



# **MIGREAT**

**MiGreat**

**Activity Report**

**2022**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mission</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>General info</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Humanitarian support</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Protests &amp; advocacy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Reach</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Finances</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Thank you!</b>	<b>7</b>

# Introduction

In 2022, MiGreat was intensively involved in Ter Apel (the only first reception centre for asylum seekers in the Netherlands), where hundreds of people were forced to camp outside. We provided emergency aid and did monitoring, protesting and campaigning for decent living conditions. We supported aid groups working on the EU borders in Romania, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia and Bosnia. We organised several demonstrations and actions.

We worked in line with our three key goals:

- Legalise migration opportunities for refugees and economic migrants;
- Stop deterrence policies, designed to damage and discourage (prospective) migrants;
- Provide humanitarian aid to people on the move in or on their way to Europe

## Vision

A world where the place you are born decides the life you will lead is an unjust world. When migration becomes a possibility for people from the global South, it can become an indispensable force in the fight for racial justice and global equality. It can give people the opportunity to increase their income staggeringly, develop new skills and support their communities at home. We want to work towards a world where migration is not a privilege, but a right.

## Mission

MiGreat believes people need to be able to move. Our mission is to challenge the right to exclude and create opportunities for migration, especially from the global South towards the EU. We campaign against the brutal border regime, which is ineffective, harmful and deadly. Alongside campaigning for regular migration opportunities and against violent border policies, we support refugees and migrants transiting towards the EU who are left to fend for themselves.

Borders have become a tool to exclude and segregate based on nationality, skin colour and religion. Predominantly white, rich countries systematically violate human rights in order to keep 'unwanted' people out, or to keep the 'unwanted people' that are in rightless. Our job is to expose the abuses that happen on EU borders, mobilise activists to demand justice and provide meaningful alternatives to anti migration policies.

We have three core goals that are the basis of all our projects and campaigns:

1. Legalise migration opportunities for refugees and economic migrants;
2. Stop deterrence policies, designed to damage and discourage (prospective) migrants;
3. Provide humanitarian aid to people on the move in or on their way to Europe

## General info

### Board

- Roos: chair
- Hannah: treasurer
- Sofie: secretary

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# Team

So we have staff now 😬😬! That's a big change we did not see coming. But, due to the tremendous government-caused emergency in the Netherlands (more about that later) and the donations coming in, we hired 3 people working full time in Ter Apel, both providing emergency support and campaigning for the government to provide shelter. We also had a part time job for campaigning and communication for a bit.

Apart from paid staff, our network of volunteers grew exponentially. We have around 30 people working for MiGreat voluntarily, in working groups, answering emails, making social media posts, collecting aid supplies and organising campaigns. These people work with MiGreat on a regular basis. We also have a network of around 100 people doing ad hoc jobs, from volunteer day shifts in Ter Apel, organising distributions to organising demonstrations. There's a network of around 1000 people who receive our newsletter and / or are in whatsapp groups, where we find new volunteers.

## Direct support to people on the move

One of our three fields of action is directly supporting people on the move. We do this by supporting local, grassroot organisations that work together closely with people on the move (PoM) and their local environment. It's important for us that the organisations we support align with our vision and mission. Below you can find information about the countries and the context of organisations we support. We launched our funding campaign to support organisations during cold, heavy months in winter (where usually more money and items are needed), but intend to continue supporting grassroot organisations throughout the year if needed.

### **Ter Apel, Netherlands**

In August 2022, MiGreat started providing emergency assistance to people who had to sleep outside in Ter Apel. In collaboration with local activists and organisations, we cooked hot, healthy meals, did distributions of tents, sleeping bags, blankets and clothes and, in case of rain, tarps and ponchos. We also

organised demonstrations for humane shelter for people on the run and spoke out in various media about the degrading situation in Ter Apel.

We ended up in a media storm, being featured on most major newspapers, tv news outlets, radio and talk shows in the Netherlands, after handing out our first meals. This resulted in an increase in financial donations and a lot of offers from people who wanted to volunteer. This enabled us to expand to providing healthy meals almost daily, buying large supplies of tents, blankets and ponchos, collecting hundreds of second hand blankets and sleeping bags with the help of volunteers. We distributed some 10,000 meals, thousands of rain ponchos, over 300 tents and hundreds of sleeping bags and blankets last summer and autumn.

After some very hectic weeks and for the first time ever, we hired people to work for MiGreat in Ter Apel full time. Apart from being present on the field day and night to coordinate distributions of food and other essential items, we were monitoring and reporting directly to journalists and Parliament members, and campaigning for proper shelter.

The authorities were less excited about our presence. The distributed tents were constantly confiscated and an emergency law was established, which criminalised handing out tents, punishable by three months imprisonment. Our staff members received official warnings and were threatened with arrest. We filed official complaints, wrote op-eds and eventually went to the Ombudsman because of the tent confiscations. Their research is still pending.

