

EPIM ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021

Epim
European Programme
for Integration
and Migration



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Front Cover Picture:
Safe Passage International

1. Looking back at 2021

The past year was marked by worrying political and humanitarian developments in the migration landscape in Europe and its neighbourhood. As the COVID pandemic continued to wage on in different waves throughout the entire year, refugee and migrant communities remained amongst the most vulnerable populations hit socially, economically and health-wise. In the summer of 2021, the take-over of Afghanistan by the Taliban ensued in chaotic and haphazard evacuations of selected Afghan individuals and families by American and different European governments. The security-driven responses to the situation further exposed the reduced international protection space in the EU. Despite a fear of a potential increase in numbers of Afghans fleeing their country to come to Europe irregularly, including through Turkey, this has not happened. The EU's overall response to Afghanistan condemned the violence and threats to vulnerable groups but was effectively mainly focused on [immediate humanitarian needs](#) and on local and regional financial support worth [100 million EUR](#), with limited collective efforts on resettlement. More generally, the salience of the political responses to Afghanistan has masked inaction or inadequate responses elsewhere. Dangerous and irregular crossings across the English Channel have continued from France to the UK, with the most recent tragedy in late November causing the deaths of 27 people. Despite an urgent ministerial meeting called by France shortly afterwards, no major shift in policy or cooperation was established. In addition, the UK has been internally focused on its upcoming [Nationality and Borders Bill](#).

Further East and South, the migration picture has been particularly bleak. Pushbacks and violence against migrants at border crossings in the Western Balkans have continued, and increasing numbers of women, children and men from Iraq have gathered at the Polish-Belorussian border since the late summer. Despite this being a geopolitical crisis, it has effectively been used as a migration crisis and consequently resulted in a humanitarian crisis, where several people have lost their lives in barren circumstances. Pressured by the situation, the EU has responded with [temporary legal and practical](#)

[measures](#), effectively further reducing the access to fair asylum procedures and adequate protection, which was already lacking.

The situation at the Polish-Lithuanian-Belorussian border is only the latest addition in a long and increasing trend of politicising the phenomenon of migration as problematic, a crisis, a threat. This trend is effectively hampering any real policy progress at EU level towards a humane and fair reform of its asylum and migration laws, resulting in a piecemeal approach of deterrence and control-focused measures, particularly focused on border management, without addressing the bigger picture. Further adding onto this trend, the European Commission in December proposed [additional changes to its Schengen rules](#) as well as a [new regulation for addressing situations of instrumentalisation in the field of migration and asylum](#) – both of which contribute to increased surveillance and control mechanisms as well as further limiting access to a proper asylum procedure.

All of the above has been paralleled by a further shrinking of the space where civil society organisations can operate, and in certain national contexts even a criminalisation of their work. Throughout the year, aside from its core grant-making activities, the EPIM team has spent much of its time and efforts listening and responding to the needs of civil society organisations operating in the above circumstances – from the dire needs in Greece, to collecting evidence on pushbacks in the Western Balkans, to gathering information and connecting civil society actors in the fallout from Afghanistan and the Poland-Lithuania-Belarus borders. While general views on migration are often limited to the number of irregular arrivals at Europe's external borders, EPIM aims to approach the phenomenon of people on the move holistically. The current migration landscape has raised questions in how EPIM can play a more meaningful, effective, and stronger role in supporting civil society organisations where it matters most. The closure of 2021 opens the door to a year of reflection and strategic rethinking post EPIM Forward, towards the ambition of a nimbler and more intentional philanthropic collaborative that is better able to respond to tomorrow's migration and inclusion challenges.

