



22 DECEMBER 2015: REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE

# Regional Humanitarian Situation Report # 6

unicef 

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

**972,551**

# of arrivals in Europe by sea in 2015  
(UNHCR, 21 December 2015)

**818,654**

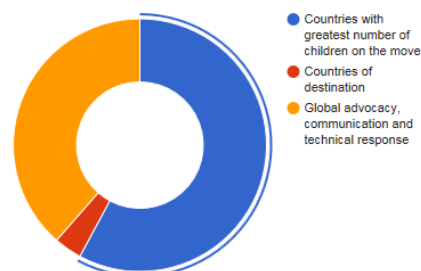
# of arrivals by sea through Greece in 2015  
(UNHCR, 21 December 2015)

**35% children**

Of people registered at the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the first two weeks of December 2015

**UNICEF Appeal 2015/2016**

**US\$14,019,135**



## Highlights

- So far this year 972,551 people have arrived by sea in Europe. At least 243,000 of all arrivals are children. More than half of them entered Europe between October and December 2015.
- The proportion of children registered at the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has increased from 9 per cent in June to 35 per cent in the first two weeks of December.
- Since October, some 60,000 children have rested and played in UNICEF child-friendly spaces in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Only during the first half of December a total of 11,916 children used child-friendly spaces.
- Since October, 10,500 babies and infants used UNICEF mother-and-baby care spaces in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Of these, some 1,800 were able to use the spaces during the first half of December.
- The speed of population movements, selective processing of refugees and migrants based on their nationality at border crossing points, and the limited time spent by children in reception and transit centres are currently the major factors influencing the UNICEF's response to the crisis.
- UNICEF still faces a funding gap of US\$2,004,185, which is 14 per cent of the total appeal of US\$14,019,135 to respond to the crisis. UNICEF is revising its funding needs to better reflect resources needed for scaling up its response to the evolving situation.

## Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of 16 December 2015, more than 972,550 people have arrived in Europe by sea according to UNHCR. Some 243,140 of all arrivals are children. Around 94 per cent of them arrived through Greece and less than 6 per cent through Italy. More than half of these children entered Europe between October and December 2015. The tragic accident on 10 December, when a Syrian father lost his 7 children and wife in Aegean waters while trying to reach Europe, is just another reminder of the danger and peril children on the move endure. So far this year, more than 210 children have

lost their lives in the Eastern Mediterranean according to IOM. The proportion of children registered at the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has increased from 9 per cent in June to 35 per cent in the first two weeks of December. In this two weeks period, an average of 1,076 children took the Western Balkans route every day. As of the end of November 2015, 32,180 unaccompanied children have registered for asylum in Sweden alone, which is 40 per cent higher than the total number who applied for asylum in the whole of the EU in 2014. The relocation process for people in need of international protection from Greece and Italy to other EU member states has yet to pick up in numbers since only 212 relocations have taken place so far (38 of them children) whereas the plan foresees 40,000 relocations. To date, no unaccompanied and/or separated children have been relocated.

The complex political climate in Europe, the lack of effective information sharing systems for refugees and migrants, as well as new physical barriers at the Slovenia/Croatia border and the Greece/the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia border leave refugee and migrant children and their families in great uncertainty about their situation. Insufficient shelter and poorly heated premises in many reception and transit centres, waiting areas on the route as well as transport along the Western Balkans route have also created extremely difficult conditions for children on the move. In this highly complex situation, UNICEF welcomed the agreement between the Ombudspersons from Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 7 December 2015 to advocate with their respective governments to improve reception conditions for refugees and migrants on both sides of the border, and find transport arrangements that would bypass the 4.5 km mud road, which refugees and migrants need to cross currently on foot in order to reach the reception centre in Miratovac, Serbia.