In September, the authorities opened up new shelters to host the asylum seekers. People still had to sleep outside incidentally, however, and up until December, people had to wait outside for hours regularly. At that time, there was no shelter whatsoever, so people, including babies, relied on us solely for ponchos, tarp and blankets to avoid hypothermia.

We are still active in Ter Apel, working to strengthen a local network of committed volunteers, monitor the situation around the application centre and offer help to people who have to wait outside during the day.

We work only outside the gates, so not inside the registration centre or other shelters, to stay fully independent. We think it is very important to work fairly and safely, to treat equal cases equally and unequal cases unequally, and to be there for everyone who is in need and ignored by authorities and other NGO's. For women and children, but especially for men, because they are most often left to fend for themselves.

### **Warsaw & border, Poland**

In 2021, Poland implemented a so called "No-Go-Zone", a heavily militarised zone on the Polish-Belarusian border in reaction to Belarusian president Lukashenkos actions of bringing people on the move to the Polish border. Lukashenko used this as leverage against the EU, framing people on the move as a hybrid threat. Since the EU also promotes this narrative of people on the move as dangerous and a threat to security, Poland decided to impose a state of emergency, deploying military forces at the border between Poland and Belarus. For weeks and months people on the move were trapped in the forests of the border region, which is one of the oldest forests in Europe. It consists of many swamps and is – even as an experienced and well-equipped hiker – extremely dangerous, especially in winter. Neither medical aid nor journalists were allowed in this zone, making it near impossible to witness the human rights violations which occurred in this zone during the time it was established.

Even after the "No-Go-Zone" was officially disestablished, police presence and pushbacks are now normalised in the border region. People on the move face the most brutal and inhumane treatment in Belarus, making it impossible for them to stay there. The Polish border police acts just in line with other actors on the EU outside borders: Pushbacks, inhumane treatment, neglect and denial to a safe and legal asylum procedure happen every day. In reaction to the mistreatment of people on the move, who experienced heavy and brutal pushbacks from one border to the other by military forces and police, activists organised to support people on the move in the woods. They formed a network ("[Grupa Granica](#)") to connect all activists and groups together to support people on the move more efficiently. Right now, Grupa Granica is doing advocacy work in Poland, informing about the situation on the border and about the situation for people on the move in Poland in general.

We support the Pick Up Mushroom Alliance financially so they can keep up the support with food, NFI, warm blankets and first aid in the woods. Especially over winter, people on the move face life threatening situations in the forests and swamps of the Polish-Belarusian border and are dependent on solidarity from local activists. Because of police repression, activists have to work extremely carefully.

### **Vilnius & border, Lithuania**

Lithuania, as being part of the Baltic EU-States, has become a migration route for people crossing through Belarus since 2021. When Poland implemented the state of emergency, people moved to the Lithuanian-Belarusian border. The situation in Lithuania regarding asylum procedures is similar to the one in Poland, a lot of people end up in closed detention centres, waiting up to 18 months for the decision of their asylum claim.

Unlike Poland, Lithuania does not have a big network of activists and supporters for people on the move. The only existing group ([Sienos Grupe](#)) is organising vital support for people on the move stuck in the woods in the border region.

Pushbacks are common practice. MiGreat is supporting Sienos Grupe financially to help with buying NFI (warm clothes, shoes, sleeping bags etc.) and food which are essential items to survive in the up to -20°C cold nights in the forest. We also assisted them to find volunteers.

### **Subotica, Serbia**

Serbia has seen an increase in numbers this year. Also, the pushbacks and state repression has become more and more violent. Informal housing structures for people on the move are regularly evicted, personal items and infrastructure is destroyed and burned by the police.

MiGreat supported a firewood-fundraiser for people on the move to keep warm during winter and to be able to cook meals and make tea through [Blindspots](#). We supported [Klikaktiv](#), an organisation that provides legal information, reporting and strategic litigation. [Collective Aid](#) is an organisation providing showers, clothes



and blankets, we supported them with a one-off donation. [Medical Volunteers International](#) (unsurprisingly) offers medical care, we support them on a monthly basis for 6 months.

### **Timișoara, Romania**

[LOGS](#) is a grassroots organisation supporting people on the move in Romania with clothes, showers, food (vouchers) and medical care. We supported them on a monthly basis from 2021 until November 2022, as LOGS managed to secure bigger and more stable funds. We still support them wholeheartedly, and hope there will be no need for emergency support again.

### **Sarajevo & Velika Kladusa, Bosnia & Herzegovina**

Velika Kladuša as a border town is seeing less people now than in the last years. This might be due to different routes or visa regulations in the neighbouring country Croatia, or due to the difficult life circumstances during winter. People on the move have been staying mostly in Sarajevo, since winter makes it extremely hard or near impossible to go on game.

