

KEY FIGURES

1,008,616

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2015.

3,771

Refugees and migrants estimated to have died / gone missing at sea in 2015.

851,319

Sea arrivals in Greece as of 31 December.

3,062

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 18 - 31 December 2015.

153,600

Sea arrivals in Italy as of 31 December.

340,680

UNHCR high and medium thermal blankets distributed since the start of the crisis.

38,426

UNHCR sleeping mats distributed since the start of the crisis.

USD 83.2M: Total 2015

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

USD 79.8M: Funding

received (96 per cent).

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.

EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #16

18 – 31 December 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of arrivals by sea to Europe passed the 1 million mark during the reporting period. The number of arrivals in 2015 was 4.5 times greater than the number of arrivals during 2014.
- In Greece, a shipwreck occurred off Farmakonissi island on 22 December 2015. Twenty-nine people were on board, 15 were rescued and 13 bodies (mostly children) were found. One person is still missing. On Leros and Rhodes, UNHCR supported the survivors to obtain their release notes; liaised with authorities on burial arrangements; counseled survivors who expressed interest in relocation scheme and voluntary return; provided hotel accommodation and meals as well as mobile telephones and Greek SIM cards so that they can contact family members. MSF is offering psychological support and volunteers are providing meals.

Dead bodies were found in various locations throughout the reporting period: two on Famakonisi (on 18 December); two on Lakria and one on Chios (on 19 December); and one on Fournoi (on 20 December) – which may be connected to previous shipwrecks or shipwrecks that may have occurred on Turkish waters but washed up on the Greek side.



Refugees approaching the Miratovac RAP, Miratovac (Serbia), ©UNHCR, December 2015.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

So far this year there were 851,319 arrivals in **Greece**, including 42,862 during 18-31 December. The situation remained volatile on Lesvos as 600-700 North Africans were unable to leave the island as a result of a police directive. By 30 December, some had stayed on Lesvos for over 12 days. Some 300 North Africans have been transferred to the preremoval facility in Corinth where they were visited by UNHCR, ICRC and IOM. The Greek police confirmed that no-one has been readmitted to Turkey as of 29 December and that those who apply for asylum or assisted voluntary return (AVR) will not be sent to Turkey. People from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are still allowed to cross the northern border to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia while those who are rejected are sent back to Athens. As of 30 December, the estimated population at temporary accommodation sites in Athens is 540 at Elaionas and 250 at Elliniko.

From 18 to 31 December, 39,572 people arrived in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. The Deputy Commander of the border police informed UNHCR that, as of 22 December, 10 Croatian police officers were deployed on the border area near Bogorodica to strengthen monitoring. If needed, the Croatian police will also support the police in the Vinojug reception centre. In addition, as of 29 December, the Serbian police were deployed to assist in the southern border area. Police support from Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Poland is expected in January. From 21 through 23 December, UNHCR and the Sector for Asylum/Ministry of Interior (MoI) conducted two training sessions for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border police and army officials to improve management of the refugee crisis and the reinforcement of a 'protection-sensitive entry system' in border areas.

In the reporting period, 41,878 refugees and migrants arrived in **Serbia**: 40,428 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and 1,450 from Bulgaria. The majority were Syrian families with small children, followed by an increasing number of Iraqi Kurdish families and Afghans. The weather remained mostly dry, but cold, with temperatures dropping below zero during the night. Most waiting and accommodation areas have been 100 per cent winterized.

In **Hungary**, from 18 to 31 December 151 people arrived. The total number of arrivals in 2015 has reached 391,369. The police apprehended 134 refugees and migrants after irregular entry, mainly coming from Serbia. The number of asylum applications registered is 177,105. So far in December, the Hungarian authorities have registered 147 new asylum claims. On 21 December, UNHCR, the Council of Europe and the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights called on the leaders of Hungary in a joint statement to "adopt the true spirit of humanity in helping those who have been forced out of their countries against their own will." The statement notes that the Hungarian government is portraying those fleeing war and conflict as criminals and terrorists in their advertisement campaigns.

Some 42,674 new arrivals reached **Croatia**. Due to reduced number of arrivals and high cost of transportation, the Mol concluded a new agreement with the Croatian Railways. As of 2016, three trains will be used on daily basis for transport from Sid-Slavonski Brod-Dobova. In addition, Croatia is complying with the Slovenian request that each train will not transport more than 940 Persons of Concern (PoC), i.e. 3,600 within 24 hours. In case that the number exceeds, PoC will be accommodated in Slavonski Brod Winter Reception and Transit Centre (WRTC) or transported to the border by buses.