*On 28 November, (left-right) refugees Jamal Majati – carrying his 1-month-old son Youssef in a cloth basket – his wife, Nour, and their 5-year-old son, Basher, hold hands as they walk across a muddy field in the village of Tabanovce, on the border with Serbia.  
©UNICEF/UN02843/Gilbertson VII*

On 7 and 8 December, UNICEF's Director of Emergency Programmes, Afshan Khan, visited Croatia and Serbia. This was an opportunity for UNICEF's Director of Emergency Programmes to not only gain first-hand experience of the challenges faced by refugee and migrant children on the move, but also to be a strong voice for children with Governments and partners, and to identify key recommendations for further scaling-up of UNICEF's response.

## Humanitarian strategy

In line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF continues to respond to the crisis in Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia through a combination of advocacy, capacity building and service delivery response. UNICEF is working to extend support to children and women throughout their entire journey, also in Greece, Austria, Slovenia, Germany and Italy. Preparedness support to countries and territories considered to be at higher risk of being affected by the crisis is already taking place. UNICEF has developed preparedness plans with partners in Bulgaria, Albania and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), and is finalizing the plans in Romania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Through its country offices and in collaboration with its National Committees and other partners, UNICEF is engaged in policy dialogue and advocacy with Governments and the institutions of the European Union as the voice for refugee and migrant children in national and regional policy processes undertaken in response to the present crisis.

## Coordination

UNICEF is actively engaged in regular Government and UN country team coordination mechanisms on the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. This includes consultation with all relevant Government ministries, as well as UNHCR, respective national branches of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, IOM, and key international and national NGOs. As the global humanitarian and development agency for the child rights, UNICEF has taken the lead in mobilising

all relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of the rights of refugee and migrant children, to adapt its response to their needs, and improve assistance to children and their families during their journey across Europe, both as part of the immediate humanitarian response and through longer term support to national child protection systems. In addition, UNICEF ensures cross-border coordination through its network of country office and National Committee teams along the Western Balkans route so as to facilitate response planning, family and children tracing and reunification and advocacy.

## Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Children account for around one third of all refugees and migrants taking the Western Balkans route every day. The current crisis is a crisis for children. To ensure that the individual needs of children, many of whom have lost their homes, experienced war, and lived dangerous journeys, are adequately addressed along the entire route to Europe, UNICEF is closely partnering with UNHCR and IOM on the development of a joint Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP), which covers Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

On 14 December, UNICEF and the Government of Germany launched a new partnership aimed at improving the care and protection of refugee and migrant children that have reached their destination in Germany in 2015. With this partnership, UNICEF and the German Government have committed to support refugee and migrant children as they take their first steps on their new journey. From early January, UNICEF, working closely with the German National Committee for UNICEF, will be providing technical assistance in Germany to: i) strengthen the protection of children in accommodation centres, through practical guidance, training and mentoring so that centres are more child-friendly and gender-sensitive; ii) support learning and play opportunities by providing expertise and training to partners to set up child-friendly spaces and early learning activities; and iii) share technical know-how when it comes to monitoring children's rights and strengthening systems for the generation of timely, disaggregated data on refugee and migrant children. The Slovenian Government has likewise welcomed UNICEF's offer of technical assistance and UNICEF will be operational on the ground as of early January. Greece has also been offered support in the areas of child protection, health and WASH. Following an assessment visit to Austria, UNICEF is now defining the assistance framework and package of interventions to support the Austrian Government in responding to the refugee and migrant crisis, as it relates to children.

### Child Protection

UNICEF remains extremely concerned about the protection dimensions of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, especially for children and women. Efforts to respond to the various protection needs of children include direct services provision, coordination, capacity building and other technical support to Governments.

