

EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #24

19-25 February 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

118,248

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016.

410

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

2,510

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 19 to 25 February 2016.

390,655

UNHCR thermal blankets distributed since the start of the crisis.

55,363

UNHCR sleeping mats distributed since the start of the crisis.

USD 235.8M: Total 2016

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

USD 107.9M: Funding

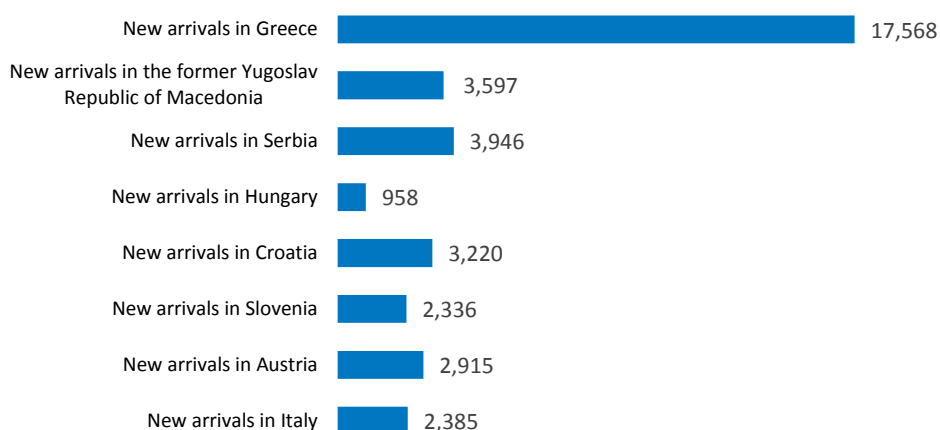
received for UNHCR's activities in Europe in 2016.

PRIORITIES

- Boost reception capacity and provide emergency assistance in receiving countries through support for States, civil society and local communities.
- Strengthen protection systems and prevent *refoulement* including through presence and capacity building.
- Increase strategic messaging and advocacy to and about persons of concern.

- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, visited Greece on 23-24 February, accompanied by the Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe and Regional Refugee Coordinator, Mr. Vincent Cochetel. The High Commissioner visited Lesbos with the Alternate Minister of Migration Policy, Mr. Yiannis Mouzalas, where he expressed his gratitude to Lesbos' residents and volunteers and confirmed UNHCR's constant support. The High Commissioner [warned](#) that border closures in the European Union (EU) states would cause "further chaos and confusion" and would increase the burden on Greece "which is already shouldering a very big responsibility". At a press conference in Athens he highlighted the need to expand legal pathways and increase solidarity across Europe in addressing the refugee crisis.
- With the growing numbers of child deaths at sea, UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM issued a [call](#) for enhancing safety for refugees and migrants. An average of two children have drowned daily since September 2015 while trying to cross the eastern Mediterranean. In total, more than 340 children, many of them babies and toddlers, have drowned in the eastern Mediterranean.
- UNHCR shared its [concern](#) over the recent restrictive practices adopted in a number of European countries that are placing additional undue hardships on refugees and asylum-seekers across Europe, creating chaos at several border points, and putting pressure on Greece as it struggles to deal with large numbers of people in need of accommodation and services.

New arrivals from 19-25 February 2016¹



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

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

On 24 February, the Ministers of Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (reference to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of the Security Council resolution: S/RES/1244 (1999)), Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia (with Bulgaria as an observer) adopted a [Joint Statement](#) at the conference "Managing Migration Together". The declaration aims to reduce the flow of people along the Western Balkan route. German and Greek officials protested the restricted list of participating states and reconfirmed the need for joint European measures in contrast to actions taken by individual states. This has drawn criticism from the Greek authorities, who are faced with thousands of people staying on their territory following the border restrictions imposed on Afghan nationals.

The implementation of the [Joint Statement](#) from the Zagreb meeting of chiefs of police from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria of 18 February resulted in chaos and increased suffering of refugees along the Western Balkan route. Since 19 February, the border between [Greece](#) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is closed to Afghans, with entry restricted to Iraqis and Syrians carrying country of origin documents, due to a domino effect triggered by the same constraints imposed by Serbia. The border has been intermittently opened and closed, creating congestion on the mainland, while daily new arrivals in the islands remained over 2,600 on average. According to the Greek authorities, as of 25 February, 3,500 people are present at Eidomeni humanitarian sites and EKO gas station, 2,125 people are hosted at Diavata camp (Thessaloniki) inaugurated on 24 February, and over 4,000 people are being temporarily accommodated in Athens, including at Elliniko, Elaionas and Schisto camp (Piraeus). The latter was opened by the authorities on 22 February and hosts over 1,200 people.

