

EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #26

10 – 23 May 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

194,838

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016 (as of 25 May).

1,380

Refugees and migrants estimated to have died / gone missing at sea in 2016 (as of 25 May).

156,156

Estimated sea arrivals in Greece in 2016 (as of 23 May)

34,222

Estimated Sea arrivals in Italy in 2016 (as of 23 May)

54,185

Refugees and migrants present in Greece (as of 23 May)

441

People returned to Turkey after the EU-Turkey Statement (as of 23 May)

USD 380.3M

Total 2016 requirements for UNHCR's activities in the context of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe.

USD 166M

Funding received for UNHCR's activities thus far in Europe in 2016.

PRIORITIES

- Boost reception capacity and provide emergency assistance in receiving countries through support for States, civil society and local communities.
- Strengthen protection systems and prevent *refoulement* including through presence and capacity building.
- Increase strategic messaging and advocacy to and about people of concern.

- While there was an increase in the number of arrivals to Europe in May (21,349) compared to April (12,799); the figures remains lower than in May 2015 (39,562). Since the beginning of 2016, the total number of arrivals (194,838) is almost three times higher than the same period in 2015 (69,426). This is mainly due to the high number of arrivals in the first 3 months of 2016. In Greece, the number of people arriving by sea has further decreased, with an average of 45 daily arrivals in May in comparison to an average of 122 daily arrivals in April. During the first four months of 2016, 27,926 persons arrived by sea in Italy, compared to 26,228 persons disembarked in the same period of 2015, which constitutes an increase of 6.5 %. However, the number of arrivals in May (6,269 between 1 and 23 May) is significantly lower than in May 2015 (21,235).
- In Greece, UNHCR launched a series of [training workshops](#) (16-25 May 2016) to provide additional tools on strengthening coordination amongst partners. Representatives from the Government included Ministry of Labour, Education, Health and the Reception and Identification Service (former First Reception Service). NGO partners and UNHCR staff also participated in these trainings.
- On 20 May 2016, the Mayor of Thessaloniki Yiannis Boutaris and UNHCR Representative in Greece Philippe Leclerc [signed an agreement](#) for 660 new accommodation places (600 through rental of apartments and 60 through host families) and social assistance for refugees who have applied to be relocated to another European Union country and for asylum-seekers with specific needs. This is part of the reception for relocation scheme aimed at the gradual creation of 20,000 accommodation places by the end of 2016. The UNHCR reception scheme is funded by the European Union and is being implemented through partnerships with Solidarity Now, Praksis, Iliaktida, Nostos, Arsis, the Municipality of Athens and the Municipality of Thessaloniki, in close cooperation with the Greek Government.
- During his first official visit to Italy as UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, participated in the First Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference, organized in Rome by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in conjunction with the Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). He [reiterated](#) that the three biggest drivers forcing people to abandon their homes and flee for safety are conflict, violence and persecution. He underlined the need for additional efforts and resources to address the root causes of displacement.



As part of the community-mobilization efforts, UNHCR and partners organized children activities and a workshop to assemble benches out of wooden pallets at Lagkadikia relocation site ©UNHCR/M. Bariot, 20 May 2016.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Trends on sea arrivals and returns

Arrivals to Greece decreased significantly in the month of April and May (4,704 from 1 April to until 23 May) compared to the first quarter where arrivals totaled 156,156. The average number of daily arrivals has dropped from 122 to 46 between April and May. To date in 2016, the main countries of origin include the Syrian Arab Republic (49%), Afghanistan (25%), Iraq (15%), Pakistan (4%) and Iran (3%), amongst others.

However, the number of arrivals in May (6,269 arrivals between 1 and 23 May) was lower than in May 2015 (21,235). The main nationalities of arrival to Italy are Nigeria (15%), Gambia (10%), Somalia (9%), Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea (8%), Guinea (8%), Senegal (7%), Mali (7%) and Sudan (5%) as of end of April. Arrival numbers of persons from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan remain very low (below 1 %).

After the EU-Turkey Statement, 441 individuals have been returned to Turkey from Greece (from 4 April to 23 May). . Main nationalities include Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, India, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine and Nepal. Eighteen Syrians have been returned to date on a voluntary basis.

