

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

3-16 November 2015

2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-OCTOBER)

335,021

Registered intentions to seek asylum in 2015

29.5%

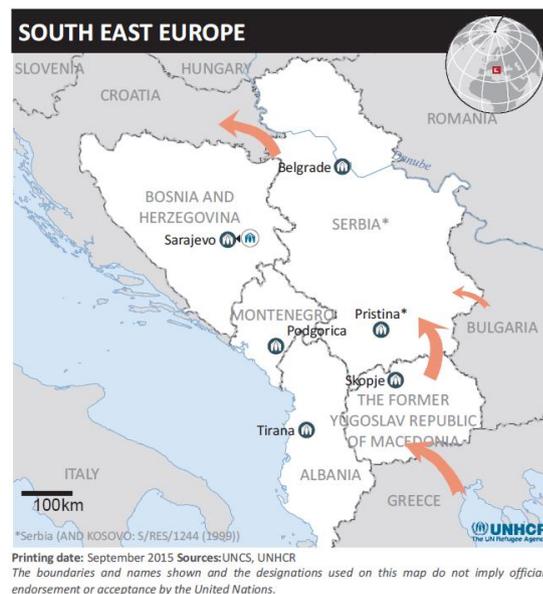
of registered intentions were expressed by minors in October

93.5%

of registered intentions were from refugee-producing countries in October

Highlights

- The number of refugee arrivals from averaged 4,900/day. Registration capacities were stepped up to over 8,000 persons/day in Preševo and 500/day elsewhere. As at 16 November, 435,981 intentions to seek asylum were registered in 2015.
- 180,344 asylum-seekers were registered in October 2015, compared to 51,054 in September, 37,195 in August and 29,037 in July. 93.5% of registrations in October originated from refugee-producing countries, including 53.5% from Syria and 29.6% from Afghanistan. Share of registered children grew from 27.3% in September to 29.5% in October.
- Only 3 asylum applications were actually submitted to the Asylum Office of the Ministry of Interior in October (34 in September), 4 asylum-seekers were awarded subsidiary protection and no asylum-seekers were given asylum (refugee status). 62 asylum-seekers were in procedure and residing in asylum centres in Serbia at end-October.

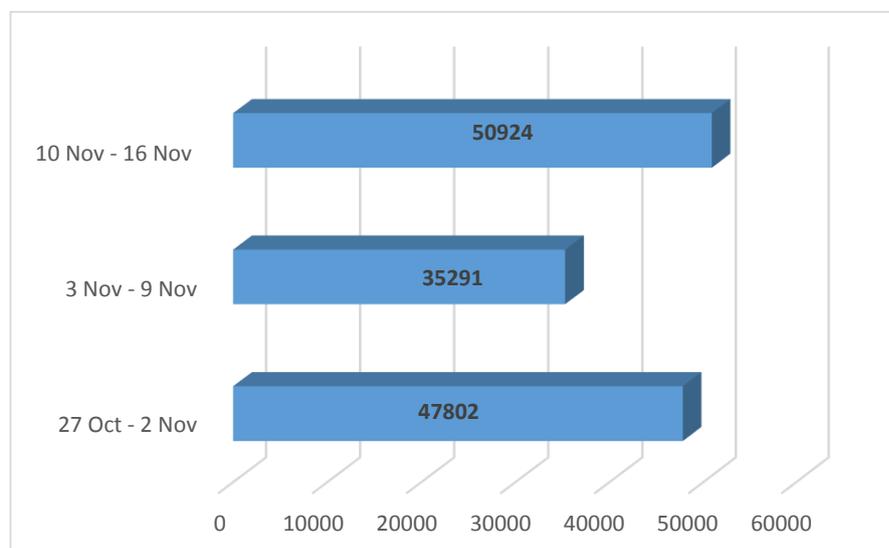


Intention to apply for asylum (Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia)

86,215 registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.

