



## KEY FIGURES

**723,221**

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2015.

**3,400**

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

**580,125**

Sea arrivals in Greece as of 29 October.

**6,000**

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 23-29 October.

**140,200**

Sea arrivals in Italy as of 29 October.

**442**

UNHCR staff deployed in emergency response.

**149,920**

Thermal blankets distributed by UNHCR since 1 June.

**80,550**

Raincoats distributed by UNHCR since 1 June.

## 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 #8

23 - 29 October 2015

## HIGHLIGHTS

- EU and Western Balkans' leaders met to discuss refugee flows along the Western Balkan Route. A 17-point plan of action was adopted, including measures to increase reception capacity. The High Commissioner for Refugees participated in the meeting and UNHCR's support is foreseen as part of this initiative.
- Despite rough weather conditions, Greece witnessed 42,425 refugees and migrants arriving by sea. October accounted for 33% of the total arrivals in 2015. An increase of Afghan arrivals and families with young children has been observed. The situation on Lesvos remains critical.
- Several shipwrecks occurred in Greek waters, taking the lives of 42 people and at least 49 people went missing. There is an urgent need to strengthen the search and rescue capacity in the Aegean Sea and increase legal pathways for refugees to reach Europe.
- A special train service started transporting refugees and migrants from Tovarnik, Croatia (close to the Serbian border) directly to Dobova, Slovenia – ensuring a more dignified transit and significantly reducing waiting times.
- Peaks of arrivals at the Slovenia/Austria borders caused significant waiting times for refugees and migrants over the week, leading to some tensions.
- As part of its winterization efforts, UNHCR continues to work with Governments in different countries impacted by the emergency to improve reception conditions, including by expanding emergency shelter, supporting registration capacity, assisting persons with specific needs and providing information and translation services. With temperatures dropping in the Western Balkan countries, preparations for the winter are ongoing in reception facilities and transit sites.
- Identification of asylum seekers to take part in the EU relocation scheme continued in Italy and was initiated on Lesvos, in Greece.

## UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

### Operational Context

EU and Western Balkan leaders as well as the High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres took part in an emergency meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkan Route on 25 October in Brussels. A [statement](#) was adopted including an agreement to improve cooperation between the countries along the route and immediate operational measures to tackle the refugee crisis in the form of a [17-point plan of action](#). It was agreed to provide 100,000 additional reception places, including 50,000 in Greece and 50,000 in the Western Balkans. UNHCR's support is foreseen in this initiative. Leaders committed to increase the capacity to provide temporary shelter, food, water and sanitation services to those in need, by triggering the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, if required.

Over 42,425 refugees and migrants arrived by sea to **Greece**, with daily average arrivals of 6,000. Arrivals in October so far, account for one third of the total of arrivals in 2015. The majority originates from the Syrian Arab Republic (64%), Afghanistan (22%) and Iraq (7%). Over recent weeks, an increase in arrivals from Afghanistan and Iraq has been observed. Whilst arrivals lowered this week due to rough sea conditions, the number of refugees and migrants on the islands continues to be significantly high, causing major concerns related to reception conditions and registration. With the winter approaching, incidents at sea are on the rise. Several shipwrecks occurred, taking the lives of 42 people and at least 49 people went missing. The Hellenic Coast Guard conducts daily search and rescue operations and on 28 October alone, at least 674 people were rescued in Greek waters in five incidents. The cold and wet weather has impacted reception conditions negatively, authorities provided some additional emergency shelter sites to protect people from the weather. On Lesbos the situation remains tense and conditions continue to be of grave concern, though some improvements were made to facilitate more orderly registration process.

Onward movements through the Western Balkans continued, with average daily arrivals of almost 7,000 in **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** and 9,000 in **Serbia**. Total arrivals in the reporting period were around 48,541 and 50,695 respectively. Movements from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia into Serbia took place in an orderly manner, under generally dry but increasingly cold weather conditions. Arrivals from Bulgaria into Serbia were around 150-200 per day.