Situation in the Western Balkans

Following the closure of the Western Balkans route, some 407 refugees and migrants remain in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 1,400 in Serbia, 69 in Croatia and 908 in Slovenia as of 23 May. In Serbia, it is estimated that some 300 refugees and migrants continue to arrive through the green borders with Bulgaria and the fYR Macedonia daily. UNHCR and partners assisted over 820 people with food, non-food items and legal counseling near the entry points, including 639 who arrived from fYR Macedonia, 175 from Bulgaria and six from Montenegro. Many have been assisted in Belgrade or near the northern border. At the Hungary-Serbia border, the number of asylum-seekers awaiting admission into the "transit zones" of Horgos and Kelebija increased after Hungarian authorities' decreased admission from 60 to 30 people per day. As a result, an average of 351 people, predominantly women and children, were waiting admission in the open, without shelter or sanitary facilities, on the Serbian side of the border.

Between 10 and 23 May, 1,500 people arrived in Hungary, out of which around 400 people entered through the transit zones along the Serbian-Hungarian border. The majority (more than 1,100 people) were apprehended by police upon irregular entry (crossing through/over the fence) and most were referred to the Office of Immigration and Nationality upon expressing their wish to seek asylum at the border police station.

Relocation

In its [third report on relocation and resettlement](#), the European Commission indicated that 1,500 people were relocated from Italy and Greece, out of an envisaged target of 20,000 by mid-May 2016. The EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship stated that more need to be done swiftly to address the humanitarian situation in Greece and avoid any deterioration of the situation in Italy.

19 EU member states (MS) have agreed to relocate 66,400 persons from Greece until September 2017 and up to 973 candidates have been relocated as of 23 May. According to the [Greek Asylum Service](#), a total of 3,744 relocation requests have been submitted to EU Member States and 2,423 have been accepted. A total of 1,350 persons are expected to depart from Greece by mid-June under the relocation scheme. In addition, to date some 608 people, mainly Eritreans, were relocated from Italy to other EU MS. During the reporting period, Slovenia received the first groups of asylum-seekers under the EU relocation scheme. On 12 May, 28 Syrian and Iraqi nationals arrived from Greece, whilst six Eritrean asylum seekers arrived from Italy on 19 May.

Achievements

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

- The Government continued to establish new sites to further decongest Eidomeni, Piraeus Port and Elliniko settlements/sites. In addition, the authorities have increased coordination with additional actors to improve conditions in all sites on the mainland. In this regard, UNHCR teams conducted field visits on mainland and on the islands to support coordination. Currently, coordination structures are being harmonized also in Kos, Leros and Chios.
- The national Child Protection Sub-Working Group adopted criteria and minimum standards for safe spaces for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in open temporary sites. These standards provide recommendations on the pre-conditions and availability of services, including the need for infrastructure for UASC designated shelters to be placed in vicinity of site managers, local authorities and police to ensure protection and safety, and the need to conduct individual assessments (Best Interest Assessment) for all UASC and prioritized placement for those most in need. Several good practices of alternatives to detention for UASC were developed, as a result of the collaboration between authorities, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies, such as Save the Children and Arsis. These include the transfer of UASC from Moria closed facility to Kara Tepe open temporary accommodation site in Lesvos, as well as the establishment of a safe space in Diavata site in Northern Greece.
- Humanitarian actors, in close collaboration with the authorities, are currently working on the possibility to establish communal kitchens and other community-based activities and mobilization initiatives at the sites on the mainland to ensure more dignified living conditions. For instance, at the relocation site of Lagkadikia, UNHCR, partners and the host community organized recreational and informal education activities for children and a workshop for the construction of benches for the communal areas of the site.
- In the North of Greece, UNHCR and partners, including Samaritan's Purse, supported the authorities to review the damage caused by the heavy rains of 20 May and resulting floods in several sites. They provided immediate measures, including installation of water pump in collaboration with the Army and Fire Service, delivery of gravel, shovels, distribution of blankets, plastic sheets, rubber mats and beds, and included further recommendations for the establishment of the new sites, which are currently being prepared by the authorities.
- Preparations continued for the pre-registration exercise, which will be conducted by the Greek Asylum Service, with the support of UNHCR and EASO, with financial support from the EU, in all sites on the mainland from the end of May to the end of July. As per the [joint press release](#) issued on 14 May, the exercise is aimed to ensure access to asylum and legal security for people who arrived in Greece prior to 20 March and are wishing to apply for asylum in Greece. Recruitment of over 130 staff, procurement of equipment and trainings are on-going.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Conditions in the closed facilities on the islands continue to be dire, particularly for people with specific needs. [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF) and [Human Rights Watch](#) called upon the Greek authorities to urgently address the situation. Tensions, protests and hunger strikes have been recorded in the reporting period both on the islands in Moria, Lesvos and Vial and Souda, Chios, as well as on the mainland in Eidomeni informal site and Nea Kavala. UNHCR has been promoting the use of alternatives to detention on the islands in particular in Lesvos and Chios. To respond to the need to identify alternative accommodation, improve reception conditions and further established referral mechanisms for people with specific needs, in particular UASC, the UN Refugee Agency is enhancing its cooperation with authorities to enable them to address these gaps.