2. EPIM 2021 in figures

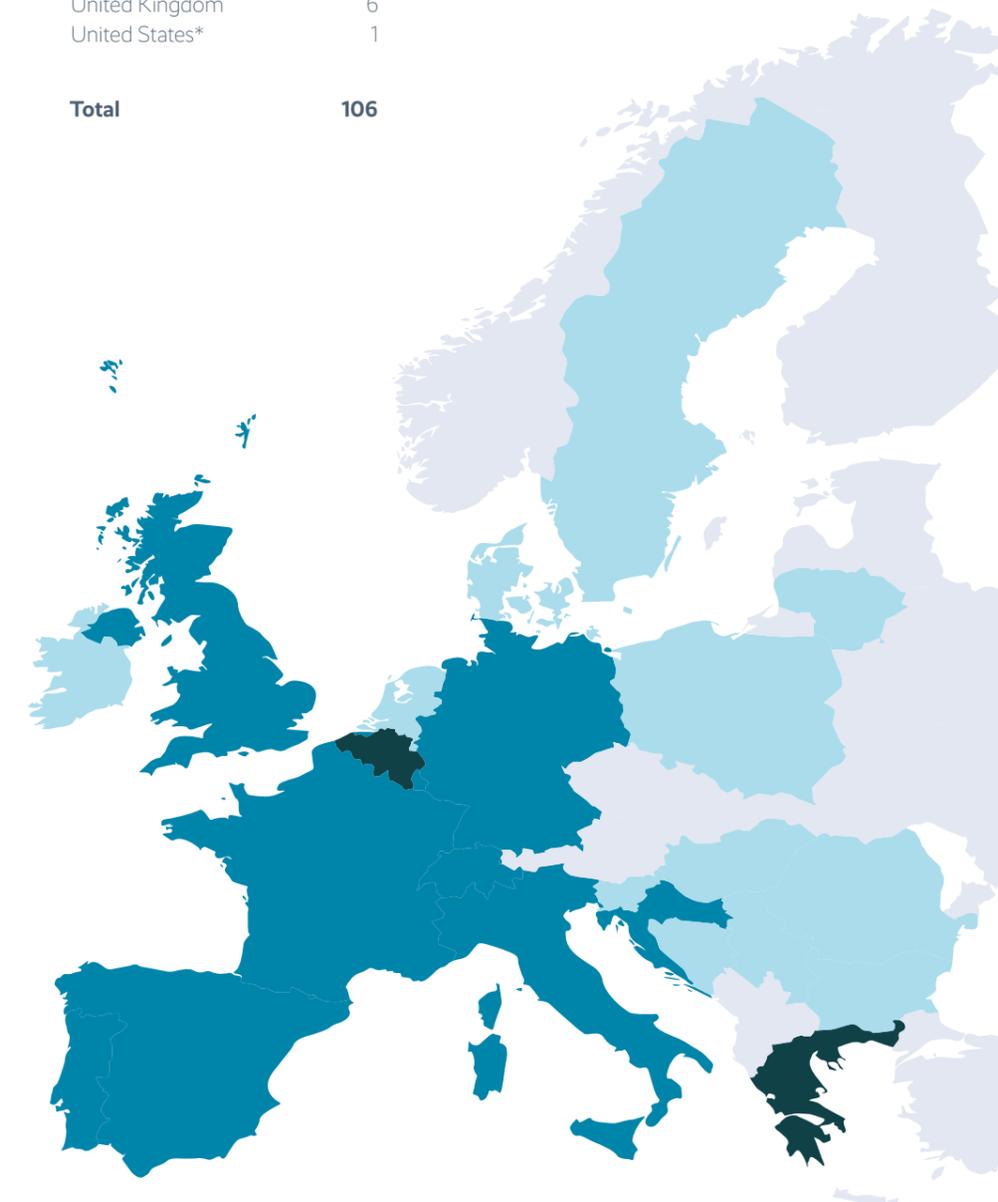


*Includes both grantee partners with a Belgian and a Pan-European focus

Number of EPIM grantee partners per country of registration

Australia*	1	Poland	2	*not featured on map
Belgium**	17	Portugal	4	**Includes both grantee partners with a Belgian and a Pan-European focus
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	Romania	1	
Bulgaria	4	Serbia	1	
Croatia	2	Slovenia	1	
Cyprus	2	Spain	7	
Denmark	1	Sweden	4	
France	5	Switzerland	1	
Germany	5	The Netherlands	2	
Greece	19	United Kingdom	6	
Hungary	4	United States*	1	
Ireland	2			
Italy	8	Total	106	
Lithuania	2			
Malta	2			
North Macedonia	1			

