



EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #19

15 – 21 January 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Amid the European Union (EU) pressure to reduce the flow of persons into Europe and following the announcement on 8 January to impose visa requirements on Syrians arriving in Turkey by air and sea from third countries, the Turkish Minister for European Affairs announced Turkey's plans to offer Syrian refugees work permits.
- The visa restrictions will not apply to Syrian refugees who cross the Syrian-Turkish border by land to flee the conflict in Syria, a policy in place since the start of the Syrian war in 2011. The move aims to stop Syrians from flying into Turkey from other countries and irregularly and dangerously trying to reach Greece and other European nations.
- According to the Austrian police, Germany has been rejecting an increasing number of persons at its Bavarian border. The returned persons were from Afghanistan, Morocco and Algeria and wanted to apply for asylum in Scandinavian countries, not in Germany. A spokesperson of the Federal Police in Munich confirmed the rejection of people without giving concrete numbers.
- In France, the authorities announced plans to open new semi-permanent camps with better protection from the elements for persons currently in informal camps. Some 125 heated containers will be opened in Calais and priority is to be given to families inhabiting the 'Jungle Camp' in Calais.

New arrivals from 15 to 21 January 2016



KEY FIGURES

36,528

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016.

107

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

1,872

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 15 to 21 January 2016.

361,975

UNHCR thermal blankets distributed since the start of the crisis.

43,998

UNHCR sleeping mats distributed since the start of the crisis.

USD 83.4M:

Total 2015 requirements for the Special Mediterranean Initiative, including winterization activities in Europe.

USD 84.9M:

Funding received including for winterization activities covering until February 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

In **Greece**, during the reporting period, four shipwrecks occurred off the coast of Agathonissi, Samos, Farmakonissi, and Kalymnos islands: 88 persons were rescued, 52 died (including 20 children) and 18 are still missing. At the same time, the Hellenic Coast Guard, Frontex, and private vessels assisted a number of distressed boats taking water, deflating dangerously, experiencing engine failure, or running out of fuel. UNHCR and partners supported the survivors and families of the deceased. UNHCR issued a [press release](#) on 22 January deeply deploring the umpteenth loss of life in the Aegean Sea, as the weather worsens and desperate refugees in search of safety, take extraordinary risks, lured also by discounts offered by unscrupulous smugglers. On 20 January, on the island of Lesbos, a child and woman died of hypothermia, despite resuscitation attempts. On 20 and 21 January, a ferry strike took place and travel to mainland was not possible. The number of people present on the Greek islands has therefore increased from 2,200 on 19 January to 7,600 on 21 January, causing congestion of reception facilities, particularly in Lesbos, Leros and Chios islands.

The border between Greece and the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** closed on 19 and 20 January and re-opened on 21 January. During the closure, the Greek police allowed the site in Eidomeni to re-open and 600 people were hosted in winterized shelters and provided with humanitarian assistance. The situation remained calm and people started crossing the border again. The closure was due to congestion caused by a train breaking down on the international railroad line to Slovenia. Authorities informed that they had received information from the Serbian Border Police that from 20 January onwards only refugees with Germany or Austria marked as their final destination country on their registration documents would be allowed to transit through the route. This practice was also implemented in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia once the border re-opened.

In **Serbia**, the weather turned markedly colder with snow-fall throughout the country and temperatures dropping to -10°C at night during the reporting period. An increasing number of Syrian families and single mothers arrived. They left Syria to reunite with their husbands, who reached Western or Northern Europe already in 2015. Speculations about possible border closures/limitations emanating from Austria and Slovenia led to concerns among authorities and adoption of new practices following development in the region.

In **Hungary**, there were 138 new arrivals who were apprehended by the police after irregular entry, arriving mainly from Serbia. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Peter Szijjarto, stated that “Hungarian authorities are ready to build a fence on the border with Romania the next day, should refugees and migrants change their transit route”.

In **Croatia** on 20 January, following the announcement of restrictive border measures taken by the Austrian authorities and similar actions planned to be taken by the Slovenian government, the Minister of Interior in the care-taker government, Mr. Ranko Ostojic, stated that Croatia would also introduce new rules.

In **Slovenia** on 21 January, after a regular session of the Government, the Minister of Interior, Ms. Vesna Györkös Žnidar, announced that Slovenia will start implementing the policy of not letting pass persons of concern (PoCs) that do not plan to seek asylum in Austria or Germany. The implementation of this policy started with the first new train of arrivals, expected at 10pm that same night. Croatia had been informed of this measure.

