#), August 2021
- Joint Statement: [European countries should immediately cease all deportations to Afghanistan](#), July 2021
- Joint Statement: [Greece: landmark European Committee on Social Rights decision upholds rights of migrant children](#), July 2021
- Joint Statement: [Time to Get Resettlement Moving!](#), July 2021
- Plan of Action: [Twenty Steps to Protect People on the Move Along the Central Mediterranean Route](#), June 2021
- NGO Letter [Croatia Border Monitoring Mechanism](#), March 2021

ECRE flowcharts

- ECRE Flowchart, [Procedures Irregular Arrivals European Pact Proposal](#), June 2021 (ITA)
- ECRE Flowchart, [Procedures Regular Arrivals European Pact Proposal](#), June 2021 (ITA)
- ECRE Flowchart, [Procedures Irregular Arrivals European Pact Proposal](#), May 2021
- ECRE Flowchart, [Procedures Regular Arrivals European Pact Proposal](#), May 2021

Other publications

- ECRE, Heinrich Böll Stiftung: [Reception, Detention and Restriction of Movement at EU External Borders](#), July 2021
- ECRE Expert Opinion, [lawfulness of Greek legislation regulating the registration of non-governmental organisations \(NGOs\)](#), December 2021
- ECRE Compilation, [Afghans Seeking Protection in Europe](#), December 2021

AIDA Country reports

- [Austria](#), April 2021
- [Belgium](#), April 2021
- [Bulgaria](#), February 2021
- [Cyprus](#), April 2021
- [Spain](#), March 2021
- [France](#), March 2021
- [Greece](#), June 2021
- [Croatia](#), May 2021
- [Hungary](#), April 2021
- [Ireland](#), April 2021
- [Italy](#), June 2021
- [Malta](#), May 2021
- [Netherlands](#), March 2021
- [Poland](#), April 2021
- [Portugal](#), May 2021
- [Romania](#), April 2021
- [Sweden](#), April 2021
- [Slovenia](#), March 2021
- [United Kingdom](#), March 2021
- [Switzerland](#), May 2021
- [Serbia](#), March 2021
- [Turkey](#), May 2021

AIDA statistical updates

- [The implementation of the Dublin III Regulation in 2020](#): September 2021