- Beyond 10 grantee partners
- 5 to 10 grantee partners
- Below 5 grantee partners
- No grantees



Picture:
Oxfam Italy – Susi Rossini



3. Key developments across EPIM

2021 was a year of considerable internal change for EPIM. After the departure of EPIM's Programme Director Sarah Sommer in June 2021, Milica Petrovic took the helm in September 2021 as the new Programme Director, after a long and intense recruitment process managed and steered by the Executive Committee and in particular EPIM Chair Tim Parritt (Oak Foundation). After successfully serving his role as interim EPIM Chair during a challenging transitional year for EPIM, Tim Parritt passed on the baton to Raphaela Schweiger (Robert Bosch Stiftung) at the end of EPIM's Steering Committee meeting in October 2021. The EPIM team is grateful for Tim's support, guidance and steering for the largest part of 2021, and is excited to embark on a new chapter for EPIM together with Raphaela.

Five new thematic strategies

During the course of 2021, and following bespoke strategic and thematic reviews, the preparatory process for five new thematic strategies was concluded. The previous Thematic Funds on Migration and Detention and Asylum were transformed into a new overarching **Thematic Fund on Shaping the Future of European Migration Governance**, given the many operational, policy and programmatic synergies. The Strategy for 2021-2024 will focus on alternatives to detention, technology and borders, pathways to regularisation and access to asylum.

The **Children and Youth on the Move Thematic Fund** adopted a new strategy for the period 2021-2023, focused on supporting civil society organisations, including those led by young advocates with lived migration experience, to advocate at EU and national level for better policies and provisions in the transition to adulthood.

Based on foundations' interest in continuing engagement in the area of EU mobile citizens' access to rights, the EPIM team has developed a **new strategy on EU Mobility** for the 2022-2024 funding period, focussed on providing support to challenges related to freedom of movement rights, particularly in the aftermath of Covid and Brexit. At the end of the cycle, EPIM will review whether to continue, mainstream or discontinue the priorities under this strategy.

The **Thematic Fund on Inclusion adopted a new strategy for the period 2021-2024**, which will focus on strengthening the political and social participation and leadership of people with a lived experience in the area of inclusion; supporting civil society advocacy and campaigning to ensure fair working and decent living conditions; and supporting civil society organisations, including those who directly represent people with lived migration experience, to enhance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of EU funding and its impact on inclusion.

Finally, the foreseen implementation under the previously finalised **Thematic fund on communicating migration in a changing environment was revisited** under the leadership of EPIM's new Programme Director. Whilst maintaining the overall objective of supporting organisations and movements (co-)driven by people with lived migration experience, the revised focus aims to support the building of coalitions of such organisations in creating strategic communication alliances within national contexts, to test narrative change tactics to influence migration discourse from the bottom up. In addition, the Strategy will promote representation, alignment and more strategic approaches to communications in the CSO sector as well as learning and alignment in EPIM and the funding sector on this topic more broadly. The new Strategy will be implemented from 2022-2024.

Overall programme level developments

EPIM has taken forward the work on the [nine recommendations](#) set out at the beginning of the year. The new strategies directly contributed to implementing some of these recommendations. The new Fund on European migration governance responds both to EPIM's ambitions to support alternatives to the current migration control paradigm and to address the consequences of technologies on migrants' lives (Recommendation 7 and 8). Similarly, the Inclusion Fund proposes to address the impact of migrants' working and living conditions on inclusion (Recommendation 9). On 21 April 2021, EPIM and the Diversity, Migration and Integration (DMI) Thematic Network of the European Foundation Centre jointly organised a learning session on closing the representation gap for people with lived migration experience in public and policy advocacy on migration issues. The discussions culminated in a set of [recommendations to funders](#) to stimulate further reflection and action (Recommendation 5). In addition, EPIM has embarked on an internal learning journey on anti-discrimination leadership, in view of defining an anti-discrimination lens and identifying concrete recommendations for follow-up actions (Recommendation 3). Over the course of next year, EPIM will review how to concretely make its grant-making processes more inclusive in light of the above.