Social workers, psychologists and pedagogues continue to work restlessly to ensure continuity of child-friendly services in 5 locations (Gevgelija and Tabanovce, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Presevo and Adasevci, Serbia and Slavonski Brod, Croatia), where child-friendly spaces are open 24 hours/7 days. Since October 2015, the centres offered services to nearly 60,000 children, including emotional and psychosocial support, family reunification and basic early childhood development activities. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, between 30 November and 13 December, 9,418 children, including 96 children with disabilities and 455 unaccompanied children, were able to rest and play in a safe environment in Gevgelija and Tabanovce. Five children who had become separated from family members were supported to be reunited with them. In Serbia, between 30 November and 13 December, 2,498 children and 1,291 mothers benefitted from CFS services in Presevo and Adasevci. In Croatia, three CFS in different sectors of the reception centre in Slavonski Brod are ready for use. Due to the high speed of the movement through the centre, mobile teams are no longer able to provide psychosocial support to refugee children being fast tracked.



*On 16 December, children enjoy morning activities in the UNICEF child-friendly space in Gevgelija, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.  
@UNICEF/the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*



UNICEF in Serbia has successfully negotiated with the Government the establishment of a CFS in the temporary emergency shelter in front of the train station in Sid and partners to implement the activities are currently being identified. UNICEF CFS and mother-and-baby spaces are being established at the new refugee aid point in Miratovac, at the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and efforts are being made to expand the CFS concept to the adolescent groups in Presevo and Adasevci.

To address challenges associated with coordination of protection activities, UNICEF has taken the lead of coordinating child protection coordination mechanisms in Croatia and Serbia, and convenes regular meetings with all child protection actors on the ground. As the lead on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in the reception centre in Slavonski Brod, UNICEF conducted assessments, produced inter-agency recommendations and is now setting up a SGBV referral mechanism within the centre.

UNICEF continues to advocate and support efforts to prevent family separation and ensure that national procedures on unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) align with children's best interests in the context of the current crisis. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a one-day workshop on child protection in emergencies was held on 9 December in Skopje to improve the capacity of managers and technical staff from 10 organizations including the Ministry of Interior and other relevant governmental counterparts to effectively manage cases of UASC. In Croatia, UNICEF has been closely following up and supporting different cases of unaccompanied children (currently 5 cases) in institutional care facilities and of children suffering from critical medical conditions, who required specialised medical care. UNICEF is working closely with the Croatian Government to ensure structured educational and recreational activities and regular psychosocial support for the children. In addition, a window of opportunity to increase the capacity of civil servants was also identified by UNICEF in Croatia, and an agreement was reached with Croatian Centre for Social Welfare to train their staff in Slavonski Brod on monitoring, identification and handling cases of UASC in late December.

Technical assistance to Governments remains a priority for UNICEF programme response as an important empowerment measure. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, between 7 and 11 December, supported by Terre des Hommes, UNICEF conducted four one-day trainings for 70 humanitarian staff from 18 organisations and national institutions involved in the provision of child protection services in Gevgelija and Tabanovce. The sessions included topics such as cultural sensitivity, the impacts of being a refugee or migrant child, working together for the benefit of children and child safeguarding. In Croatia, during the first half of December, UNICEF undertook intensive training sessions in the areas of child protection, nutrition and communications for UNICEF staff, implementing partners and other frontline workers. A total of 95 individuals received training in the reporting period. Needs for additional technical assistance on child protection in emergencies have been identified by the Government, and UNICEF supported by Terres des Hommes is planning a scoping mission to agree on the precise areas of technical assistance.

Concerned about the protection risks to which refugee and migrant children and women are exposed in temporary shelters in Bulgaria, UNICEF is developing jointly with UNHCR a training for police officers, border police and social workers at the border points and at registration and reception centres to improve their capacities and coordination to respond to the protection needs of refugee and migrant children. UNICEF is also part of an inter-agency group providing technical guidance to the Government to revise the internal protocols and procedures in detention, reception and registration centres.

### Health and Nutrition

The provision and availability of child appropriate food for children on the move remains challenging along their entire journey across South-Eastern Europe. The content of the food packages varies and consists mostly of dry food, which is not suitable for all children. This often leads to poor nutrition of children and increases significantly risks for children's health. Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) is therefore a key component of UNICEF response.

