

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

22 – 28 September 2015

2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-SEPTEMBER)

154,677

Registered intentions to seek asylum

38%

of registered intentions were expressed by minors

810

Capacity of Asylum Centres

PRIORITIES

- Assist the Government and the civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of the refugees
- Strengthen the asylum systems in line with applicable international standards

HIGHLIGHTS

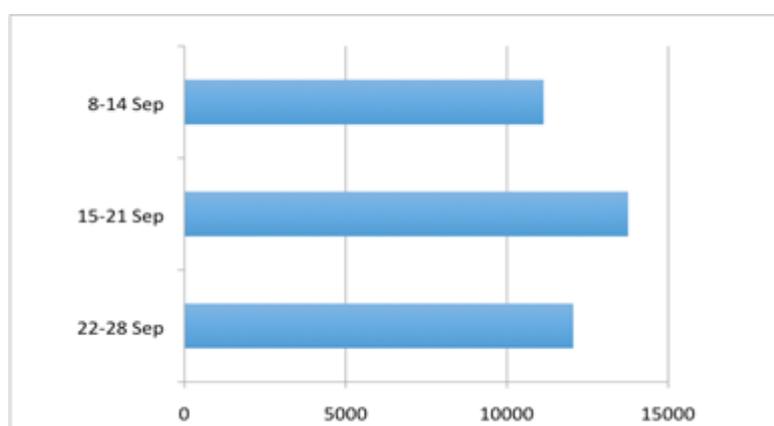
- The number of refugee arrivals from FYR Macedonia averaged 4,600 in the reporting period. Registration capacities have been stepped up to around 3,000 persons/day in Preševo and 500/day elsewhere.
- Refugees continued to enter Croatia on foot through the fields in the vicinity of the official borders. In the evening of 22 September, the Croatian authorities stopped admitting refugees at the Šid/Tovarnik border crossing so that some 2,000 refugees spent the night in "no man's land" between Serbia and Croatia. The refugee flow rerouted to Berkasovo/Bapska exit point, with an average of 2,250 observed exits per day. UNHCR, together with authorities and partners, immediately opened info and aid delivery points. Šid/Tovarnik was reopened for refugees on 24 September. 25-26 September Jamena/Strošinci, South-West of s Šid served as a temporary new exit point into Croatia.
- Numbers of refugees observed in Belgrade and in the area close to the border with Hungary reduced to around 200 daily in Belgrade and just over 100 in the Subotica-Horgosz-Kanjiža area at the end of the reporting period.
- UNHCR teams and partners assisted and protected refugees and migrants at entry and exit points in two daily/nightly shifts (08:00-24:00)



Printing date: September 2015 Sources: UNCS, UNHCR
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Intention to apply for asylum (Source: Ministry of Interior)

12,055 registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.



UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Serbia is situated along the preferred route through the Western Balkans for refugees originating from the Middle East and Asia, aiming to seek asylum in Europe. The majority are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. UNHCR estimates that at any given time over 6,000 refugees are on Serbian territory.

Horgosz 2 border crossing with Hungary remained closed. Very limited and selective access to asylum procedures was available at a container/transit zone placed beside the Horgosz 1 border crossing. Readmission of irregular migrants and failed asylum-seekers from Hungary remained suspended.

On 25 September, Croatia and Serbia largely normalised the movement of people and goods at key border crossings between the two countries.

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn, and Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić visited the Refugee Aid Point (RAP) Principovac in Šid on 25 September. Commissioner Hahn praised Serbia's response to the refugee crisis.

Government of Japan awarded urgent funding of USD 2 mil to Serbia and FYR Macedonia, to be implemented through UNHCR (reception of refugees, psychosocial support), IOM (support to border management and registration of refugees) and IFRC (food procurement and distribution, medical assistance).

