



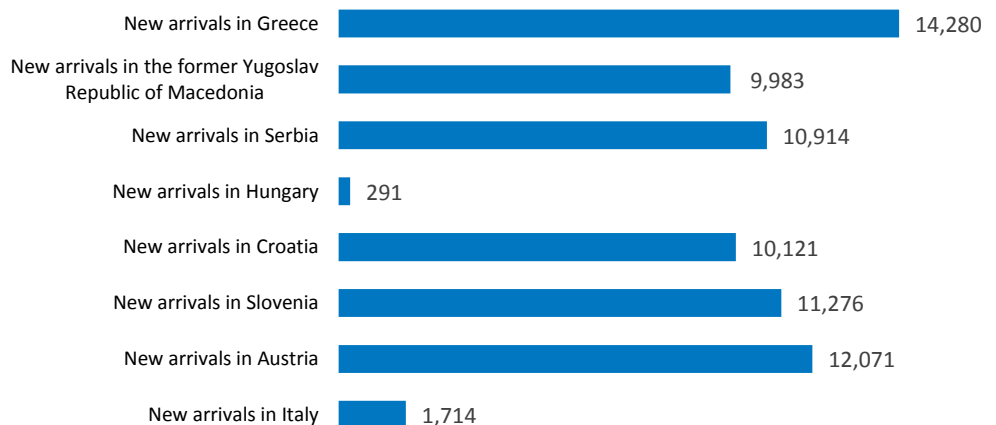
EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #21

29 January – 4 February 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 30 January, a boat heading to Lesbos capsized, taking the lives of 37 people. Seventy-five people were rescued from the sea in Canakkale. On 2 February, according to the Turkish Coast Guard, a boat capsized off the coast of Turkey, at Seferihisar in the Izmir province. Nine people, including two babies, drowned and 13 people were rescued.
- A series of strikes have characterized the end of January and beginning of February in Greece. The strikes are taking place in a general atmosphere of political and social reforms that culminated with the declared general strike of 4 February, which is likely to cause further congestion on the islands. On 30 January, a taxi driver strike started in Gevgelija in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which has affected the pace of the refugee transit through the country. Drivers blocked the railroad hindering trains from transporting refugees in protest that refugees have not been permitted to travel to the northern border via taxi. Interim measures were reached periodically allowing refugees to travel by taxi and bus to avoid overcrowding the site. The Border Police regulated the flow of refugees into the country. An agreement was reached in the evening of 3 February, whereby one train a day will transport refugees and the remaining people will be allowed to travel by taxi or bus to the Tabanovce transit site.
- As decided at a ministerial meeting on 30 January, the Greek Defense Ministry will assume a more active role for the completion of the five hotspots. On the mainland, the Ministry will provide two camps in Sindos (Thessaloniki) and Schisto (Piraeus), with a capacity of 1,500 people with the possibility to expand to 4,000 each. A Central Coordinating Body for the Management of Migration will be created, led by a senior military official in collaboration with other competent authorities, as well as UNHCR and the European Commission.

New arrivals from 29 January – 4 February 2016¹



¹ UNHCR Hungary has no comprehensive information on the total number of new arrivals but only those apprehended by the police.

KEY FIGURES

73,442

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016.

366

Refugees and migrants estimated to have died / gone missing at sea in 2016.

2,040

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 29 January - 4 February 2016.

373,152

UNHCR thermal blankets distributed since the start of the crisis.

50,340

UNHCR sleeping mats distributed since the start of the crisis.

USD 235.8M:

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

USD 107.5M:

Funding received for UNHCR's activities 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 persons of concern.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The Greek Islands, in particular Lesvos and Chios, were congested due to an extended ferry strike and continued arrivals due to better weather conditions. Humanitarian actors and relevant authorities activated contingency measures at each location to expand the accommodation capacity. Following the end of the ferry strike on 31 January, departures from the islands to mainland **Greece** continued at a rate of over 5,000 persons per day.

On 1 February, in a meeting with the European Commissioner, Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Alexis Tsipras, stressed that Greece "fulfils its responsibilities and asserts that others also undertake their share of responsibility". The Commissioner recognized that progress has been made since November 2015 and commended the government's decision to involve the Greek Defense Ministry in the completion of the hotspots. On the same day, the leader of main opposition party New Democracy, Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, held a meeting with the Alternate Minister for Migration Policy, Mr. Yannis Mouzalas, after which, he emphasized that he is committed to do everything possible to manage this migration influx and avoid any possibility of Greece being expelled from the Schengen zone.