MiGreat supported [Kompas 071](#), a local community centre in Sarajevo where people can wash their clothes, have tea, take language classes and get NFI through a Free Shop. We also supported Collective Aid, an organisation distributing NFI items. In Velika Kladuša, we supported Rahma, an organisation providing food and clothes to people falling victim to pushback from Croatia and living in squats or in the forest.

## **Protests, Campaigns & Advocacy**

### **General**

We organised dozens of protests, all in the Netherlands. Some focused on issues on the EU borders, such as border deaths, pushbacks and the building of another anti migration wall. Others focused on the situation in the Netherlands, where hundreds of people asking for asylum were left on the streets. We organised two campaigns where we asked people all over the Netherlands to demonstrate in their own city or village. The other actions were (co)organised by our core team.

When we protest, we always aim to hold the responsible authority or company accountable.

Due to our presence in Ter Apel, we got in touch with Dutch Parliament Members, and reported to them directly about the situation on the ground. We also sent out releases to the press and news letters to politicians, making sure they had all the right information. We also used the media attention we got to not only elaborate on the situation in Ter Apel, but also the broader issues of border violence, passport Apartheid, and the struggle for freedom of movement.

Below is a brief description of the protests and campaigns we organised in 2022, in chronological order.

### **Picketline Aegon & Nationale Nederlanden: don't invest in Polish border wall**

Together with Stop The War on Migrants, we demonstrated at the offices of investment companies Aegon and Nationale Nederlanden in the Netherlands. Both of them invest in companies that built and made profit on the border wall on the Poland – Belarus border. We informed the staff, none of whom seemed to know about their involvement in the border wall, and talked to representatives.

### **Peace for Ukraine**

Shortly after the war broke out, and before it became clear that the EU would welcome Ukrainian refugees, we organised a protest in Amsterdam on the 27th of February. Around 12.000 people attended, calling for peace in Ukraine and welcoming anyone (both Ukrainians and third country nationals) fleeing Ukraine. We organised this protest together with Free Russia NL, Peace SOS and individuals.

### **Love thy Neighbour – EPP**

During the congress of the European People's Party in Rotterdam, we organised a protest called 'Love Thy Neighbour'. We called on the christian politicians from all over Europe to welcome people on the move and act in line with the values they claim to have. Hundreds of top politicians, including Prime Ministers and MEP's, attended.

## 48.000 NAMES

On World Refugee Day, 21 June, we commemorated the 48,647 people who died on European borders, and many more who went missing. We built a mass monument on the island of Terschelling during a large theatre festival. Hundreds of people came to commemorate the people who died on the borders of Europe.

From 18 to 21 August, we built up the monument on Graceland festival. It was seen by thousands of people there.



Thanks to UNITED Against Refugee Deaths for making and sharing the list of deaths, and to Wij Doen Mee for their donation.



## Wij maken plek

Following the situation in Ter Apel, we organised a campaign called 'Wij maken plek' (we make space). We kicked off with a national demo on 4 September, attended by around 2000 people. We called on both the national government and the municipalities to open up shelters for asylum seekers. In 40 municipalities across the country, people organised demonstrations and actions. Around 5000

people demonstrated, and both national and local media paid attention to our actions.

### **Moldy toast demo**

On 19 October, we organised a small protest at the Parliament, ahead of a debate on the situation in Ter Apel. At that time, people were still forced to wait outside without any shelter from rain or cold. People did not receive any food or water at all, or were handed sometimes moldy, sometimes frozen sandwiches. We spoke to Parliament members, mostly from the left spectrum, and handed them the substandard meals given to people on the move. One of them showed his moldy toast during the debate in Parliament.

## **Livestream: Groen van Prinstererzaal**



[Open in nieuw venster](#) 

### **Stop racisme demo 30 okt**

Platform Stop Racisme organised a protest on the 30th of October in Amsterdam to demand proper shelter for all in the Netherlands. Regardless of nationality or legal status, everybody should be welcome. We supported the organisation and spoke at the event.