**Hungarian** authorities report that some 144 persons arrived. Most of them crossed irregularly through the border with Serbia, whilst nobody was reported to have claimed asylum in the transit zones at the borders with Croatia and Serbia. The Government continues to close down refugee reception facilities and open camps in Hungary.

On 24 October, a record number of over 11,500 arrivals from Serbia was recorded in **Croatia**, totaling some 57,539 during the week. The peak in arrivals combined with the facilitation of border crossings in small groups, resulted in thousands of people sleeping in the open and growing tensions – with rainy and windy conditions, and temperatures nearing zero. Over the course of the week, border crossings resumed more gradually with reduced waiting times.

Early in the week, Harmica/Rigonce border crossing became the main entry point into **Slovenia** from Croatia for refugees and migrants. However, as of 27 October a special train service started transporting persons from Tovarnik (close to Opatovac) directly to Dobova (Slovenia). From there, people are transferred to centres near the Austrian border. Refugees and migrants are no longer crossing the Harmica/Rigonce border by foot. Around 59,934 persons entered Slovenia in the reporting period.

Peaks of arrivals at the Sentilj/Spielfeld border crossing with **Austria** caused significant waiting times over the week. Some 54,798 persons entered Austria from Slovenia and an average of 360 asylum claims were lodged per day. Austria's capacity of 13,000 places in emergency shelters is becoming increasingly overstretched. Due to the scarcity of emergency shelter, border crossings from Slovenia and transfers from the Spielfeld assembly point are being delayed from time to time, leading to tensions amongst refugees and migrants.

Around 442 refugees and migrants arrived by sea in **Italy** during the reporting period. The main nationalities include Eritreans (27%), Nigerians (14%), Somalis (8%), Sudanese (6%) and Syrians (5%). Whilst Lampedusa remains the only operational hotspot, identification of asylum seekers to take part in the EU relocation scheme is undertaken in reception facilities nationwide.

## Achievements

### Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

#### Greece

##### Achievements and Impact

- Information sessions on international protection and asylum continue to be conducted on Lesbos, Kos, Samos, Leros, Chios, Rhodes, Evros and in Eidomeni – targeting around 7,000 persons a day. Frequent changes in registration procedures limit the opportunity to provide accurate and consistent information.

- UNHCR continues to improve reception conditions through the installation of additional rub halls, Refugee Housing Units (RHU), winterization of shelter, such as flooring and installation of plastic covers, site planning solutions and enhancement of WASH.
- Temporary emergency shelters in public buildings were opened by municipalities in Lesvos and Chios, as a consequence of UNHCR's advocacy efforts.
- UNHCR started implementing a token system to facilitate more orderly registration processes in Moria and Kara Tape on Lesvos.
- UNHCR provided around over 2,100 sleeping mats, 10,000 High Energy Biscuits (HEB), 9,800 blankets, 265 baby kits, 350 solar lamps and 3,600 raincoats on the islands which were distributed with support of volunteers.
- Frontex, in cooperation with the Hellenic Police, EASO and EU-LISA, started a one month pilot in Moria hotspot, testing a new accelerated process for identifying, registering arrivals and provision of information on access to international protection and relocation. In the context of this pilot, the first group of asylum seekers to take part in the relocation scheme, has been identified by EASO and processed by the Greek Asylum Service, with support of UNHCR. The asylum seekers are expected to be transferred from Athens in the next weeks. It was also announced that the former military base of Linopotis on Kos was selected as a second hotspot site.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR is concerned by the deteriorating reception conditions whilst arrivals continue, weather conditions worsen and limited shelter is available. Many people are sleeping rough on Kos, Samos, Lesvos and Chios.
- Cases of hypothermia, other cold-related pathologies and psychological distress were reported on Lesvos.
- Due to the cold, refugees and migrants are making fires in the open to stay warm, creating possible hazards.
- The over 44 arrival points continue to create challenges in the effective provision of humanitarian assistance.
- In cooperation with authorities, capacity needs to be enhanced in registration and crowd control systems.
- The prevention of family or group separation is a challenge due to overcrowded reception sites and during transfers from small arrival islands to bigger islands for registration.
- There is a need to improve the identification and assistance to individuals with specific needs, including survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and persons with mobility deficiency. UNHCR and other actors are supporting the authorities to address this issue.
- Gaps remain in the protection of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC). There is a lack of appropriate shelters on almost all islands, resulting in cases of children remaining in police custody in substandard conditions, before being transferred to open reception facilities in the mainland.