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNICEF and DRC opened a “Child Friendly space” on 22 September at Hotel Bristol premises, with the support of Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Labour (MoL) and the City of Belgrade authorities. During the reporting period, around 152 children participated in activities organised in the Child Friendly Space in Hotel Bristol in Belgrade and around 200 in the Child Friendly Space in the Preševo One-Stop Centre. Children were engaged in educational and recreational activities, while mothers were provided with psycho-social support and counselling, child health, nutrition, and hygiene and safety information.
- The Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade provided information, referrals, access to asylum procedures, humanitarian aid and social services as well as the internet.
- In coordination with the Red Cross, NGO partners and UNHCR teams in neighbouring countries, UNHCR field teams in Serbia identified and followed-up many cases of family separation (including children being separated from their parents/caregivers), reuniting a majority of cases.
- The percentage of Persons with Specific Needs (PWSN: incl families with many, young children or babies, pregnant women, elderly, disabled, refugees with medical needs) identified at the main entry and exit points remained significant (30-40%).
- Two Syrian men and one Yemeni man approached UNHCR for information about the procedures to return to their country of origin. Their reasons for wishing to return were mainly personal.
- Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) and Asylum Protection Centre (APC) opened up a joint Asylum Centre in Subotica on 23 September.
- HCIT provided psychosocial support at the old brick factory (OBF), accompanied by one psychologist and two translators (Farsi and Arabic). They engaged two more interpreters for Arabic and 6 more temporary staff to deliver assistance at border crossings with Croatia, ensuring 24/7 coverage.

- HCIT Representative contacted Red Cross tracing service in Subotica and Police Station in Kanjiža (in case that the missing person had been readmitted from Hungary), in order to reunite one family from Iraq staying at Vašarište RAP.
- UNHCR worked closely with the Government, central and local authorities, and NGO partners to monitor and support refugee protection and humanitarian needs 24/7 at the main entry and exit points of the country, as well as along their journey throughout the country. Locations covered include Preševo, Bujanovac, Vranje, Leskovac, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Negotin, Niš, Zaječar, Belgrade, Subotica, Kanjiža, Šid, Sombor and Kikinda.
- Together with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and Border Police at the One-Stop Centre in Preševo, UNHCR prioritised PWSNs to fast-track registration procedures.
- Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) upgraded the free WI-FI network of the One-Stop Centre PC in Preševo.
- IOM and UNHCR continued to transport around 2,000 most vulnerable refugees daily from Miratovac RAP to Preševo One-Stop Centre.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The need to capture more accurately, in the registration process, relevant data such as numbers and ages of children, UAMs, separated children and other PSWNs for protection intervention and other follow-up purposes, remained unmet in the reporting period.
- The mother and child rooms of the SCRM in the Preševo Centre remained unavailable during daytime. UNICEF child friendly spaces are open only during office-hours.
- Refugees and migrants continued to cross into Serbia from Bulgaria, with the total number of arrivals around 300 daily across the entire stretch of this border.
- Asylum Info Centre was in need of 2 project assistants and 6 volunteers.
- Refugees continued to complain about limited access to registration services at the Alien Office of Belgrade Police in Savska Street.



Child-Friendly Space and Breastfeeding Room for Children and Mothers on the Move opened in Belgrade Photo:@UNICEF

Education

Achievements and Impact

- In the Banja Koviljača, Krnjača, Bogovađa and Krnjača asylum centres, UNHCR funded DRC activities for children, including a kindergarten supervised by qualified care-givers, and English and Serbian language lessons three times per week to improve their chances of integration within the community.
- The Bogovađa asylum centre conducted sewing classes for women and mothers who are protégés of this centre. This activity boosted refugees' psychological well-being and self-confidence, and empowered them with transferable skills. Products include bedsheets used in other asylum centres and the One-Stop Centre in Preševo.
- Save the Children held creative workshops for refugee children in Belgrade.
- Ministry of Education continued organizing activities for children in Bristol park in Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Notwithstanding the above mentioned efforts, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection continued to face challenges of integration and education opportunities.