Throughout 2021, EPIM has responded in a bespoke way to **concrete civil society needs on migration-related issues emerging from specific international developments**.

Picture:
Equal Legal Aid – Priscille Duflos



In Greece, EPIM supported civil society organisations in addressing alarming legal aid provision gaps. In light of the absence of state-funded legal aid schemes for asylum seekers, CSOs providing legal assistance play a key role in ensuring migrants' access to rights but remain under-resourced. New grants were made to support:

- Equal Legal Aid in providing better access to information and legal aid to displaced persons in Northern Greece through legal clinics, street work and individual counselling;
- Equal Rights beyond Borders in establishing an office on the Greek island of Kos. Whilst Kos is the only island (next to Lesbos) with a pre-removal detention centre from which deportations are conducted, limited civil society presence had resulted in an alarming lack of legal support and general awareness of rights violations on the island;
- HumanRights360 in strengthening legal aid support in Northern Greece. In light of an increase of persons released from detention without any guidance, legal documentation or material support in the Evros region, a particular focus was placed on ensuring access to asylum procedures for unregistered persons.

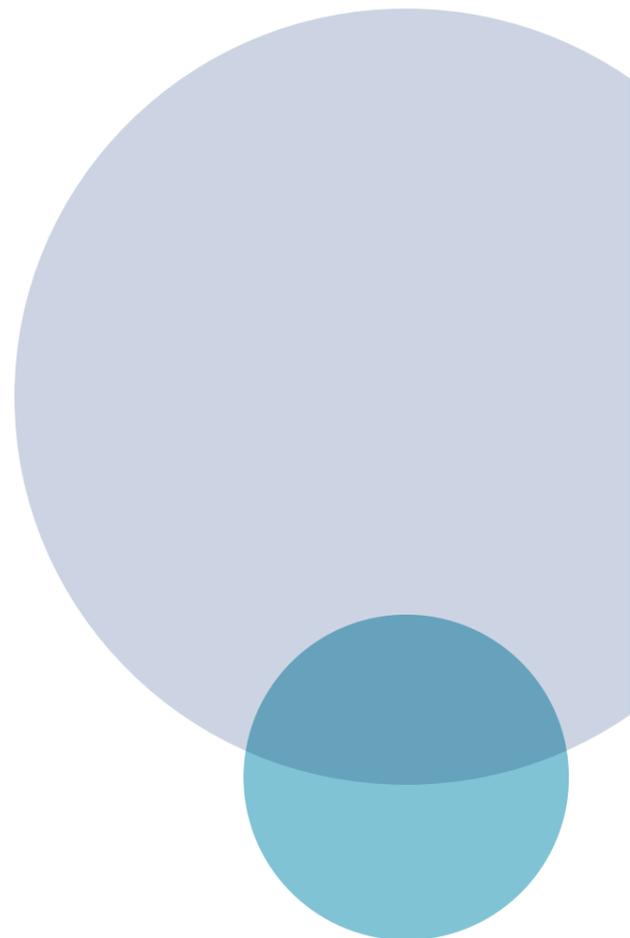
Still in Greece, as part of its bespoke **Covid-19 Response**, EPIM made grants to support civil society partners to respond to the impact generated by covid on their target populations. New grants were made to:

- Choose Love and the Congolese Community in Greece to provide asylum information and legal aid to asylum seekers through an online helpdesk co-driven by refugee communities;
- Greek Forum of Refugees to support refugee communities living in camps in Greece based on insights collected during focus groups, and
- Lesvos Solidarity to offer a space for people living in refugee camps to quarantine or isolate.