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



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. UNHCR estimated that at any given time some 11,000 refugees were on Serbian territory in the reporting period.

No asylum-seekers made use of registration procedures in the Hungarian transit zones near Horgoš 1 and Kelebija.

As a result of a bilateral agreement between Serbia and Croatia, transportation by train between Šid and Slavonski brod, where a new winter reception centre was awaiting to receive refugees, started in the morning of 3 November. In the early afternoon of the same day, Berkasovo/Bapska crossing point was officially closed. UNHCR, Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), Red Cross and the police had prepared basic services at Šid train station and began to support the government in improving the capacities and conditions of nearby Adaševci and Principovac Refugee Aid Points (RAPs). The number of departures from the Šid train station continued at the trend of 6,200 on average per day. The initial plan for the train transportation scheme envisaged employment of 6 trains to transport some 6,600 refugees and migrants daily. On days when the number of asylum-seekers and migrants surpassed this figure, as a result of backlogs due to the ferry strike in Greece, additional train and bus departures were introduced by the Croatian government. UNHCR, HCIT, Women and Health Alliance International (WAHA), doctors from Šid Healthcare Centre, Red Cross, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), the Police, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Intersos and Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (EHO) were present at the Šid train station to provide assistance to refugees and migrants. UNHCR, SCRM, Red Cross, APC (Asylum Protection Center), World Vision, ATINA, Operation Mobilization (OM), Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC), Caritas, Intersos and Czech volunteers were present at Adaševci Refugee Aid Point (RAP).

Refugees and migrants continued to arrive into Serbia from Bulgaria, with an average of 200 asylum-seekers arriving daily across the entire stretch of this border. Arrivals from FYR Macedonia peaked on 9-11 November, averaging 9,000 per day, following the cessation of a 4-day ferry strike in Greece.

Numbers of refugees observed in Belgrade fluctuated between 70-170 daily.

In further follow-up to the 17-point Leaders' Statement of 25, Government of Serbia (GoS) responded by undertaking to create additional 3,000 shelter spaces to reach minimum of 6,000 by end-2015. Winterisation of reception facilities in Preševo and elsewhere continued to be prepared.

United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Serbia has thus far delivered over US\$ 3.7 million of assistance and still has over 12 million US\$ available for immediate disbursement, upon invitation from the GoS. Ten UN agencies are actively working in supporting the GoS in their response to the refugees/migrants situation in Serbia. These are: UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNOPS, UN Women, WFP and OHCHR.



Šid – Refugees boarding the train to take them to the winter camp in Slavonski Brod in Croatia,
Photo @UNHCR

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- In Preševo, UNHCR and DRC assisted 2,190 PWSNs, made 204 medical referrals and reunited 50 families. 2 DRC staff and 3 IOM staffers assisted UNHCR in protection activities in Preševo.
- IOM, MSF and UNHCR continued to transport up to 4,000 refugees with specific needs daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre. Women with infants were escorted to the UNICEF/DRC mother and child tent, which was used by 842 mothers and 1662 children.
- The situation at the Šid train station was much calmer than in Berkasovo, since asylum seekers were waiting in buses for the train to arrive. Some needed to be temporarily accommodated in Principovac and Adaševci RAPs while waiting for trains. UNHCR and HCIT assisted around 1,000 PWSNs, reunited at least 17 separated families and referring 30-40 medical cases to first aid daily. UNHCR identified 11 UAMs from Afghanistan at Šid train station and referred them to UNHCR Croatia.
- On 12 November, UNHCR assisted the orderly departure of a Syrian refugee survivor of a traffic accident for family reunion to Switzerland.
- On 12 November, UNICEF referred a Lebanese family, who wished to repatriate, to UNHCR. UNHCR found out that the family lacked travel documents to return to Lebanon, and referred the family in turn to IOM Belgrade for Assisted Voluntary Return.
- At a Field coordination group meeting of NGOs operating outside the RC in Preševo, MSF, Oxfam, Group 484, DRC, UNHCR, Save the Children, Atina, Humedica, and the United Volunteers of Preševo coordinated information dissemination and signposts in relevant languages.
- Balkan Center for Migration (BCM)/Catholic Relief Service (CRS) interpreters assisted over 2,000 refugees who arrived by train to Šid daily.
- APC (Asylum Protection Center) handled the bus movement and parking arrangements at Adaševci. UNHCR counselled refugees awaiting on buses in Adaševci on the procedures for boarding the trains, with a focus on family