The Western Balkans and Hungary

Achievements and Impact

The fYR Macedonia

- Humanitarian partners adjusted food and other assistance, including on clothes and Non-Food Items (NFIs) distribution, food quality and quantity, access to recreational activities, child friendly services and lack of educational activities for older children, based on the feedback on the services provided by refugees and migrants in Tabanovce and Vinojug, collected by UNHCR.

- In Tabanovce and Vinjoug, the Red Cross society provided medication to 1,203 people and conducted 330 medical interventions.

Serbia

- During the reporting period, 477 people were admitted from border sites in Horgos/Rozske and Kelebija/Tompa into the Hungarian “transit zones”, while 17 rejected asylum applicants were returned to Serbia. UNHCR, UNICEF and the Red Cross society continued to distribute food and NFIs to people present at the border in Horgos I and Kelebija.
- It is estimated that, in the last two weeks, the number of refugees and migrants present in Belgrade grew to over 600 people. These were assisted by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), UNHCR and civil society organizations. The SCRM continued to temporarily accommodate refugees and migrants regardless of their documentary status in Krnjaca Asylum Centre.

Croatia

- UNHCR’s partners, the Croatian Red Cross society (CRC) and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), continued to provide psycho-social counselling and medical services to refugees and migrants in reception facilities. JRS provides assistance, therapy and/or medicines (e.g. dental treatments; gynecological check-ups; orthopedic equipment) for people with specific needs or those whose medical condition requires further attention. The Croatian Law Center provides legal counselling on asylum procedures to those accommodated in reception centres for asylum-seekers and at the Jezevo detention centre.
- UNHCR conducts regular monitoring visits to reception and detention facilities to assess reception conditions and procedures and to provide counselling on asylum procedures and integration.

Slovenia

- UNHCR teams identified people with specific needs during the monitoring visits to the Asylum Home. They followed up with the Head of the Social Workers at the Asylum Home and psychiatric support was provided for one case.
- UNHCR is monitoring and undertaking participatory assessments with refugees and migrants staying in reception facilities, to better assess protection needs and tailored responses. UNHCR is in close contact with the Ministry of Interior regarding increased instances of asylum-seeking unaccompanied and separated children disappearing from the accommodation facilities. With regards to cases of domestic violence, UNHCR expressed concern to relevant authorities. In addition, UNHCR teams will organize some discussions with people of concern on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to highlight its zero tolerance policy.

Hungary

- On 12 May, UNHCR issued a country paper update, “[Hungary as a Country of Asylum](#)”, which represents UNHCR’s observations on legal measures and practices that Hungary has adopted between July 2015 and March 2016. UNHCR’s main concerns include lack of compatibility of the Hungarian asylum legislation with international and European obligations.
- UNHCR is present daily in the transit zones to monitor the admission procedure and coordinate with UNHCR teams in Serbia to identify people with specific needs and advocate for appropriate support and accelerated entry into the transit zones.
- With UNHCR’s support, the Hungarian NGO, S.O.S. Children’s Village, received final authorization to send pediatricians to the transit zones. The doctors began regular visits to provide health care to children inside and outside the transit zones as of 17 May.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- UNHCR observed that more single women are using smuggling networks in Tabanovce, despite the high risk of SGBV, to exit the country.