People of Afghan nationality were denied entry into the [former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#), in response to Serbia refusing entry to persons of this nationality, resulting in over 600 Afghans being stranded in the Tabanovce transit centre (northern border). According to the Border Police from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, negotiations took place with the Serbian authorities to let them enter. However, a decision at a higher diplomatic level is still pending. Currently only Syrian and Iraqi nationals, with Greek registration and official identity documents, receive new registration forms and are allowed to continue their journeys.

Daily changes of arbitrary procedures and requirements led to increased waiting times, screened out and stranded refugee population. In [Serbia](#), the Sid Refugee Aid Point (RAP) was overcrowded and registration in the South of the country and boarding of trains to Croatia were slowed down by thorough document verifications.

In [Hungary](#), a sharp increase in the number of new arrivals marked the reporting period with 958 new arrivals apprehended by the police which represent an increase compared to last week's 475. On the other hand, the Hungarian government will call for a referendum against the compulsory relocation quotas.

In [Croatia](#), following the adoption of the Joint Statement, the number of Afghan arrivals has reduced. Refugees and migrants said they were questioned by the Croatian police about their country of origin, reasons for leaving their country, their destination and their aim of travel prior boarding for departure to Croatia. Several people were denied entry.

At a ministerial conference on the migrant crisis in Vienna on 24 February, the Croatian Minister of Interior, Mr. Vlaho Orepic, stated that Croatia is participating in joint efforts in refugee profiling on the Greek- former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian border and the further transit of migrants as agreed.

In [Slovenia](#), following the increase in the number of asylum seekers in the last few days, the Ministry of Interior (Moi) has decided to open two new receptions centres in Ljubljana and Logatec. A temporary accommodation centre in the town of Vrhnika was also opened. The new UNHCR Head of Office met with the Head of the Border Police to discuss the implementation of the decisions of the Border Police Chiefs' meeting and also to inform the Border Police that UNHCR is in the process of assessing the current situation at the entry and exits points and may realign its activities in accordance to the changes and/or new needs.

Since the introduction on 19 February of a daily cap of 80 asylum applications (a maximum of 3,200 persons on the move to Germany and a maximum of 80 asylum applications in **Austria** per day respectively), the limit has not yet been reached. The Austrian Minister of Interior, Ms. Johanna Mikl-Leitner, has announced the further lowering of this limit in the future. In addition to the 1,000 soldiers already providing support in managing the refugee situation, another 450 soldiers will be deployed to the borders to assist the police.

In **Italy** eight sea arrivals occurred and 2,385 persons disembarked in the southern ports of Pozzallo, Lampedusa, Augusta and Messina. On 19 February, 15 persons were traced close to the shores of the Sicilian city of Agrigento. They claimed to be survivors of a shipwreck of a small boat with 30 persons on board. Authorities also discovered two bodies in the sea. On 24 February, five dead bodies were disembarked in Augusta. Witnesses reported that four Nigerian women and one man from Cameroon lost their lives in one rubber boat, which shipwrecked due to overcrowding.

As of 24 February 2016, 303 individuals were relocated out of Italy to nine Member States and 295 out of Greece, totaling 598 persons relocated so far to 15 Member States. In terms of places pledged, 19 Member States and Lichtenstein have offered relocation places.



Refugees waiting in the rubhall following UNHCR distribution of blankets and sleeping bags ©UNHCR/L. Brashnarska, Tabanovce transit centre (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), February 2016.

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

- In Eidomeni and Diavata sites and in the Attica region, UNHCR continued to identify and refer vulnerable cases, provide information on asylum, relocation and family reunification to the people stranded due to the situation at the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- Upon request from the authorities, UNHCR provided two additional rubhalls at Elliniko open temporary accommodation site in Athens, thus expanding the capacity to 1,300 people. Lighting to increase security and prevent protection risks was also installed.
- In the Southern Dodecanese, following the unprecedented number of arrivals on the small island of Kastelorizo, 297 people were evacuated by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) vessel from Kastelorizo to Rhodes, with UNHCR's support during embarkation and reception upon arrival. In view of a continued number of new arrivals, UNHCR has been coordinating with local authorities, volunteer groups, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to improve reception capacity and basic services on Kastelorizo.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- As part of the Communicating with Communities initiative, seven additional TV screens were placed in six rubhalls and in the child-friendly space in the Child and Family Protection Support Hub in the Vinogug reception centre. The TV screens disseminate targeted information, such as registration procedures, services at the site, and entertainment for children. The UNHCR Innovation team is working with partners and persons of concern (PoCs) to develop the content that will be broadcasted.