separation risks, and assisted medical cases either by escorting them to the doctor, or by calling doctor to see them at their locations.

- Intersos provided free internet and mobile charging at Adaševci RAP.
- The UNHR container at Šid train station was used by breastfeeding mothers with infants who needed a space for changing and feeding in the absence of the UNICEF tent (due to access issues).
- People in Need (PIN) and Czech volunteers were providing information to refugees and supporting coordination among the different actors at Adaševci.
- On 6 November, UNHCR organised a yoga session for children awaiting to board the trains in Šid to relax and recuperate before they continue their trip.
- On 7 November, UNHCR organized training in protection in Preševo for UNHCR, DRC and IOM staff.
- As of 9 November, with the peak of arrivals following the end of ferry strikes in Greece, UNHCR staff was engaged in crowd control at the train station in Preševo. Waiting time for registration at RC in Preševo was 4 hours on average in the reporting period.
- The Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade, supported by ADRA, Savski Venac municipality and UNHCR, as well as Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) continued providing information, referrals, aid, counselling and Internet access to refugees in Belgrade.
- SCRIM continued to provide free shuttle service twice daily to the AC in Krnjača for refugees in the Belgrade region to shelter from the elements. Around 60 refugees used the shuttle bus on a daily basis.
- UNHCR's partners Amity and Sigma Plus had mobile teams consisting of social workers and psychologists present in Negotin, Zaječar, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Knjaževac and Bujanovac, who reported daily on the influx of refugees in these municipalities, their needs as well as the needs of the local communities and services provided. They had an Arabic-speaking team member in Zaječar and mobile teams used services of locally recruited translators.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The need to capture more accurately, in the registration process, relevant data such as numbers and ages of children, UASCs and other persons with specific needs (PSWNs) for protection intervention and other follow-up purposes, remained unmet in the reporting period.
- More Kurdish and Farsi interpreters were needed, especially in Preševo.
- Many NGOs were facing access issues to RAPs, since the new policy requiring work authorisations was introduced by the authorities. A location for the Child Friendly Space has been identified and UNHCR/World Vision will start child activities shortly in Adaševci RAP, having obtained access permission.



Preševo – UNHCR teams in Preševo and Tabanovci facilitated reunification of a Syrian family, Photo@UNHCR

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 bed sheets used in other asylum centres and the One-Stop Centre in Preševo.

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

- WHO provided medical supplies for the RAP in Miratovac as well as medical supplies to 16 health centres in most affected locations, including Preševo, Dimitrovgrad and Šid.
- WHO did another round of procurement of medical supplies and also facilitated with MOH coordination of NGI support.
- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre. Medical team in Preševo RC had 1,782 interventions, and asylum-seekers also used the medical services of MSF and Humedica outside the RC gates.
- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.

- MSF provided medical assistance at their camper in Adaševci to some 250 refugees and migrants daily. BCM/CRS medical team and Šid Health Centre provided medical assistance from the main lobby of Adaševci Motel, and had up to 150 interventions daily.
- WAHA provided medical care at Šid train station 24/7.
- Croatian police allowed WAHA on board the trains in Šid to do quick medical checkups of refugees in need of care who were eager to continue their trip as soon as possible.
- UNHCR/DRC doctors continued their presence in Svetonikoljski park in Belgrade and provided medical assistance to refugees and migrants daily 07-19hrs.
- WAHA medical team in Dimitrovgrad had around 30 interventions daily.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Medical team in Dimitrovgrad lacked medication and equipment to adequately assist the new arrivals.
- There was a need for expertise in psychiatric care as such cases kept increasing in Preševo.