Serbia

- The humanitarian and protection situation outside the Hungarian “transit zones” in Horgos I and Kelebija on the Serbian side of the border with Hungary, continues to be of serious concern. On average, 351 asylum-seekers were waiting in the open without shelter and sanitary facilities.

Croatia

- During visits to reception facilities, UNHCR teams noted the need for the presence of additional medical staff and are following up with the management of the centres accordingly.
- In some cases, UNHCR observed delays in the appointment of special guardians and limited interpretation services for UASC. While asylum applications by UASC should be prioritized, the delays prevent the asylum authorities from conducting the asylum procedures. In addition, the limited presence of interpreters in the institutions for UASC prevents them from communicating with staff in the facilities and interacting with other children. UNHCR will continue to advocate with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth for timely appointment of special guardians and regular presence of interpreters in the facilities accommodating UASC.

Slovenia

- Between 1 January 2016 and 31 May, 568 asylum applications have been lodged in Slovenia. The number of applications in 2016 is already double of those lodged in 2015. The increase in number of asylum-seekers continues to have an impact on the asylum procedures and the provision of services due to the lack of capacity at the reception centres. UNHCR is working with the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and partners to ensure that quality is maintained and/or improved.
- UNHCR is undertaking a comprehensive analysis of effective access to asylum procedures for UASC.

Hungary

- In the past two weeks, UNHCR observed forced returns to Serbia from the transit zones. So far, 17 asylum-seekers, including Afghan, Syrian, Iranian and Moroccan nationals, were returned following court decisions confirming inadmissibility of their claims based on the consideration that Serbia is a safe third country. The returns were conducted outside of the readmission framework, without the Serbian authorities being informed. UNHCR offices in Hungary and Serbia coordinated closely to follow up on the situation of those who remain in Serbia.
- During its monitoring visit to Office of Immigration and Nationality’s open reception centres in Vámoszabadi and Bicske, UNHCR observed worsening reception conditions, in particular Vámoszabadi, where the hygienic conditions are very poor. Despite the expansion of the accommodation capacity to 200 places, both facilities remain overcrowded, with people being accommodated in common areas, including in kitchens and sport halls. In addition, individual counselling, legal aid and the provision of information on asylum procedures need to be strengthened. UNHCR is following up with relevant partners and authorities to address these gaps.

Working in partnership

In line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), UNHCR supports the governments’ coordination efforts at central and local levels in Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey. In Hungary, UNHCR chairs a coordination forum including UN agencies, IGOs, NGO partners and non-state institutions. This includes the support to crisis management teams, the facilitation of general and sectoral coordination meetings. Besides cooperation with governments, UNHCR also cooperates closely with the European Commission and relevant EU Agencies, including Frontex and EASO. Full list of partners is available [here](#).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

In the framework of the revised inter-agency [regional and Refugee Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\) for Europe](#), released on 10 June, the Plan amounts to USD 669.9 million with UNHCR appealing for USD 380.3 million in additional support for European affected countries in the eastern Mediterranean and western Balkans route for 2016. This appeal supersedes UNHCR’s 2016 requirements for Europe region presented in the [Special Mediterranean Initiative \(SMI\)](#), in the

[Winterization Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe](#) and the inter-agency regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) released on 26 January.

As of 23 May 2016, USD 328.8 million have been earmarked against the RMRP, including USD 166 million for UNHCR.

Special thanks to major donors to the refugee emergency in Europe – the European Union and the United States of America – as well as to all government donors and private donors for their generous contributions. UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds, as well as for those who have contributed directly to the situation. In this changing operational context, UNHCR is appealing to donors to provide contributions that can be allocated as flexibly as possible.