Four mother-and-baby spaces (MBS) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, continue supporting IYCF practices for children on the move 24hours/7days. Since October, some 10,500 babies and infants have benefitted from these services. During the first half of December, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 4,461 women, 241 of whom were pregnant, received services including emotional and psychosocial support and counselling on child health, nutrition and safety. In Serbia, a total of 1,106 babies and 405 mothers have benefited from the two MBS at Presevo and Adasevci from 30 November to 13 December. In Croatia, during the same period, approximately 660 infants and babies have been assisted in the UNICEF-supported MBS, which is an increase of 12 per cent compared to the second half of November. They come from Syria (55 per cent), Iraq (24 per cent) and Afghanistan (21 per cent).

UNICEF is leading the newly established IYCF working group in Croatia, aiming to review the content of food packages for refugees and migrants, and ensures training, monitoring and coordination of all IYCF activities in the reception and transition centre in Slavonski Brod. In Serbia, additional nurses have been deployed to the MBS and on 10-11 December UNICEF organised a training for all frontline nurses, cultural mediators and support staff working in Presevo reception centre on the basics of infant and young child feeding in emergencies. The training included also topics on the importance of breastfeeding, WHO recommendations for IYCF, and international guidance documents.

Due to lack of private space, exposure to hard weather conditions, extreme fatigue and stress, most lactating women have difficulties to breastfeed, and complimentary feeding of young children has been recognized as a significant gap in countries where children and their mothers are on the move. Recognising this issue, UNICEF, WHO and Serbian Ministry of Health are currently developing Standard Operating Procedures to ensure that both promoters and consumers of breastmilk substitutes have a clear understanding on the health implications. Similarly, UNICEF in Croatia is working with partners to ensure safe feeding alternatives for infants with no access to breastmilk, while actively promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, from 2 November to 14 December, UNICEF distributed through its implementing partners 387 jars of semi-solid complementary food for babies, 367 boxes of baby appropriate biscuits and other nutrition supplements.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

UNICEF continues to support WASH infrastructure, supply distribution (mainly hygiene kits) and hygiene promotion in response to the most urgent needs of refugee and migrant children. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, during the first half of December, 2,759 babies and children were bathed at the mother-and-baby corner in Gevgelija, and were provided with 3,291 diapers, 73 bars of soap, 108 sachets of baby cream and 133 bottles of baby shampoo. In



*Many refugee and migrant children and their families are facing harsh weather conditions. Thanks to the generous support from the European Union's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), they can keep warm in the UNICEF-supported child-friendly space in Presevo and receive warm winter clothes which will help them to weather the upcoming winter in Europe. © UNICEF/UN03025/Gilbertson VII*

Croatia, during the reporting period, 3,030 children were reached with dry clothes and diapers.

Following UNICEF WASH assessment conducted between 27 November and 4 December, and strong joint UNICEF/UNHCR advocacy, an agreement was reached with the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 14 December, to construct two additional sanitation blocks for people waiting to enter the transit centre in Gevgelija, and those waiting to board the train, as well as an additional biodegradable septic tank. UNICEF has conducted similar WASH assessments in five different locations in Serbia and recommendations are being produced. In Croatia, due to recognized hygiene and sanitation challenges, UNICEF is advocating to provide a handwashing station in the area of the mother-and-baby mobile space. In the interim,

staff are required to use hand-sanitizer and gloves when handling children.