- A new registration software was installed in the Vinojug reception centre in order to comply with the new registration practices being put in place. In addition, the MoI introduced a new document called “Personal Data of Migrant” that each refugee is required to fill in before leaving the reception centre. The main purpose of this document is to track the refugees’ final destination as a country for asylum.

Serbia

- Arrivals from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria reduced to a daily average of below 565 refugees. On two occasions refugees, including families with children from Syria and Iraq, were stuck in open country at the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and were unable to continue their journey to Croatia due to the lack of new required documentation, unified registration, and Greek registration documents. UNHCR and partners assisted them with food, water, blankets while waiting to be processed by the authorities and in adverse weather conditions.
- At Sid train station, departures to Croatia substantially decreased, with only four trains. All facilities in the three sites, Sid, Adasevci and Principovac Refugee Aid Points (RAPs) were fully utilized to accommodate the 1,287 refugees and migrants who were unable to proceed and were denied entry to Croatia for lack of required documents and/or because of their country of origin, resulting in crowdedness in particular in the Sid RAP. In Adasevci, an additional UNHCR Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) was set up to be used as women dressing room. UNHCR and its partners assisted the refugees 24/7, and together with IOM and the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), provided counseling on the right to seek asylum and/or Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme.

Hungary

- For the first time this year, people have sought asylum in two of the four existing transit zones coming from Sid/Serbia. Fifty-one were admitted to Tompa transit zone on 21 February, the majority of them were Afghans and Iranians in addition to two Syrian families. They included pregnant women and children and reported that they were part of a larger group of around 500 whom the Serbian police forced to leave Serbia and brought some of them to the border area from where they had to go on their own to Tompa transit zone (on an eight-hour journey). Only those who agreed to apply for asylum in Hungary were admitted. The Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) interviewed them and rejected their applications based on safe third country grounds. UNHCR daily presence was essential to ensure the provision of basic needs as the facility was still not functional and to sensitize the asylum-seekers about the asylum procedures and their right to appeal the rejection decision. In Rozke transit zone 46 men (most of them Pakistanis, Moroccans and Palestinians) were admitted but none accepted to apply for asylum and returned to Serbia.
- UNHCR conducted a monitoring visit to Vámoszabadi Open Reception Centre on 22 February. Currently, the facility accommodates 182 PoCs mainly from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco and Algeria. UNHCR monitored the conditions of the facility and conducted group discussions to raise awareness on asylum procedures, rights and obligations. Vulnerable PoCs were identified and referred to attend their needs.

Croatia

- On 19 February, due to an ongoing protest on the railway in Sid, an alternative system of bus transportation was used for transporting refugees and migrants to Croatia/Winter Reception Transit Centre (WRTC) through the border crossing Bajakovo on the highway, connecting Zagreb and Belgrade, one hour drive from Slavonski Brod.
- Due to changes in transportation timelines with Slovenia, refugees and migrants were placed in the WRTC for rest and recuperation. One train per day departed for Slovenia during the reporting period.

Slovenia

- In Vrhnika, UNHCR undertook a visit of the centre and observed that individuals are accommodated according to family groups. There are external sanitation facilities with running water and two shower containers with hot water. The shower containers are clearly marked, one for men, one for women and children. The toilets, on the other hand, are not clearly marked for men and women, or physically divided; UNHCR will discuss the matter of separated toilets with the Civil Protection. Moreover, UNHCR observed access’ issues for persons with special needs and has made a request for the Civil Protection to resolve them. Currently there is no medical team on site and, in case of an emergency, refugees and migrants can call medical services. UNHCR will make a recommendation to the Civil Protection in Ljubljana to provide a system of regular medical care.

- In Lendava, a coordination meeting took place with the Civil Protection/Red Cross, the police and UNHCR. UNHCR raised again the issue of the availability of hot water, and the Civil Protection informed UNHCR that mobile shower containers with hot water would be available by 25 February. UNHCR also requested the services of a dentist due to many dental ailments at the facility.
- In Sentilj, the police introduced new procedures for individuals who are returned from Austria. Apart from reporting their bio-data and nationality, individuals will be asked to relay their journey to Slovenia as well as state the reasons for leaving their country. All individuals who are returned from Austria will receive information about their temporary accommodation at Postojna Centre for Foreigners.