In **Austria**, the new border management system will first only take place in Spielfeld/Sentilj (Austrian/Slovenian border). On 20 January, this started with a test phase for up to 500 people on a daily basis. Other refugees and migrants were transferred through the Karawanken tunnel (Jesenice/St. Jakob im Rosental). The centre shall be fully operational in a few weeks and all arrivals will be checked and registered in Spielfeld before entering Austria. The Ministry of Interior also announced that only persons expressing the wish to apply for asylum either in Austria or in Germany will be allowed to enter Austria. On 20 January, the Austrian Federal Government and the Heads of the nine Austrian Provinces met and agreed on measures to reduce the number of refugees and migrants entering Austria.

In **Italy**, two boats with 700 people arrived in the ports of Augusta and Catania. The new arrivals reported to have departed from Libya. On 15 January, a shipwreck occurred off the coast of Sicily and took the life of one individual. Four people are still reported missing. Some 67 persons, mainly Eritreans and a small group of Syrians, were relocated: 50 on 15 January to the Netherlands, nine on 18 January to Finland, eight on 21 January to Belgium.



UNHCR staff provides information to refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Italy @F.Malavolta/UNHCR, November 2015.

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

- On 21 January, the Assistant High Commissioner (AHC) for Protection, Mr. Volker Türk, visited the humanitarian site in Eidomeni as well as the police station and met unaccompanied children who were under protective custody. He discussed the importance of strengthening the child protection system with the Greek authorities, including the Alternate Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection and the Alternate Minister of Migration Policy, and offered UNHCR's support in this regard.
- During the temporary closure of the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNHCR and METAction, MSF, Hellenic Red Cross, Praksis, Save the Children, and Arsis provided humanitarian support and distributed food and blankets.
- Several cases of unregistered persons who entered Greece through the land border with Turkey were noted in Eidomeni and were referred by UNHCR for registration to the Hellenic Police and to the Greek Council for Refugees for follow up.
- Several cases of hypothermia requiring medical assistance were reported on the southern shorelines of Lesvos. In response to the weather conditions, UNHCR shore response cars, which continue to patrol 24/7, are continuously equipped with winter blankets, water and some food. Strong winds and heavy rain also caused damages to UNHCR, MSF and Frontex facilities on Kos, Leros and Samos islands.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 20 and 21 January, the AHC Türk met with government officials as well as UN officials and representatives of major UNHCR donors. He also visited the border with Greece and the Vinojug reception centre. The AHC Türk underlined the need to strengthen efforts to protect refugees and asylum-seekers where they are across Europe, including providing safe access to seek asylum. He conveyed that UNHCR continues to stress the need for increased legal pathways to Europe and elsewhere, allowing refugees and asylum-seekers to find protection in a way that is manageable and safe.
- The Emergency Lab team from UNHCR Innovation/Emergency Services has been working with staff in Gevgelija on enhancing the loudspeaker messages for refugees, through partnership with Translators without Borders, and bringing wireless control capabilities. A TV screen has also been installed in the Children and Family Support Hub and content specific to the protection needs of children and families is being piloted. The piloting of a palm of the hand translation app is planned in the coming days.

- Incidents of smugglers robbing and abusing refugees and migrants, especially those arriving to the Tabanovce transit centre on foot, continue to be reported. UNHCR and partners provide them with medical and other humanitarian assistance and report the incidents to the police.

Serbia

- In light of the drop in temperatures and start of snow-fall, UNHCR and partners (Médecins Sans Frontières, International Organization for Migration, Mercy Corps, Norwegian People's Aid, Save the Children, International Rescue Committee) increased transport from the green border to Miratovac Refugee Aid Point (RAP) and from the RAP to the Presevo reception centre. They also reinforced shelters in the reception centre, where 16 UNHCR Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) were opened to accommodate refugee families.
- In Sid on 20 January, the Serbian police carried out screening of the registration documents of refugees and migrants, a practice previously undertaken by the Croatian police, which were now only involved in the boarding process. Some 633 persons, including double counting, were screened out and not allowed to board trains in Sid by the Croatian Police for not being of Afghan, Iraqi or Syrian nationality, or for not holding registration documents. Refugees and migrants who were not allowed to board the trains were offered transportation by the Serbian authorities to the Asylum Centre in Krnjača near Belgrade. UNHCR, Humanitarian Center for Integration and Tolerance, Asylum Info Centre and Belgrade Centre for Human Rights counseled them on asylum procedures in Serbia.