On 3 February, the Minister of Defense, Mr. Panos Kammenos, accompanied by the EU and UNHCR officials, visited the islands of Leros, Samos, Chios and Lesvos to inspect the locations to host hotspots, but was prevented to land in Kos due to protests by the local community.

During the taxi strike in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Eidomeni become congested with up to 4,000 people hosted at the two humanitarian sites, and several buses waited at EKO gas station. On 4 February, crossing resumed in groups of some 100 people per hour. In contrast, temporary accommodation sites in Athens and mainland port of Piraeus became crowded (some 1,500 people) due to road blocks caused by farmers' demonstrations against the pension system reform, which prevented movements to the north border. UNHCR team has been monitoring the situation in close collaboration with the authorities and NGO partners such as MSF.

The Police Directors and Border Unit Heads from the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria met in Skopje on 3 February. The officials agreed to establish clear common criteria, which must be fulfilled for refugees to transit through the Western Balkans route: registration procedures and documents should be harmonised and standardised by all parties concerned; individual data should be collected in national databases through registration and exchanged across borders in a timely fashion; and persons who do not possess travel documents, who present forged documents, or who give false information about their nationality/identity will not be allowed to transit along the route.

In **Serbia**, a significant decrease in arrivals was observed from 31 January to 2 February, as a result of the taxi strike in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the temporary border closure between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Hence, the number of refugees at Sid train station was also substantially reduced and few trains departed to Croatia.

In **Hungary**, 291 new arrivals were apprehended by the police after irregular entry: bringing the total in January to 553 which is double the number of those apprehended in December 2015 (267 new arrivals).

On 29 January, the Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orbán, in a radio interview stated that Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia should build fences on their borders with Greece. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Péter Szijjártó, told reporters in Bucharest after **meeting** his counterpart, Mr. Lazar Comanescu, that Hungary hopes that Romania can defend its borders as this will make a fence between the two countries redundant. He added that Hungary will not build more fences than necessary and that the outer borders of the EU must be defended and unchecked immigration has to be stopped.

On 29 January, the **Croatian** Prime Minister, Mr. Tihomir Orešković, and the Slovenian Prime Minister, Mr. Miro Cerar, stated the need for greater cooperation between the two countries in tackling the refugee and migrant crisis. Mr. Orešković expressed support for Slovenia's plan on improving and strengthening border controls between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

On 1 February, the Slovenian State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Mr. Bostjan Šefic, met with the Ambassador of Austria, Dr. Clemens Koja, and the Austrian police attaché, Mr. Andreas Pichler, in **Slovenia**. The Austrian Representatives highlighted that the Slovenian's Prime Minister's proposed plan to strengthen control of the border

between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was well received by the Austrian authorities and underlined the good cooperation between the two countries.

In **Austria**, authorities are discussing the possibility of returning some 50,000 rejected asylum-seekers by 2019 and a new financial incentive system for voluntary returns. In addition, the inclusion of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Georgia, Mongolia and Ghana in the list of country of origin deemed as 'safe' is also under discussion. According to these plans, asylum applications from people arriving from any of these countries should be subject to accelerated procedures.

In **Italy**, 12 sea vessels arrived carrying a total of 1,714 people to Pozzallo, Taranto, Lampedusa, Augusta and Messina. The new arrivals reported that they had departed from Libya. On 29 January, a shipwreck occurred off the coast of Libya. Survivors were disembarked in Taranto on 30 January; six bodies were also retrieved. Reportedly, some 60 people went missing. Some 22 Eritrean nationals were relocated to France.

As of 4 February 2016, 279 individuals were relocated out of Italy and 202 out of Greece, totaling 481 persons relocated so far to 11 Member States. In terms of places pledged, 17 Member States and Lichtenstein have offered relocation places.



Asylum-seekers walking towards Miratovac RAP upon crossing the Serbian-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border, Miratovac (Serbia), ©UNHCR, January 2016.

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

- The Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) and Frontex have further stepped up patrols on sea and along the shores of Lesvos. Both agencies now aim to pick up arrivals from the rubber dinghies on the sea and transfer them to the ports. In the South and at Mytilene port, the HCG started using their two buses to transfer arrivals to Moria for registration. UNHCR continues to be present 24/7 along the southern shore and to provide transport service to complement the HCG efforts, particularly in case of increased number of arrivals.
- Support for the survivors of the recent shipwrecks continued including accommodation, psychological support, liaison service with authorities, and counseling on legal procedures (including asylum), relocation and family reunification where applicable. On Samos, the ICRC arrived to provide forensic support to the authorities with regards to the bodies. On Leros, UNHCR and ICRC assisted survivors to acquire blood samples for DNA testing and held meeting with the coast guard and the hospital. The estimated number of persons onboard the boat that shipwrecked near Kalolymnos rose to 80 individuals.