There were 43,119 new arrivals in **Slovenia**. On 26 December, a new practice was observed: 103 people were returned from Austria to Slovenia. UNHCR Slovenia was informed by the Slovenian police that the majority were returned because they gave false information about their nationality, name, and age. The nationalities of those returned included Iranians, Algerians, Moroccans and Pakistanis. They were re-interviewed by the Slovenian police and allowed to travel to Austria. However, 20 people were again returned to Slovenia. All were re-interviewed and returned to Austria.

Some 47,409 new arrivals entered **Austria**. According to the Mol, 80,470 asylum applications were lodged from January to the end of November 2015. In comparison, in the first 11 months of 2014, 23,860 claims were recorded. According to the Austrian Mol, in reaction to warnings of a potential terrorist attack, the police have enforced more intensive border control mechanisms. Since 25 December 2015, the police in the province of Carinthia (border crossing Jesenice-St. Jakob im Rosenthal) and later also in the province of Styria (border crossing Sentilj-Spielfeld) have started to check the identity of newly arriving refugees/migrants more thoroughly. With the assistance of interpreters, they now perform language

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checks and test the knowledge of migrants about their claimed country of origin. Persons who gave misleading information about their nationality to the Slovenian authorities are rejected at the border and returned to Slovenia. In the meantime, meetings between the Austrian and Slovenian authorities have taken place to find a joint approach.

Between 18-31 December, 3,362 refugees and migrants arrived in **Italy**. Transfers under the European Union (EU) relocation scheme took place for 10 Eritrean and Syrian asylum-seekers (as well as family members of different nationalities) to Portugal; 6 Eritrean asylum-seekers to Belgium; 24 Eritrean and Syrian asylum-seekers to Finland; and 6 Eritrean asylum-seekers to Spain.

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

Achievements and Impact

- Winterization progressed further by UNHCR partner Samaritan's Purse: installation of lining at the rub hall was completed on Samos; flooring of Refugee Housing Units (RHUs) was done on Leros; the inner lining and flooring of the rub hall was completed at Skala Skamnia on Lesvos.
- On the southern shores of Lesvos, UNHCR continues to provide 24 hour presence and transportation services to ensure protection interventions for people with specific needs (PSN) and priority access to registration. In anticipation of harsher weather, all UNHCR shoreline vehicles are equipped with blankets, water and food.
- Capacity of 500 places to accommodate relocation candidates and other asylum seekers through UNHCR-Praksis
 project made available in 2015 has been fully utilized and was increased to 1,000 places to cover expected needs
 by the end of the year.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to limited space at Elliniko and Elaionas in Athens, people are sent away if they do not comply with certain criteria: nationalities falling under the relocation scheme, potential asylum seekers, and other vulnerability criteria. Many people have gathered in the open air informal site at Victoria Square or are reportedly resorting to squatting in abandoned buildings. In response to a request from the authorities, UNHCR delivered 219 beds to Elliniko on 29 December in addition to two rub halls, 219 beds, 500 sleeping bags, and 500 sleeping mats.
- On Lesvos, many North Africans left Moria by 26 December due to mounting tension and gathered in informal settlements near the port, harbor areas, and Mytilene town. Meanwhile, North Africans continued to be detained on other islands. UNHCR visited detainees and provided information on asylum procedures. UNHCR continued to advocate with the authorities for access to asylum for persons in need of international protection.
- At Moria, registration remains slow with long queues resulting in a backlog of two-three days. Due to limited space, UNHCR is mobilizing buses to take unregistered persons to Kara Tepe to spend the night and bring them back to Moria in the morning for registration.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Achievements and Impact

- The representatives of the national institutions the Crisis Management Centre, the MoI, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as the Ombudsman office joined humanitarian partners for the Protection Coordination Meeting. This practice will continue, allowing for discussion about all important protection issues among the relevant stakeholders, in the interest of improving the protection response.
- The implementation of the national Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the protection of UASCs in the current emergency context was discussed at a workshop organised by La Strada and UNHCR. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) will take the lead in adapting the national SOPs to the current context, and will produce a simplified version, easy to implement by all concerned humanitarian partners. Presence of social workers from the competent Centres for Social Work will be ensured, thus allowing for the national authorities to assume full responsibility for the BIA process and the protection of the UASCs. UNHCR, with the support of trained staff from partner organisations the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) and La Strada, will continue filling the gap in the meantime.
- Winterization activities advanced rapidly in both the Vinojug reception site and the Tabanovce transit centre with the colder weather on the doorstep. In Vinojug, connection to the enhanced electricity grid was completed on 30 December, allowing proper heating in all facilities. In Tabanovce, three UNHCR rub halls were erected and