Health

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac, Kanjiža and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- UNICEF and DRC established a mother-and-baby space in Belgrade, where the lactating mothers were supported to breastfeed their babies and infants, and young children were provided with age-appropriate feeding.
- UNHCR installed and furnished a medical container in Svetonikoljski Park, nearby the bus station in Belgrade. UNHCR/DRC mobile medical unit was supplied with necessary medical equipment/furniture and connected to the electric network. As of 26 September, two medical teams (medical doctor & nurse) engaged through the local Health centre Zemun, financed by UNHCR, have been providing health care services to refugees on a daily basis from 7 AM to 7 PM.
- Medical teams of Belgrade health centres continued providing health care services to refugees in Belgrade parks. Private clinics Ped Medic and Bel Medic assisted refugees at Miksalište. As of 22 September, adults were also able to obtain medical assistance at Miksalište.
- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre. Refugees usually suffered from respiratory infections, diarrhoea, minor injuries with secondary infections, headache, muscle aches, etc, and there were several cases of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma. Refugees with emergency medical needs were prioritized for assistance in Preševo and Miratovac. Isolation room was available for patients in need.
- Red Cross, MSF, Humedica, SOS Dečije selo, Ecumenic Humanitarian Organization and World Vision provided humanitarian aid and medical assistance at Berkasovo/Bapske border crossing.
- Medical International Aid was providing medical assistance at Šid/Tovarnik border crossing.
- Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM) continued with provision of medical services/medicines to refugees at Vašarište RAP on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 11 AM to 05 PM. Local health centre Kanjiža provided emergency medical assistance to refugees during the night, field assistance at the border (Horgoš) upon request of the border police, as well as transportation to Hospital Subotica if needed.
- Ministry of Health and UNFPA finalized a "Field Assessment and Analysis of Service Provision to Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers with regard to their Sexual and Reproductive Health".

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- At Preševo Centre, it was noted that there is a need for two benches for refugees waiting for medical check-up, as well as two heaters for the medical team. The positioning of wheelchair ramp with handrails necessary for the improved access of disabled persons to the medical team needed assessment and follow-up.
- There was a need to engage a pharmacist in Preševo/Miratovac, to monitor the requisition, provision, consumption and follow up on existing stocks of medicines.
- At the OBF there was no medical team and no-one to refer the refugees to except the ambulance services (and only in emergencies).



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Distribution of up to 600 UNHCR-funded food rations by the Red Cross continued daily at Preševo Centre.
- For Eid, the local community of Preševo offered hot and cold meals, sweets and fruits to hundreds of refugees in the Preševo Centre and close to the bus station in Miratovac. Mikser House and Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation did the same in Belgrade.
- Spanish NGO SOS Remar provided hot meals, coffee and tea and to all newcomers and to the police and SCRM staff members in Preševo One-Stop Centre.
- Red Cross distributed food to PWSNs in Belgrade parks.
- HCIT delivered food packages and baby food at the OBF near Subotica, Vašarište RAP as well as Šid/Tovarnik border crossing.
- UNHCR delivered 112.4 kg of high-energy biscuits to Šid.
- Volunteers from Germany and Austria distributed food and water at Šid-Tovarnik border crossing.
- Red Cross distributed food once daily at Vašarište RAP. They also distributed food and water at OBF and Subotica bus station.
- Caritas and Menedek distributed food at OBF.
- Eastern European Mission delivered food and water to the refugees at OBF.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross organisations and MSF, 2,000 food and hygiene packages daily, mainly for refugees arriving from Bulgaria.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR



Local community organized celebration of Bajram for the refugees in Miratovac Photo: @UNHCR/L. Selmani