Preševo: A refugee family receiving Caritas food and hygiene packs Photo: @Caritas, M. Živković



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.
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide 1,300-2,750 food parcels daily in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade, based on the needs. So far, Caritas provided for more than 40,000 food parcels, including some 500 food parcels which were distributed in Bosilegrad.
- Remar increased their food distributions in Preševo RC with the peak in the arrivals on 9-11 November.
- Red Cross Šid, World Vision, Caritas and EHO were distributing food in Adaševci regularly throughout the day following the arrival of new buses. In addition, a group of volunteers from the Belgrade mosque provided sandwiches and yoghurt to about 300 refugees on 11 November.
- Red Cross distributed around 200 food packs in Belgrade daily.
- Volunteers engaged by ADRA were serving hot meals at Dimitrovgrad RAP and distributing clothes.

- UNHCR and HCIT distributed 31,540 bottles of water, 34,200 WFP high-energy biscuits (HEBs) and 210 loaves of bread at Šid train station.
- UNHCR, DRC and partners distributed 4,570 bottles of water and 65 boxes of WFP HEBs in Preševo.
- Red Cross distributed food and water at all border towns with Bulgaria used by refugees for entry into Serbia.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross, 1,000 food and hygiene packages daily, for refugees arriving from Bulgaria to Negotin.
- Red Cross and Miksalište distributed food and clothes/shoes to refugees in Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Provision of food to single refugee and migrant men remains a gap yet to be filled.
- Mokranje border crossing near Negotin needed potable water.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR WASH Expert produced the draft WASH winterization strategy for Preševo RC.
- UNHCR and HCIT moved 12 mobile toilets from Berkasovo to Šid train station on 3 November.
- UNHCR installed 10 new mobile toilets at Adaševci RAP on 4 November and another 12 on 8 November. Potable water was available at Adaševci from a tanker provided by Sremska Mitrovica municipality. The cleaning of latrines in Šid and Adaševci was performed by private company hired by UNHCR.
- Czech volunteers regularly cleaned Adaševci bus parking area and the SCRM also mobilised convicts to clean the Adaševci site.
- Philanthropy commenced works on the new toilet block in Tobacco factory in Preševo.
- MSF added 14 more latrines outside the Preševo RC for asylum-seekers waiting outside. They will also put latrines at Preševo train station.
- UNHCR was providing for the rental and cleaning services of mobile toilets at Miratovac RAP and Preševo RC.
- UNDP continued to rent a garbage truck on behalf of the Preševo municipality from Vranje PUC, which served to keep Miratovac and Preševo litter-free.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Latrines in Adaševci RAP needed more regular cleaning.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- On 16 November, Minister Aleksandar Vulin opened up a new RAP in Subotica together with Mr. Elmir Bojadzic, general director of Arbeiter Samariter Bund (ASB) for south-eastern Europe. The renovation and furnishing of the RAP was financed by ASB. This RAP (580 m²) is expected to be used as a temporary shelter for up to 150 refugees and migrants.
- SCRM was close to completing the renovation and furnishing of the Šid RAP, which is planned to have 250 beds.
- Expansion of the Reception Centre in Preševo by means of refurbishing the Tobacco factory within the RC Compound continued. UNHCR Site Planner produced the draft shelter winterization strategy for Preševo RC, finalized the fire and riot exit upon discussions with security officer, designed privacy space for latrines inside and outside the RC and finalised the layout for the site.
- Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center provided three 120 kW diesel generators to the Sector for Emergency Management of the Ministry of Interior. The Center previously provided 31 big tents (M-30), 12 medium sized tents

(M-10), 4 diesel generators, 36 ovens, 3,265 blankets, 15 beds, 3 sets of folding furniture and 12 sets of metal tableware to be used in Reception Centres in Serbia.