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insulated and the flooring was installed. They are heated with typhoon heaters and gas heaters are also in place as backup.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Since 26 December, UNHCR has observed that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border police have only admitted nationals from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq with Greek registration documents. Previously, persons with identity cards or other documents proving nationality or residence (such as Palestinians from Syria) were also admitted, although not in a systematic way. As a result of the selective admission practice, people not belonging to any of the three admitted nationalities are entering the country outside of the unofficial border crossing point, and are increasingly claiming to have paid smugglers to transit the territory. Many have been promised to be dropped off in Europe but find themselves stranded, and sometimes abused by smugglers along the route in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Also, a number of individuals have been arrested for irregular entry and detained; only then, some of them seek asylum in the country, to avoid detention and deportation. UNHCR is monitoring the situation in order to take action when needed.
- The presence of unauthorized persons in Tabanovce continued to be reported. The Crisis Management Centre's site manager was made aware of more thefts of used UNHCR blankets and other humanitarian items. The Mol stands ready to deploy the necessary police forces to maintain security in the centre.
- Taxi drivers held a number of strikes blocking the railways, not allowing any trains to pass as taxis were no longer allowed to transport refugees. Refugees were left to wait in Vinojug for long periods as authorities deliberated on how to resolve the situation. The police decided to let taxis and buses transport them on and off again throughout the period as the site began to overflow.

Serbia

Achievements and Impact

- In Presevo reception centre, the UNHCR-funded project of winterisation and electrification of 35 RHUs was completed on 28 December, more than doubling the overnight shelter capacity there from 160 to 370 refugees. In Dimitrovgrad, UNHCR-supplied electric heaters that were installed in the waiting areas, which are now fully winterized.
- In Sid, the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) supplied diesel fuel and firewood sufficient for heating the entire Sid Refugee Aid Point (RAP), including the rub halls. UNHCR provided 60 bunk beds for one rub hall and 25 benches for the Sid RAP. In Adasevci, the RAP and five rub halls have been fully winterized and UNHCR provided 100 bunk beds and 25 benches for the rub halls. These facilities have accommodation capacity of 350, and waiting capacity of over 1,000.
- As of 21 December, UNHCR-funded buses transporting asylum seekers from the Miratovac village to the reception centre in Presevo have been running 24/7, with police escort during the night, thereby facilitating their access to registration.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

In Miratovac/Presevo, UNHCR and partners face challenges to identify the reportedly increasing number of UASCs who take trains from Gevgelija, as by the time they arrive in Serbia, they have integrated with families they are travelling with. This is further exacerbated by the fact that they lack guardianship documents.

Hungary

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and partner organizations continued to identify age-disputed children in detention 15 children at asylum detentions/prisons in Bekescsaba Kiskunhalas and Vac. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee intervened to expedite the transfer of children to FOT Children's home. UNHCR identified several PSN in detention (medical and psychosocial needs) and referred them for adequate assistance to the Cordelia Foundation.
- On 15 and 16 December, UNHCR conducted a monitoring visit to Bicske open reception centre, which hosts 188 persons: most of them originate from Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria. UNHCR found the accommodation conditions in Bicske reception centre to be satisfactory.
- On 18 December, UNHCR conducted a detention monitoring visit to Budapest Airport Alien Police, in which nine people were held in detention. Two of them applied for asylum. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee is visiting the

detention facility twice a week to ensure that people in detention have access to fair asylum process and legal aid if needed.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR is concerned about the campaign linking refugees and migrants to terrorism, and portrays them as
 potential terrorists or criminals due to their religion. This campaign will negatively affect integration for the
 refugee community in Hungary and will put UNHCR partners at risk as anyone supporting refugees is presented as
 a threat for nationality security.
- The number of PoC in detention is 753 held in the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) asylum detention facilities and Alien Police detention for irregular crossing, pending deportation/expulsion to Serbia. Detention conditions for asylum-seekers remain poor. Medical assistance provided at asylum detention facilities is limited. Children are kept in asylum-detention facilities for long periods without age assessment. UNHCR has identified children in detention during its visits and is working on their transfer to children's home.
- UNHCR and its implementing partner, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, are currently investigating allegations of mistreatment against asylum-seekers in Nyirbator asylum detention and Alien Police facilities. UNHCR is calling upon the Hungarian Government to treat asylum-seekers with respect and dignity.