- On Leros, 30 North Africans who were detained at the police station in substandard conditions for nine days were transferred to the mainland on 4 February, while other 21 detainees were moved in the police station. UNHCR continues to advocate for improved detention conditions.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- Media in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia reported on 2 February that 27 Czech Border Police officers would be deployed to the southern border of the territory to support the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian police officers. They are expected to stay in the country for six weeks (e.g. until 19 March) with a possibility to extend the mission if requested.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MSLP) and UNHCR organised a meeting with all the protection humanitarian partners active in the Vinojug reception centre (Sector for Asylum, Border Police, Crisis Management Centre, UNICEF, IOM, and relevant NGOs) to correct the practice of registering unaccompanied children (UAC) on the documents of "caregivers" who were randomly selected among refugees arriving at the same time as the UAC. UNHCR will regularly share the copies of the UAC's registration documents and information about the assigned caregivers with the UNHCR office in Serbia, for further follow-up.

Serbia

- On 1 February, the authorities convened a shelter coordination meeting with UNHCR, IOM, donors and civil society organizations in Belgrade. The meeting discussed accommodation for persons that are seeking asylum in Serbia, as well as for undocumented refugees and migrants. UNHCR also raised the issue of access to shelter for people stranded in Belgrade.
- During the reporting period 514 persons were not allowed to board trains by Croatian authorities for not being of Afghan, Iraqi or Syrian nationality or not holding registration documents.
- UNHCR Serbia initiated cross-border meetings with colleagues in Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in order to strengthen coordination and share information.

Hungary

- On 1 February, UNHCR monitored the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) open reception centre in Nagyfa which accommodates 129 asylum-seekers-mainly Pakistanis, Somalis, Afghans, and a noticeable increase in the number of asylum-seekers registered as Syrians (1 in December 2015, 10 in January 2016). Asylum-seekers are generally satisfied with the treatment and services provided but the main complaint is the lack of communication tools (WIFI/pay phones) to communicate with their families especially since the reception centre is 20 km from the nearest city. Currently the OIN runs a shuttle three days a week to Szeged city but it is not sufficient. Asylum-seekers can only use the shuttle after they receive Humanitarian Residence Permits. The head of the facility confirmed to UNHCR that the shuttle would be available on Fridays and that the management is following up with the internet service provider to have free internet access.
- On 2 February, UNHCR visited Kiskunhalas Aliens Police Detention, accommodating 126 people, mainly non-asylum seekers and rejected asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco and Iraq. The lack of information is a major cause of frustration and psychological exhaustion as Persons of Concern (PoCs) are not informed about their immigration procedures (duration of detention, expulsion and other related legal matters). PoCs also reported insufficient time outside in the open air - only 10-15 minutes although it should be an hour per day by law. The other major concern is that the centre accommodates families with children and other vulnerable groups, without sufficiently addressing their specific needs (e.g. psycho-social counselling, educational and child-friendly space).

Croatia

- The MoI verbally notified UNHCR of the return of some Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis by Slovenia who do not fulfil the requirement under Article 5 of the Schengen Borders Code which applies to third country nationals, such as a travel document and valid visa. According to the MoI, the individuals had expressed their intention to seek asylum in Germany or Austria.
- Coordination meetings between UNHCR, the Croatian Red Cross and other NGOs on the ground continue to be held on a daily basis in the Winter Reception and Transit Centre (WRTC) in Slavonski Brod.

Slovenia

- In Dobova, UNHCR met with the Chief of Police and expressed the UNHCR's commitment to reinforce the existing cooperation with the police to provide protection and assistance to the PoCs, and respect the coordination protocols and agreements between UNHCR and the police.
- During the morning coordination meeting in Šentilj, the police informed partners that as of 4 February, 1,000 people per day are expected to arrive in Šentilj. They also indicated that Šentilj will be the only exit point after the end of February as the Karavanke exit point will no longer be operational.

Italy

- UNHCR field teams provided information on access to the asylum procedure and the relocation programme at the ports of disembarkation, in the hotspots, as well as in second line reception facilities. UNHCR roving teams visited reception centres in Milan in order to provide information to potential relocation candidates hosted there.
- UNHCR met with the Director of the Border Police and the European Commission to discuss possible new trends of sea arrivals to Italy and address pending concerns related to the provision of information and access to the procedure in the hotspots. The discussion will continue in the context of the drafting of the SoPs on the hotspots, promoted by the MoI in close collaboration with the EC, EASO and UNHCR.