- UNHCR delivered 50 refugee housing units (RHUs) to Preševo and erected 18 with the help of Macedonian Red Cross.
- MSF installed 2 rub halls in Adaševci RAP and 2 rub halls in Principovac RAP on 5 November. UNHCR and MSF worked on the winterization of the rub halls at Šid area (6 in total) and placing of floor platforms within the rub halls.
- UNHCR donated 13 wheelchairs to disabled refugees in Preševo and Šid.
- UNHCR and DRC distributed 650 blankets and 2,900 bags in Preševo.
- UNHCR and HCIT distributed 1,700 blankets, 827 bags and over 1,000 disinfectant gels at Šid train station.
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide from 200-500 hygiene packs for women and 50-150 hygiene packs for babies daily in Preševo and Adaševci. Caritas had distributed more than 11,500 hygiene packs for women and more than 3,500 baby hygiene packages, including 600 hygiene packages for women and 160 baby hygiene packages that were distributed in Belgrade. Caritas also distributed 1,323 raincoats in Preševo.
- HCIT continued distributing UNICEF-donated jackets, hats, gloves, scarves, socks and underwear for children, as well as baby clothes in Šid.
- World Vision, Group 484 and Oxfam distributed items for babies and children and hygienic parcels in Adaševci RAP.
- SCRM provided information and free transport to Asylum Centre Krnjača in Belgrade twice daily, where asylum-seekers could find shelter, food and other services in the cold season instead of resting in the open in parks.
- Red Cross distributed hygiene packages for women and children, clothes, underwear and socks in Dimitrovgrad.
- Caritas provided heaters for the RAP in Dimitrovgrad.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Hard shelter was lacking in Negotin and Zaječar and more blankets, shoes and warm clothes were needed all along the Serbia-Bulgaria border at crossings used by refugees and migrants arriving daily from Bulgaria.



Preševo – New refugee housing units were installed inside the Reception Centre, Photo@UNHCR

Working in partnership

- The internal coordination mechanism of the UN system in Serbia is the **UN Refugee Theme Group (RTG)**, which meets every Friday under UNHCR chairmanship. RTG coordinates the 4 sectorial working groups (WGs): a) Refugee Protection WG (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour, Employment Veteran and Social Policy (hereinafter: MoL) & UNHCR), b) the WG on Shelter/NFI/WASH (Co-chaired by Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), MoL & UNHCR), c) WG on Health/Food/Nutrition (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Health & WHO) and d) WG on Local Community Support (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Local Self-Government & UNDP), which meet on a fortnightly basis.
- Field coordination group meetings take place every second day in Preševo (chaired by UNHCR) and Šid (chaired by SCRM).
- **Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG)**, co-chaired by the UNHCR and the MoL, currently makes for the key coordination mechanism for agencies/NGOs operational in the country, as well as a source of information for donors/diplomatic missions who also attend its meetings largely as observers. RPWG has over 150 members, and is constantly growing. Under UNHCR lead, RPWG has given rise to three sub- working groups (SWGs) on: a) Information for Refugees, b) Child Protection and c) Non-Food Items (NFIs). The RPWG met on 5th November in Belgrade.
- A **Partners' Briefing** where the UNHCR, UNRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & MoL/Chair of Government WG on Mixed Migration update the diplomatic corps/donors and NGOs on the current refugee situation and the response of the UN agencies in the previous period, took place on 9 November. Partners Briefing takes place every first week of the month.
- The **Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO)** hosts **Donor Coordination Meetings** every first week of the month. The last Donor Coordination Meeting took place on 9 November in Belgrade.



Partners' Briefing, featuring the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour, UNHCR and UNRC, took place at Hotel Inn, Belgrade, on 9 November, Photo@UNRCO