Croatia

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR delivered 1,200 bunk beds to the WRTC and provided 1,000 helium-filled balloons which were distributed on 23 and 24 December. On 21 December, 5,000 winter jackets purchased by UNHCR were delivered to the WRTC. Two heat blowers for the UNHCR rub hall were delivered on 21 December. The rub hall next to the registration centre is now fully winterized.
- UNHCR and its legal partners, the Centre for Peace Studies, Information and Legal Centre and the Croatian Law Centre, were present at the WRTC and disseminated information on asylum procedures in Croatia. UNHCR assisted and referred 151 PSN to service providers on site. Some 71 persons in need of further assistance were referred to UNHCR team in Slovenia. Medical assistance was provided by the Ministry of Health (MoH) to 603 individuals, including hospital care for child delivery and arterial by-pass surgery.
- On 30 December the Croatian Government approved additional EUR 1 M to the Mol, the State Office for Protection and Recue and the Directorate for Commodity Reserves for the care and assistance of refugees and migrants.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

With the thermogen heating machine, the reception condition in the UNHCR rub hall has improved. However, the temperatures in the night and early morning are below zero and, with both ends open, the rub hall cools fast. Following the joint assessment with the Croatian Red Cross (CRC) and the State Office for Protection and Rescue, a procurement of industrial rubber strip curtains (used for big workshops or warehouses), to be placed at the entrance and exit of the rub hall, is initiated.

Slovenia

Achievements and Impact

- The police have developed an application called eMigrant that shortened the registration time of each individual from 10-15 minutes to 5 minutes. This was done as the old procedures proved not to be efficient enough under the current strain of number of migrants arriving to Slovenia. With this application, the Slovenian police can scan and verify passports, collect fingerprints, as well as manually input data of PoC without documents. Currently, the data is collected in a national database, but the police feel that closer collaboration at the EU level would be beneficial.
- A shipping of four trucks of UNHCR humanitarian assistance (13,500 sleeping bags, 1,000 pairs of footwear and 10,000 pairs of socks) was received at the new warehouse, across from the Dobova train station.
- In Lendava, the Slovenian Military helped set up two additional rub halls. In total, six rub halls are on location. Instalment of the heating system and electricity network in the rub halls has started.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

• More people are arriving without the necessary clothing. With the first fall of snow there is a need for more warm clothing, including hats and gloves.

There is a need for first aid teams on the trains in case people fall sick (particularly in this cold weather) during their travel to Austria.

Italy

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR assisted the disembarkation of over 2,000 refugees and migrants arriving in six different landings in Lampedusa and Sicily following their rescue at sea, and provided information sessions on procedures and asylum. Most refugees and migrants originated from Sub-Saharian countries, Eritrea and Somalia. UNHCR could not attend the landing that occurred in Reggio Calabria.
- One additional hotspot became operational in Trapani during the reporting period, with a capacity of 220 places, and an overall maximum capacity that can be extended to 400 places. There are currently 36 persons in Trapani, including 12 Eritrean asylum-seekers who entered the relocation programme.
- Under the coordination of the MoI and in cooperation with the EC and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), UNHCR carried out additional information activities for 260 Eritrean, currently in Lampedusa, and for potential relocation cases in other areas of arrival. UNHCR and EASO are also cooperating in developing information material on the relocation programme.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There are currently over 600 persons in Lampedusa waiting to be transferred to the mainland, pending registration formalities, including 260 Eritreans (since early December), and 80 UASCs originating from Somalia.
- In Sicily, incidents of denied access to asylum procedures continue to be reported, including for persons who expressed their will to apply for international protection. Moreover, there are increasing reported cases of persons of different nationalities including from refugee producing countries, who are issued with a rejection order. These issues are being followed at local and central level.

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 | Al 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 Organizazacij | 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

UNHCR's <u>Winterization Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe</u>, 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 <u>Special Mediterranean Initiative</u> (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 79.8 million** has been received for the SMI, representing **96 per cent** of the total 2015 requirements (USD 83.2 million), including winterization activities.

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; Federation Internationale de Football; Goodman Sachs Gives; Gota Media Group; H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB; 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; 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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Sources: UNHCR Author: UNHCR - HQ Geneva Feedback: mapping@unhcr.org Filename: eus_smi_presence_used_crossing