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- DRC and Philanthropy carried out detailed assessments and planning of various activities related to WASH and Shelter interventions to be conducted at Preševo RC, in close cooperation with UNHCR and relevant Government authorities.
- UNHCR continued to support waste management and maintenance of latrines at Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre, and UNDP agreed to support the local authorities in Preševo with additional equipment for waste management.
- CRS distributed water at Berkasovo/Bapska border crossing through its IP “Solidarnost”
- On 27 September, four chemical toilets were delivered by UNHCR to Jamena/Strošinci border crossing, to be relocated as/when needed.
- HCIT, UNHCR and the volunteers continued to clean and maintain border exit points with Croatia. The volunteers from Czech Republic and HCIT staff put up over 10 posters in Berkasovo/Bapske area on non-littering in Arabic and Farsi.
- HCIT cleaned the OBF site in cooperation with Subotica communal service.
- Potable water was continuously provided to all new comers in Miratovac RAP by UNHCR and from an Army tank.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Amity NGO appealed for one mobile shower and toilets at Negotin border crossing.
- The medical container in Miratovac RAP remained in need of water supply (a water tank).



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- Due to an increase in the number of refugees present at the OBF in the reporting period, as well as colder weather conditions, Arbeiter Samariten Bund (ASB) and SCRМ initiated a construction/rehabilitation of a small emergency shelter for refugees there.
- Two Eulex containers were delivered to Vašarište RAP on 23 September.
- Intersos was present at OBF, delivering socks and water to the refugees there.
- UNHCR reached an agreement with the SCRМ on instalment of plastic sheeting and gravel aimed at improving the conditions for refugees waiting to register at Preševo Centre.
- Volunteers from different countries distributed shoes and clothes at Berkasovo/Bapska.
- Catholic Relief Service distributed NFIs at Berkasovo/Bapska border crossing through its IP “Solidarnost”.
- HCIT distributed baby diapers at OBF and blankets, raincoats, water and hygienic parcels for babies at Berkasovo/Bapska border crossing.
- In the reporting period, UNHCR delivered 5,040 blankets and 500 plastic sheets to Preševo, 3,540 blankets, 1 tent, and 100 plastic sheets to Šid and 705 blankets, 600 sleeping mats and 200 plastic sheets in Belgrade.
- Volunteers from Czech Republic helped to create shelter out of UNHCR-distributed plastic sheeting at Berkasovo/Bapska border crossing.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The waiting conditions at the Reception Centre (RC) in Preševo remained challenging for asylum-seekers, especially in the rainy weather.
- More permanent shelter solution for refugees squatting in Belgrade remained unavailable.
- The cold and rainy weather conditions made the need for additional shelter capacity in the waiting areas at the main entry and exit points from the country increasingly urgent. There was a need to upgrade contingency plans for shelter, including winterization, as well.

- Sigma plus was appealing for shelter, food and water assistance for refugees, as well as enhancement of registration capacities of the border police at Dimitrovgrad border crossing, due to an increased number of incoming refugees there (over 200 per day).
- Raincoats were needed at entry and exit points in the country.
- Refugees at the OBF were in need of winter clothes and shoes.
- At Berkasovo/Babske border crossing there was an urgent need for winter clothes (jackets, socks and winter shoes, preferably rubber boots), as well as a dry, clean and private shelter where women and children could change out of their wet clothes and where babies could be changed.



Refugees at Berkasovo, Serbia/Croatia border
@UNHCR/M. Awad

Working in partnership

- On 24 September, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs together with UNHCR co-chaired the **Refugee Protection Working Group** meeting held in Belgrade.
- On 25 September, the **UN Country Team Refugee Task Force** made up of the UN agencies in Serbia met in UNHCR premises in Belgrade.
- UNHCR implementing partners include: Amity, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), Indigo, INTERSOS, Microfins, Praxis, Sigma Plus and Vizija.
- UNHCR operational partners include the Ministries of Labour, Interior and Health, the SCRM as well as municipal authorities, the UN Country Team, ADRA, CRS, and MSF.

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