### Winterization

To address the needs of children on the move in harsh winter conditions, UNICEF continues to advocate for additional shelter capacity (including in-door space for psychosocial support) and medical assistance at the main border entry and exit points. As part of its winterization activities, UNICEF has procured additional winter clothes, footwear and hygiene supplies, as well as materials and supply to equip planned Children and Family Support Hubs for continued delivery of services throughout the winter.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 3,500 children received winter clothes and shoes, and 143 babies received baby slings to ensure their safety while their mothers walk on uneven ground. In Serbia, children attending CFS and mother-and-baby corners in Presevo and Sid received 467 changing mats, 514 baby blankets, 445 pairs of winter

shoes/boots, 310 overall outerwear clothing for babies, 708 winter jackets, 1,838 thermal underwear sets, 2,398 sets of scarfs, hats and gloves and 2,072 pairs of winter socks. In addition, UNICEF distributed through partners 89 baby carriers and 79 pairs of women's pregnancy tights to ensure safety of mothers and their babies while en route. Although it is clear that many refugee and migrant children have received winter clothes and shoes before arriving in Slavonski Brod, Croatia, some children were still insufficiently dressed to face harsh winter weather. UNICEF in Croatia therefore continues supporting the distribution of winter jackets, sweaters, pants, gloves, scarves and hats in the distribution tent. Distribution of winter clothing reached 3,030 children in the first two weeks of December.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the frame of the new pre-fabricated building to replace the current CFS in Gevgelija is in place and construction is expected to be completed by 24 December. In Tabanovce transit centre, UNICEF-supplied heaters and generators are being used daily to provide power and heating for the whole site, including refugee housing units, and the CFS is connected to the main power grid. In Serbia, CFS and mother-and-baby space in Presevo are now located in heated containers, and hot water heaters are in the process of being installed. In Croatia, all premises of UNICEF-supported services in the reception centre in Slavonski Bord, as well as the mobile mother-and-baby tent near the registration point are provided with permanent heating.

### Monitoring, Data Collection and Information on Available Services

UNICEF continues advocating with Governments to capture age and gender breakdown during registration of people on the move and establish this as a standard. To address existing data gaps and improve availability of data on refugee and migrant children in Europe, UNICEF is closely working with IOM, UNHCR and other partners in a newly established inter-agency Information Management Working Group. UNICEF expects this joint regional effort, coupled with close coordination and collaboration at country level, to significantly improve the availability of quantitative and qualitative information on children on the move and inform UNICEF programming, policy and advocacy.

With the aim to learn more about the profile of children on the move across the Western Balkans and identify protection risks and needs, between 3 and 11 December, UNICEF in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia surveyed 320 children and caregivers. The results will be shared with the Government and partners to inform advocacy and humanitarian programming to reduce the vulnerability of the children.

### Communications and Advocacy

Throughout 2015, UNICEF has been a strong voice for the rights of all children- whether refugees or migrants- with the European Union, Governments and partners. The day of international migration (18 December) was another occasion for UNICEF to remind European partners and stakeholders of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its Protocol, to which all European countries are parties.

A new photo essay on a Syrian family with a new-born baby and on the move through the Balkans was widely shared on digital platforms as part of UNICEF's global end of year report highlighting that more than 16 million babies born into conflict in 2015.



In December, UNICEF in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia continued to produce and publish social media content on the plight of children on the move and on the response, including under the #FightUnfair social media initiative.

In Croatia, some 2,000 people visited the Zagreb Museum of Illusions during a two-day event titled 'Museum of Reality' (14-15 December), which showed the lives of the most vulnerable children on the move in Europe. This UNICEF-supported event generated unprecedented media

coverage and sensitized an estimated 3 million people on the plight of children on the move through three live interviews from the Museum and generated extensive media coverage on the internet, TV, newspapers and radio.

In Bulgaria, UNICEF has joined forces with UNHCR to advocate to stop the mistreatment of refugees and migrants at Bulgarian borders and improve the response to signs of abuse. In addition, UNICEF sensitized Bulgarian officials and