Working in partnership

In line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), UNHCR supports the Government's coordination efforts at central and local level in Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. 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 operates closely with the European Commission and relevant EU Agencies, including Frontex and EASO. Other partners include:

[A21](#) | [Action Aid](#) | [ADRA Adventist Development and Relief Agency](#) | [Agape](#) | [AI Amnesty International](#) | [Amity](#) | [Apostoli/IOCC ASB](#) | [BCHR Belgrade Centre for Human Rights](#) | [Caritas](#) | [Church of Holistic Gospel](#) | [Cordelia Foundation](#) | [CRS Catholic Relief Services](#) | [Croatian Law Centre](#) | [Croatian Red Cross](#) | [Centre for Peace Studies \(Croatia\)](#) | [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Macedonia](#) | [DRC Danish Refugee Council](#) | [Dorcas](#) | [Evangelic church of Greece](#) | [Ecumenical Refugee Council Euro Human](#) | [Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Red Cross](#) | [GIZ Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit](#) | [Grain of Goodness](#) | [Greek Refugee Council](#) | [Hellenic League for Human Rights](#) | [Hellenic Red Cross](#) | [Hellenic Theatre Drama & Education Network](#) | [Help the Refugees in Macedonia](#) | [HERA Health education and Research Organization](#) | [HHC Hungarian Helsinki Committee](#) | [Hilal](#) | [HCIT Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance](#) | [Human Appeal](#) | [ICMC International Catholic Migration Commission](#) | [IHA International Health Action](#) | [Indigo](#) | [Information Legal Center –Croatia](#) | [INTEROS](#) | [Institute Circle](#) | [IOM International Organization for Migration](#) | [IRC International Rescue Committee](#) | [Israaid](#) | [Italian Red Cross](#) | [JRS Jesuit Refugee Service](#) | [Kaliri](#) | [KSPM-ERP Church of Greece](#) | [La Strada \(Open Gate\)](#) | [Legis](#) | [Magna](#) | [MdM Médecins du Monde](#) | [Medin](#) | [Menedek Association](#) | [Mercy Corps](#) | [Merhamet](#) | [METAction](#) | [MGMD Mirovna Grupa Mladih Dunav](#) | [Microfins](#) | [MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres](#) | [MYLA Macedonian Young Lawyers Association](#) | [NRC Norwegian Refugee Council](#) | [Nun](#) | [Operation Mercy](#) | [Oxfam](#) | [Peace Institute \(Slovenia\)](#) | [PiN People in Need](#) | [PiC Pravno-informacijski Center Nevladnih Organizacij](#) | [Praksis](#) | [Praxis](#) | [ProAsyl](#) | [Remar](#) | [Salvation Army](#) | [Samaritan's Purse](#) | [Save the Children](#) | [Shelter Box](#) | [Sigma Plus](#) | [Slovene Philanthropy](#) | [SOS Children's Village](#) | [Terre des homes](#) | [UNDP United Nations Development Programme](#) | [UNFPA United Nations Population Fund](#) | [UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund](#) | [Union of Baptist Churches in Croatia](#) | [UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services](#) | [Vizija](#) | [Vlaznia Kumanovo, Volunteer Centre Osijek](#) | [WAHA Women and Health Alliance International](#) | [WHO World Health Organization](#)

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

In the framework of the [inter-agency Regional and Refugee Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\) for Europe](#), released on 26 January, UNHCR appeals for **USD 235.8 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 \(SMI\)](#) and in the Winterization Appeal.

A revised version of the Special Mediterranean Initiative, outlining the Office's response to the refugee crisis not only in Europe, as included in the RMRP, but also in countries of asylum or transit in Africa and the North Africa sub-region, is soon to be released. Pending the release of this new appeal, requirements for Africa and North Africa sub-regions indicated in the SMI appeal remains valid.

As of 9 February, **USD 108.5 million** has been received for the SMI in 2016, including USD 107.5 million earmarked to Europe region.

Contributions have been received from: Canada; European Union; United States of America; Avaaz.Org, ERICSSON AB and Fondation BNP Paribas, UNIQLO and other private donors.

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 of unrestricted and regional funds in 2015:

[Sweden](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [Norway](#) | [Australia](#) | [Denmark](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [Germany](#)

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Links:

UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed at the plight of refugees and migrants at Bulgaria borders](#)

UNHCR, <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php> (webportal accessible via Google Chrome or Firefox only).

Europe Refugee Emergency

UNHCR Presence and Key Border Crossings

as of 04 February 2016