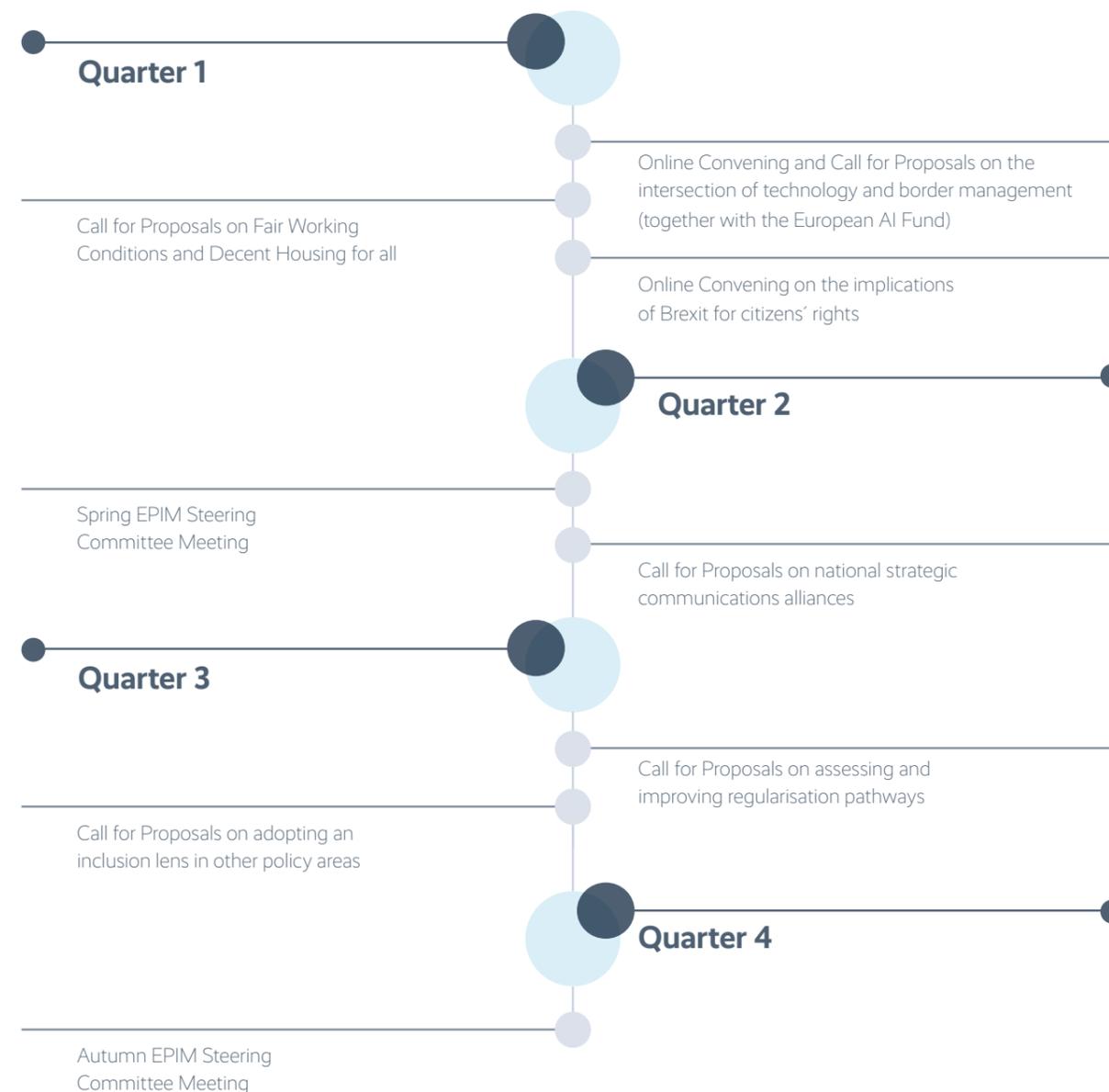
EPIM has also closely followed the **unfolding of the situation of Afghanistan in Europe**. Following the developments over the summer, EPIM organised an informal exchange in the margins of its Steering Committee meeting in October 2021 with representatives from UNHCR and the Afghan diaspora in Europe to better understand where philanthropic engagement on this issue could be meaningful. EPIM followed up by reaching out to its civil society contacts in connecting them with one another on this issue, and by offering to respond to emerging needs where relevant. In that context, EPIM delivered a grant to Safe Passage International to facilitate family reunification pathways for Afghans. EPIM also provided a grant to European Network of Migrant Women and their members to create safe pathways to Europe for Afghan women.