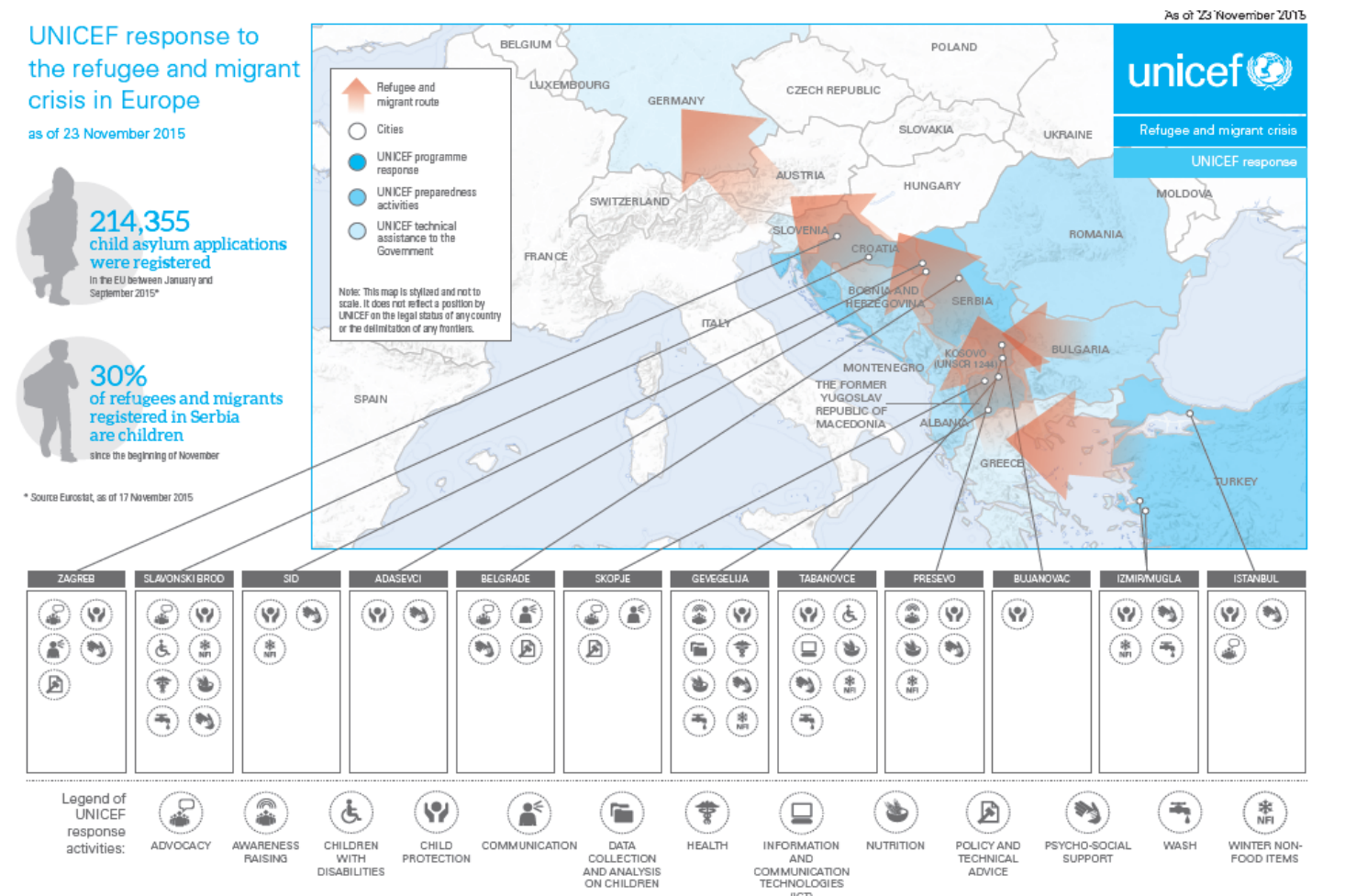


members of the public on the issue of unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in Bulgaria, through a dedicated media production broadcasted during high-level conference on unaccompanied and separated children, then aired on Bulgarian national TV.

Funding

Since the launch of the HAC Appeal in September 2015, UNICEF has received US\$ 12, 014,950 for the response to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. 53 per cent of funds have been received from public donors- DFID and European Commission/ECHO being major contributors, while 48 per cent have been received from private donors.

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