Italy

- Three hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Trapani) are officially operational, out of the six identified by the Italy Road Map. While the MoI announced the imminent opening of the hotspot in Taranto, local media reported that the tendering for the opening of the hotspot in Augusta has been suspended until 9 June for administrative reasons.
- During field visits to the reception facilities in Rome accommodating relocation candidates, UNHCR collected complaints and queries from persons concerned about their situation - as media are reporting about the possibility that Member States may close their quotas. UNHCR is continuing to provide consistent information on the relocation scheme and its advantages, but a systematic lack of clear information from key competent authorities is exacerbating asylum seekers' frustration and distrust in the programme.

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](#) | [Habitat for Humanity](#) | [Hellenic League for Human Rights](#) | [Hellenic Red Cross](#) | [Hellenic Theatre Drama & Education Network](#) | [Help the Refugees in Macedonia](#) | [HERA Health education and Research Organization](#) | [HHC Hungarian Helsinki Committee](#) | [Hilal](#) | [HCIT Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance](#) | [Human Appeal](#) | [ICMC International Catholic Migration Commission](#) | [IHA International Health Action](#) | [Indigo](#) | [Information Legal Center –Croatia](#) | [INTERSOS](#) | [Institute Circle](#) | [IOM International Organization for Migration](#) | [IRC International Rescue Committee](#) | [Israaid](#) | [Italian Red Cross](#) | [JRS Jesuit Refugee Service](#) | [Kaliri](#) | [KSPM-ERP Church of Greece](#) | [La Strada \(Open Gate\)](#) | [Legis](#) | [Magna](#) | [MdM Médecins du Monde](#) | [Medin](#) | [Menedek Association](#) | [Mercy Corps](#) | [Merhamet](#) | [METAction](#) | [MGMD Mirovna Grupa Mladih Dunav](#) | [Microfins](#) | [MSF Medecins Sans Frontieres](#) | [MYLA Macedonian Young Lawyers Association](#) | [NRC Norwegian Refugee Council](#) | [Nun](#) | [Operation Mercy](#) | [Oxfam](#) | [Peace Institute \(Slovenia\)](#) | [PiN People in Need](#) | [PiC Pravno-informacijski Center Nevladnih Organizacij](#) | [Praksis](#) | [Praxis](#) | [ProAsyl](#) | [Red Cross Serbia](#) | [Remar](#) | [Salvation Army](#) | [Samaritan's Purse](#) | [Save the Children](#) | [Secours Islamique France](#) | [Shelter Box](#) | [Sigma Plus](#) | [Slovene Philanthropy](#) | [Society for Peace Development and Ecology \(SPDE\)](#) | [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](#) | [United Nations Volunteer \(UNV\)](#) | [WHO World Health Organization](#)

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

In the framework of the [inter-agency Regional and Refugee Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\) for Europe](#), released on 26 January, UNHCR appeals for **USD 235.8 million** in additional support for European affected countries in the eastern Mediterranean and western Balkans route for 2016.

This appeal supersedes UNHCR's 2016 requirements for Europe region presented in the [Special Mediterranean Initiative \(SMI\)](#) and in the Winterization Appeal.

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

As of 29 February, **USD 109.5 million** has been received for the crisis in 2016, including USD 107.9 million earmarked to the Europe region.

Contributions have been received from: Canada; European Union; United States of America; Avaaz.Org, ERICSSON AB and Fondation BNP Paribas, Industria de Diseno Textil, 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 2016:

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

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Links:

UNHCR, [UNHCR Survey finds Afghan and Syrian refugees arriving to Greece are fleeing conflict and violence](#)

UNHCR, [UNHCR concerned by build up along borders and additional hardships for refugees and asylum seekers](#)

UNHCR, [With growing numbers of child deaths at sea, UN agencies call for enhancing safety for refugees and migrants](#)

UNHCR, [Grandi concerned at reports of Balkan border closures](#)

UNHCR, [UNHCR, UNICEF launch Blue Dot hubs to boost protection for children and families on the move across Europe](#)

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

Europe Refugees/Migrants Emergency

UNHCR Presence and Key Border Crossings

as of 25 February 2016



Sources: UNHCR Author: UNHCR - HQ Geneva Feedback: mapping@unhcr.org Filename: eus_smi_presence_used_crossing