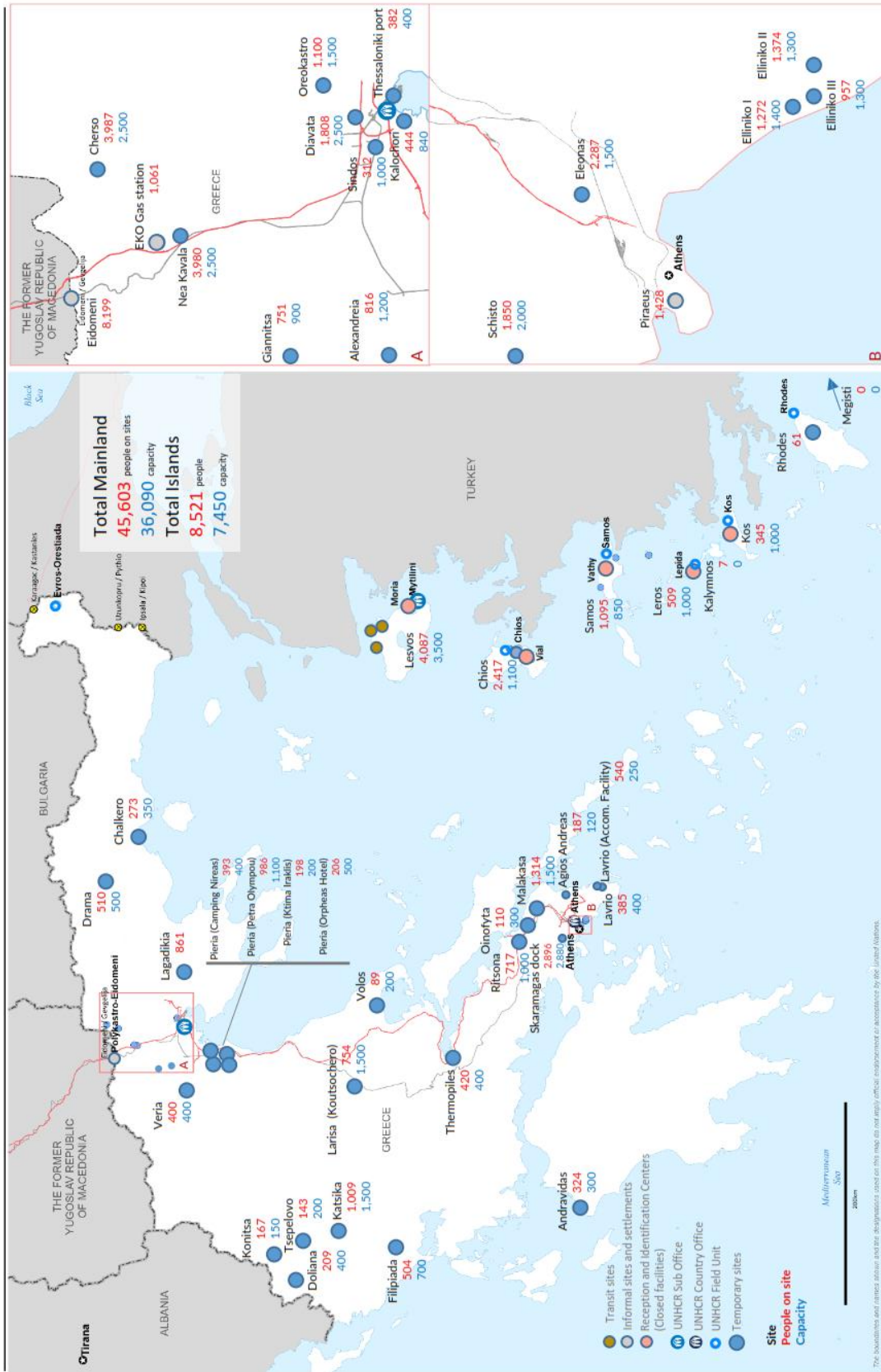
Major donors to UNHCR of unrestricted and regional funds in 2016: Sweden | United States of America | Netherlands | Norway | Australia | Denmark | Priv Donors Spain | Canada | Switzerland | Germany

ANNEXES

Europe Refugee Emergency

Daily map indicating capacity and occupancy (Governmental figures)

As of 24 May 2016 08:00 a.m. EET



Presence and capacity are based on Governmental figures from the Coordination Centre for the Management of the Refugee Crisis, as of 24/05/2016 08:00 a.m. Eastern European Time. Online map with additional information: <http://www.unhcr.gr/sites>

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Links:
 UNHCR, [Coastguard rescues some 1,000 refugees and migrants off Italy](#), 13 May.
 UNHCR, <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php> (webportal accessible via Google Chrome or Firefox only).