## The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR maintains its 24h presence at entry and exit border points. UNHCR's partner MYLA, provided legal advice to 360 representatives of refugee groups at Vinojug reception centre (close to Greek border) and assisted 136 persons with specific needs with registration.
- At least 477 persons with specific needs were assisted by La Strada. La Strada hosted around 791 women and 5,984 children in UNICEF Child Friendly Spaces at the Vinojug centre.
- Winterization efforts are ongoing in Vinojug centre, with the installation of heaters and a mobile kitchen.
- In preparation for the winter, UNHCR is procuring winter clothes, footwear and rain coats. Other partners, including the Red Cross, UNICEF and NGOs are also boosting their stocks.
- UNHCR distributed over 3,328 blankets and collected several hundreds of blankets left behind by refugees and migrants for washing, to be reused for newcomers. Around 251 raincoats and 72 sleeping bags were also distributed by UNHCR.
- UNHCR, the Red Cross, Nun, Legis, Agape, ProCredit, Dorcas, Samaritan's Purse and Kaliri distributed around 18,643 food parcels, 386 hygiene kits, 10,956 liters of water and 1,700 back packs at the Vinojug site.
- The Red Cross assisted around 4,516 individuals with medication and provided 791 medical interventions. Some 56 persons were referred to the Ministry of Health (MoH).

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The electrical capacity in Vinojug is not sufficient to provide power to the heaters, which may be temporarily solved by generators provided by UNHCR, till a transformer is installed.

- Some railway personnel are overcharging refugees and migrants, who are increasingly lacking financial means to pay for transport.
- There is a need for standard operating procedures in Tabanovce site (close to Serbian border), including a food distribution schedule.

## Serbia

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR maintained its 24h presence in Preševo (close to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) as well as in Berkasovo and Sid (at the Croatian border). UNHCR provided legal and protection assistance on family reunification, asylum and registration procedures.
- UNHCR assisted some 2,231 persons with specific needs and referred 166 medical cases to health services.
- The efficiency of registration at the Preševo centre improved to a daily registration capacity of 8,000 persons, compared to 2,000 in September.
- Some dozen families were reunited by UNHCR, the Red Cross, HCIT, BCHR, DRC and Child Welfare Services.
- UNHCR distributed 2,000 raincoats, 6,111 blankets, and 1,470kg of HEB in Berkasovo.
- UNHCR, the HCIT, World Vision, MSF, the Red Cross, WAHA, Czech volunteers and the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration continued to provide assistance, distribute food and non-food items.
- In Belgrade, doctors of UNHCR partners and Community Health Centres continued to provide medical assistance to refugees staying in parks in the city centre.
- UNHCR intensified its cooperation with the authorities in identifying and preparing additional emergency shelter sites and places for the winter.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is an urgent need for additional emergency shelter capacity, enhanced cleaning services and sanitary facilities at border crossings and reception centres.
- An increasing number of families with young children, as well as elderly and disabled, was noted. Family separation continued to be a significant issue throughout the week.
- Needs for emergency shelter items, warm/rainproof clothes and footwear remain high.