Finally, EPIM has kept an ear to the ground on what was happening at the **Poland-Lithuania-Belarus border**. EPIM has had many conversations with local grassroots civil society organisations in Poland and Lithuania to understand the situation on the ground as well as with larger international NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee. It acted as a connector and bridge-builder, putting these various organisations in touch with one another to scale and maximise cooperation and coordination, in particular on advocacy at European level.

As a result of the above experiences, EPIM will reflect and review its approach to non-thematic, opportunity-driven or discretionary grant-making for the future, also in response to the recommendation made to increase the flexibility of EPIM's support to emergencies and opportunities.



4. What to look forward to in 2022



Our civil society partners in 2021

Actors which are part of EPIM-funded projects

The following actors have been involved in EPIM-funded projects as lead implementers or project partners and have received direct funding by EPIM. Organisations are listed according to their geographical focus, which can be different from their country of registration.

Belarus

Asociacija Human Constanta International

Belgium

Antigone Advocaten
Confederation of Christian Trade Unions
DUO for a JOB
JRS Belgium
Liga voor Mensenrechten
ORBIT vzw
Platform Minors in Exile
Rising You
Unicef Belgium

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Danish Refugee Council BiH

Bulgaria

Caritas Sofia
Center for Legal Aid – Voice in Bulgaria (CLA)
Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR)
International Council for Cultural Centers

Croatia

Are You Syrious
Centre for Peace Studies

Cyprus

Cyprus Refugee Council (CyRC)
KISA

France

JRS France

Germany

Interventionsbüro
JRS Germany
Verein für junge Afrikanische und andere Diaspora VJAAD (Migrafrica)

Greece

Babel Day Centre
Congoese Community in Greece
Council for Migrant Integration/ Municipality of Athens
Diotima
Danish Refugee Council Greece
Equal Legal Aid
Generation 2.0 for Rights, Equality and Diversity
Greek Council for Refugees
Greek Forum of Refugees
HIAS Greece
HumanRights360
Lesvos Solidarity
Médecins du Monde Greece
Melissa Network
Merimna
Mobile Info Team
Network for Children's Rights
PRAKSIS
Starfish Foundation
Velos Youth

Hungary

Artemisszió Foundation
Hungarian Helsinki Committee
She4She

Ireland

JRS Ireland
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione (ASGI)

Italy

Centro Astalli Rome (JRS Italy)
Coalizione Italiana Libertà e Diritti Civili (CILD)
CSD Diaconia Valdese
Danish Refugee Council Italy
Oxfam Italy
Progetto Diritti
Refugees Welcome Italia

Lithuania

Diversity Development Group

Malta

Aditus
JRS Malta

North Macedonia

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

Pan-European

Choose Love
Danish Refugee Council Brussels
Equal Rights Beyond Borders
European Alternatives
European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
European Network of Migrant Women
European Network on Statelessness (ENS)
European Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA)
FEANTSA - European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
HIAS Europe
International Centre for Policy Advocacy (ICPA)
International Detention Coalition (IDC)
JRS Europe
Oxfam International
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
Profundo Research Foundation
Refugee Rights Europe
Rigardu e.V (Border Violence Monitoring Network)
Safe Passage International (France)
Safe Passage International (UK)
The Young Republic (TYR)
Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE)

Poland

Association for Legal Intervention (SIP)
Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Portugal

CGTP General Confederation of Portuguese Workers
JRS Portugal
Share your World - SPEAK
The Centre for Migrations of the Municipality of Fundão (CMMF)

Romania

JRS Romania

Serbia

Humanitarian Center for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT)

Slovenia

Infokolpa

Spain

Asociacion La Bolina
Fundación Cepaim
No Name Kitchen
Red Acoge
SJM Spain
SOS Racismo Gipuzkoa

Sweden

Afghan Women Organization
Dream Orchestra
Médecins du Monde Sweden

Switzerland

CCSI + Collectif Soutien
Sans Papier Genève

The Netherlands

New Women Connectors

United Kingdom

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Saathi House



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