Hungary

- On 18 and 19 January, UNHCR monitored Kiskunhalas Aliens' Police and Asylum detention centre which accommodates more than 190 persons, mainly from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The total number of PoCs to UNHCR in detention reached 739. They are held in detention for irregular crossing, pending return to Serbia. Medical assistance provided at asylum detention facilities remains very basic. In some detention facilities, heating system is not functioning while poor internet connection and overpriced rates to make an external phone call (3 euros per minute) makes it extremely difficult for asylum-seekers to communicate with their families.
- In a public statement on 19 January, the Immigration Office Director, Ms. Zsuzsanna Végh, mentioned that most of the 414,000 migrants who entered Hungary irregularly in 2015 came for economic considerations. She stated that her Office had registered 188,000 asylum applications, the second highest number of applications among EU Member States. According to the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) records', 59 per cent of the asylum applications in 2015 were filed by Syrian and Afghan nationals.

Croatia

- The Croatian Red Cross (CRC)'s access to the registration site, including the waiting area and registration tents has been restricted by the camp management in the Winter Reception and Transit Center (WRTC) and no reason for it has been shared so far. The police have been in charge of prioritizing families with specific needs for registration and of providing assistance. The CRC will be called for interventions outside the registration area in case of need.
- For the second time in the past weeks, some refugees and migrants jumped out of the train in Slavonski Brod train station. The police intervened immediately and arrested four men. It is assumed these actions were to pre-empt being registered in Croatia as the four individuals are not of Afghan, Iraqi and Syrian nationality. They were transferred to the WRTC. UNHCR requested for additional information regarding the event and the arrested individuals.

Slovenia

- At Dobova, the police announced that registration of arrivals will be further re-organized based on the intended final destination stated by refugees and migrants. Some people, who initially indicated their will to travel to other countries other than Austria or Germany, replaced their destination to Germany. This came as a result of the police separating those who were not traveling to Germany. The police did not provide further details regarding this practice.

Italy

- UNHCR conducted information sessions on international protection and relocation in first and second line reception facilities (Villa Sikania and Bari). It also supported authorities in the prioritizing persons with special needs for referral to appropriate services, through individual counselling sessions.

- On 19 January, the hotspot opened in Pozzallo (Province of Ragusa) and renovation is ongoing. The facility needs to be re-furnished to become fully operational. Separation by gender is currently not ensured and there is no specific area dedicated to unaccompanied children.

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](#) | [INTERSOS](#) | [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](#) | [Vlazia Kumanovo, Volunteer Centre Osijek](#) | [WAHA Women and Health Alliance International](#) | [WHO World Health Organization](#)

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR's [Winterization Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe](#), released on 5 November, appeals for **USD 96.15 million** in additional support for Greece and affected countries in the Balkans for the winter months (November 2015 – February 2016). This is in addition to UNHCR's revised appeal for the [Special Mediterranean Initiative](#) (SMI) of **USD 128 million** for June 2015 – December 2016, which outlines the Office's response to the refugee crisis in Europe, and also incorporates targeted programmes in countries of asylum or transit in Africa and the North Africa sub-region.

In response to the fast-evolving situation, UNHCR is continuing to update its requirements for the response to the crisis in Europe. Currently, UNHCR's total 2015 requirements in Europe for the response to the refugee crisis, including winterization activities, stands at USD 58.76 million.

As of 31 December, **USD 84.9 million** has been received for the SMI in 2015, including winterization activities which are to be implemented by the end of February 2016.

Contributions have been received from: Andorra; Canada; Denmark; European Union; Germany; Italy; Japan; the Netherlands; Norway; Portugal; Republic of Korea; Slovenia; Spain; Switzerland; United Kingdom; United States of America; WFP; AB Trav and Galopp; Atlas Copco AB; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Ericsson AB; Federation Internationale de Football; Goodman Sachs Givens; Gota Media Group; H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB; Human Rights Watch; Ikea Foundation; Industria de Diseño Textil; Lindex AB; Nando Peretti Foundation; Nordea Bank AB; Pernod Ricard Co; Radiohjälpen; Shroepfer and Hoffmann Foundation; Stadium Sweden AB; Stockholm Globe Arenas; Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget; The Church of Latter-day Saint; Tele2 AB; TRYGG Foundation; UPS Corporate; 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:

[United States of America](#) | [Sweden](#) | [United Kingdom](#) | [Netherlands](#) | [Norway](#) | [Private donors in Spain](#) | [Denmark](#) | [Australia](#) | [Japan](#) | [Canada](#) | [Switzerland](#) | [Private donors in Italy](#) | [France](#) | [Private donors in the Republic of Korea](#) | [Finland](#)

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Links:

UNHCR, [Building on the Lessons Learned to Make the Relocation Schemes Work More Effectively - UNHCR's Recommendations](#)

UNHCR, [Report warns refugee women on the move in Europe are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence](#)

UNHCR, [High Commissioner welcomes Turkish work permits for Syrian refugees](#)

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