## Hungary

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its partners are monitoring all border crossing points with Croatia and Serbia, and is regularly present to monitor transit zones (Rédics, Roszke, Tompa, Beremend and Letenye).
- UNHCR monitored several prison facilities, where over 900 persons of concern and migrants are being held pending deportation to Serbia. In addition, some 430 persons are being held in asylum detention centres. UNHCR provided information to people of concern regarding the detention system, the possibility to apply for asylum and seek legal aid.
- UNHCR organized an information-sharing meeting, attended by more than 20 IGO and NGO partners. It was agreed by all stakeholders to continue coordination efforts in the coming months.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The automatic use of detention for people crossing the border irregularly remains a serious concern. UNHCR visits detention facilities to assess the situation of people of concern, engage in dialogue with relevant authorities on alternatives to detention. In the meantime, UNHCR advocates for the immediate improvement of basic detention conditions including as regards access to information and medical services etc.
- Hundreds of refugees and migrants have been in detention for 30-60 days awaiting readmission into Serbia. UNHCR is particularly concerned about the tensions erupted in many asylum detention facilities, where persons of concern have complained about use of force in response to protests, resulting in serious injuries.
- Persons registered as asylum seekers are frequently held in detention for 2-4 months, at times longer. UNHCR considers that some of them are at grave risk of self-harm and mental health problems, including suicide attempts and hunger strikes.

- UNHCR staff met with asylum seekers who made allegations of mistreatment during detention and minimal medical assistance to critical medical cases. UNHCR and its partners are following up with providing support to these cases.
- UNHCR identified a number of unaccompanied children from Afghanistan and Syria who were kept in asylum detention facilities along with adults, with little or no support from social services.
- On all the above protection concerns related to detention, UNHCR is systematically advocating with the competent authorities in accordance with UNHCR detention guidelines.

## Croatia

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR maintained its 24h presence at Bapska/Berkasovo border crossing and the Opatovac transit centre (close to the Serbian border), supporting authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs. UNHCR mobile teams operate at the Croatia/Slovenia Border.
- The new winterized transit centre in Slavonski Brod, with an increased capacity and enhanced infrastructure compared to Opatovac, is scheduled to receive the first refugees and migrants on 1 November.
- The Government activated the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism for material support including winter tents, beds, blankets, mattresses and sanitary equipment.
- UNHCR distributed 15,000 blankets as well as HEB, snacks and water. At Opatovac, the Red Cross exhausted its stock of water by distributing 7,000 water bottles.
- The MoH and partners assisted 1,229 medical cases, 112 urgent medical interventions, and 16 transports to the hospital from Opatovac, Bapska, and Tovarnik.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Limited information provided by authorities to refugees and migrants, on transport modalities and the destination of the trains and buses whilst being transferred, remains a challenge in the delivery of assistance.
- UNHCR is concerned by the lack of food and limited access to washrooms for refugees and migrants during the 15 hour train journey from Tovarnik to Slovenia.
- The number of cases of family separation at Opatovac continued to stretch UNHCR and partners' capacity. Reuniting families proved to be challenging due to their increased numbers and fast transit.
- During the rainy days in the beginning of the reporting period, demand for dry and warm clothes increased significantly. In recent days with dryer weather, UNHCR observed people arriving better equipped. However, in anticipation of colder weather, more thermal blankets, warm clothes and shoes are required.

## Slovenia

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR has a 24h presence at key border crossings, registration and reception centres, to assist authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, interpretation and information provision.
- Authorities have taken several steps to enable a more organized and dignified transit process, including direct transfers from Croatia into Dobova, collaboration with UNHCR translators, the deployment of 1,500 military staff to assist the police and provide logistical support.
- The opening of a new reception centre in Dobova (near the Croatian border) with heated tents has increased the efficiency of registration procedures and improved reception conditions significantly.
- UNHCR has set up a bi-national coordination mechanism with colleagues in Croatia to share information on the arrival of persons with specific needs and separated families.
- UNHCR distributed 15,440 blankets, 490 bags, and about 10,000 bottles of water.
- Caritas, the Red Cross and ADRA provided water, food, clothes, blankets and hygiene items to arrivals.

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Conditions at all reception facilities require improvement, particularly with regards to WASH.
- The centres in Sentilj (near the Austrian border) are overcrowded due to the slow pace of border crossings, high numbers of arrivals from Dobova and limited capacity.
- The number of separated families is rising significantly. Refugees and migrants regularly get separated during border crossings from Croatia and when women and children are given priority for transportation.

- There is need for additional Farsi speaking interpreters.