### **Heb uw naaste lief CDA congres**

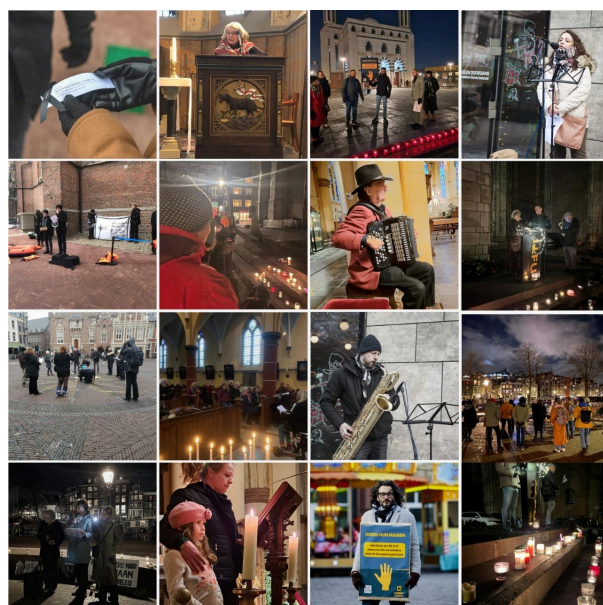
On the 5th of November we organised the second 'Love Thy Neighbour' (Heb Uw Naaste Lief) protest during the national congress of the CDA, the biggest Dutch christian political party, and one with extremist views on migration. We demanded proper shelter for people on the move in the Netherlands, safe routes of passages and the end of deadly border policies. We spoke to many local politicians affiliated with the party, many of whom knew nothing about the role CDA plays in anti migration policies, both in the Netherlands and on the border. We made stones with the most important human rights written on them, and smashed them, a reference both to a Biblical story and the systematic violation of human rights by CDA.





## Noem hun namen

From the 10th till the 18th of December, more than 25 local remembrance protests were organised all over the Netherlands to say the names of people who have lost their lives on deadly European borders. Then, more than 48.647 people had lost their lives. A national remembrance protest was organised on the 18th of December in Utrecht. In total, more than 1000 people joined our protests, and national and local media paid attention to the actions.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> For example the national newspaper Trouw:

<https://www.trouw.nl/buitenland/noem-hun-namen-herdenkt-anonieme-asielzoekers-die-de-dood-vonden-op-weg-naar-europa-ba83657a/>

# Reach

Due to the media storm around the situation in Ter Apel, our Dutch social media platforms now have more followers: 1.5K on Facebook and 8K on Instagram. Our most viewed post reached 42K people.

During and after big actions, thousands of people visited our website. Check it out here! <https://migreat.org>.

Media, including newspapers and television, paid significant attention to our actions. We were invited on a talkshow (with views up to 800.000 per night) 3 times ([Khalid & Sophie](#), and twice at [Op1](#)) and were featured on all major news outlets (tv, radio, news paper, social media). Op-eds were published [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

# Finances

MiGreat is an independent organisation that doesn't get any government funding. The vast majority of our money comes from small, private donations - in 2022, more than 11.000 people donated to us! 🥰 We are still overwhelmed and amazed by all the support we got.

Most of them were from private, one-off donations. We also received €3000 from Stichting Spons, for the pursuit of blankets, and €5000 from Stichting Haella, to buy a van. There were also a number of religious institutions that collected money for us.

Most of the money was spent on goods in Ter Apel directly. We distributed some 10,000 meals, thousands of rain ponchos, over 300 tents and hundreds of sleeping bags and blankets last summer and autumn, and during the height of the crisis we had 3 people working in Ter Apel full time. This quickly scaled down to 1 person when there were no longer people sleeping outside daily. Most of our staff and travel costs were made in relation to Ter Apel.

MIGREAT 2022 - INCOME & EXPENSES			
INCOME		EXPENSES	
Donations	€ 384.236,74	Aid	€ 93.925,76
		- Ter Apel	€ 58.700,41
		- EU borders	€ 35.225,35
Money left 2021	€ 13.828,45	Campaigns & communication	€ 19.042,93
		Personnel	€ 46.778,41
		Travel costs	€ 4.950,17
		Bank costs	€ 3.075,08
		Operational & office	€ 1.854,09
		Extra	€ 5.750,90
<b>Total income 2022</b>	<b>€ 398.065,19</b>	<b>Total costs 2022</b>	<b>€ 175.377,34</b>
		<b>Money left</b>	<b>€ 222.687,85</b>

# Thank you!

In 2022, MiGreat amplified the call for freedom of movement and managed to offer solidarity to thousands of people completely neglected by the authorities. We gained a lot of attention due to our involvement in the reception crisis in the Netherlands. This was challenging: many people were sleeping outside while there was no forecast of the situation improving. Especially in a country such as the Netherlands which has the financial means to prevent such a situation, this was completely horrifying.

With the situation in the Netherlands ensuring a lot of attention to MiGreat – we could shift the attention on Ter Apel to other parts of Europe where the conditions for people on the move are even worse. The donations we received ensured the possibility for us to continue and broaden our financial support to organisations supporting people on the move at the borders of Europe.

So we want to thank you. All the people who have supported us in various ways. From (small) donations to volunteers helping out in Ter Apel to our first paid staff members who ensured a coordinated aid response in Ter Apel to the people following us on social media – you are all necessary to fight for freedom of movement!