## Italy

### Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR assisted the disembarkation of 442 persons arriving in 2 different landings following their rescue at sea. 100% of arrivals benefitted from information sessions on procedures, including on asylum. UNHCR referred 3 person with specific needs to specialized services
- UNHCR undertook 16 monitoring visits to reception facilities, to strengthen the capacity of authorities to identify protection needs and gaps.
- EASO continues to support the relocation process through the deployment of experts to the hotspot on Lampedusa and other parts in Italy, providing information, counseling and support to the authorities with registration and processing of relocation applications. UNHCR provides information on the relocation procedure in the hotspot and other selected regional hubs.
- In Rome, the process of identification of asylum seekers to take part in the relocation scheme and related information sessions are being conducted by local NGOs, under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Interior (MOI).

### Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Provision of information by UNHCR on the possibility to apply for international protection upon arrival, is permitted only after screening procedures by the police
- Screening procedures of persons who wish to apply for asylum vary at the different points of arrival and fall short of a systematic individual assessment.
- There is a lack of systematic referral mechanisms for people with specific needs, particularly for individuals suffering from trauma, victims of trafficking, SGBV and torture.
- Basic services available in reception facilities should be standardized and improved, in particular legal counselling services and the identification and referral of people with specific needs.
- UASC of certain nationalities, particularly Eritreans, Syrians and Somalis, continue to consider Italy as a transit country, many avoid being identified putting them at greater risk and without access to specialized services.
- The start of the relocation scheme, highlights the need to strengthen coordination mechanisms and develop standard operating procedures in hotspots, particularly regarding information provision.

## 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. 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](#) | [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 \(Croatia\)](#) | [Danish Refugee Council](#) | [Dorcas](#) | [Ecumenical Refugee Council](#) | [Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Red Cross](#) | [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](#) | [ICMC International Catholic Migration Commission](#) | [IHA International Health Action](#) | [Indigo](#) | [INTERSOS](#) | [IOM International Organization for Migration](#) | [IRC International Rescue Committee](#) | [Italian Red Cross](#) | [JRS Jesuit Refugee Service](#) | [Kaliri](#) | [La Strada \(Open Gate\)](#) | [Legis](#) | [Magna](#) | [MdM Médecins du Monde](#) | [Medin](#) | [Menedek Association](#) | [Mercy Corps](#) | [METAction](#) | [MGMD Mirovna Grupa Mladih Dunav](#) | [Microfins](#) | [MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres](#) | [MYLA Macedonian Young Lawyers Association](#) | [Nun](#) | [Operation Mercy](#) | [Oxfam](#) | [Peace Institute \(Slovenia\)](#) | [PiN People in Need](#) | [PiC Pravno-informacijski Center Nevladnih Organizacij](#) | [Praksis](#) | [Praxis](#) | [ProAsyl](#) | [Remar](#) | [Samaritan's Purse](#) | [Save the Children](#) | [Shelter Box](#) | [Sigma Plus](#) | [Slovene Philanthropy](#) | [SOS Children's Village](#) | [UNDP United Nations Development](#)

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

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On 30 September, UNHCR presented its revised appeal for the Special Mediterranean Initiative (SMI) June 2015 – December 2016. The SMI 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 Europe component of the SMI, which currently stands at **USD 36 million** for 2015.

As of 29 October, **USD 16.57 million** has been received for the SMI from: Andorra; Canada; Denmark; Germany; Japan; the Netherlands; Norway; Portugal; Slovenia; Spain; Switzerland; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB; Pernod Ricard Co; Shroepfer and Hoffmann Foundation; TRYGG Foundation; UPS Corporate; and private donors. This represents 24% of the total requirements for the SMI in 2015 (USD 59.4 million).

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:

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

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**Links:**

UNHCR, [Worsening weather brings more tragedy to eastern Aegean](#), 29 October 2015.

UNHCR, [UNHCR concerned at reports of sexual violence against refugee women and children](#), 23 October 2015.

UNHCR, [Fearing rough seas, refugees chance Bulgaria land route](#), 23 October 2015.

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# South Eastern Europe

## Border Crossings and UNHCR Presence

as of 29 Oct 2015



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

