

KEY FIGURES

1,018,770

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe as of 7 January 2016.

3,810

Refugees and migrants estimated to have died / gone missing at sea as of 7 January 2016.

861,473

Sea arrivals in Greece as of 7 January 2016.

1,451

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 1 - 7 January 2016.

153,600

Sea arrivals in Italy as of 7 January 2016.

342,772

UNHCR high and medium thermal blankets distributed since the start of the crisis.

38,427

UNHCR sleeping mats distributed since the start of the crisis.

USD 83.2M:

Total 2015 requirements for the Special Mediterranean Initiative, including winterization activities in Europe.

USD 84.5M:

Funding received including for winterization activities covering until February 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 people of concern.

EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #17

1 – 7 January 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- More than 300 refugees and migrants were rescued during the first weekend of 2016 by the Greek and Turkish Coast Guards. On 2 January, a drowned two-year old boy became the first recorded refugee casualty of the year. Some 122 persons were rescued on 2 January in two separate operations conducted by the Coast Guard and Frontex off Lesbos. An additional 164 people were rescued on 3 January in two operations off Samos. After treatment, and processing by the Greek authorities, the wounded and deceased were transferred to the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) rescue ship and taken to Pythagoria, the southern port on Samos. On the same day, six people were rescued off the island of Oinousses, while another 50 refugees and were rescued earlier in the day. Meanwhile, Turkish authorities said that their Coast Guards rescued 57 refugees and migrants after they were stranded on an islet off the coastal town of Dikili.
- On 1 January, the Croatian police introduced a limit of 940 persons per train and requested list of all names and nationalities of those on board travelling to Slavonski Brod. As a result, the boarding process in Sid (Serbia) can take up to three hours due to a detailed document check.



UNHCR staff provides information to refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Italy @F. Malavolta/UNHCR, December 2015.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The restrictions based on nationality continue to be implemented along the Balkans route. During the reporting period, 152 people were returned from Vojvodina transit centre, on the southern border of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Greek border for possessing forged documents, no documents, or for being nationals of countries other than Afghanistan, Iraq, or Syria. In Greece, 233 people were returned from Idomeni to Athens, where 550 people are staying at Elaioussa open temporary accommodation site and 240 at Elliniko site. Some 84 persons were not allowed to enter Serbia due to lack of documents or not belonging to the three nationalities and 180 asylum-seekers were prevented from embarking the train in Šid train station by the Croatian police due to lack of Serbian registration papers. Austria continues to return to Slovenia individuals with false documentation.

As of 4 January 2016, **Sweden** introduced additional checks and restrictions at the borders. Everyone entering Sweden by bus, train or ferry from Denmark will be checked and those lacking valid ID documents will be sent back. This practice aims to reduce the number of refugees entering the country, which has already received more than 160,000 asylum-seekers, and follows the re-introduction of border checks in Germany, Austria, France, Belgium and several other European countries.

Denmark has strongly criticized the law stating that it may be faced with several thousand 'irregular migrants' stranded in Copenhagen or Helsingør. On 4 January, the Danish Prime Minister announced in a press conference that Denmark has introduced temporary border controls at the border with Germany which will be implemented between 4 and 14 January, with possible extension. These controls will include random identity checks carried out by the Danish border police.

From 1 to 7 January 2016, 10,154 refugees and migrants arrived in **Greece**. Due to deteriorating weather conditions, several rescue operations took place on the waters near Lesbos, Chios and Samos for boats in distress.

Some 36 North Africans are detained on Kos and Chios. UNHCR continues to provide information on the asylum process for those in need of international protection. Some 50 North Africans (mainly Moroccans) in Moria (Lesbos) has been counseled by UNHCR and are now waiting to register for Assisted Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration (AVRR) with IOM.

UNHCR was informed by the Director of the Pre-removal Detention Centre in Corinth that between 30 and 50 North African nationals were transferred to Athens. The majority joined IOM's AVRR scheme and will be returned to their country of origin, while the rest will be re-admitted to Turkey.

There were 15,775 arrivals in the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**. Some challenges in reception conditions were reported due to the very cold weather. There were power outages in both the Gevgelija and Tabanovce reception sites. While heating was provided by gas heaters, this remained limited in some of the rooms. Electrical issues were resolved with heating being available in both sites thereafter. Some tensions were reported between refugee groups in the site in Tabanovce. The police intervened to control the crowd.

Some 17,072 people entered **Serbia**, 16,821 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and 251 from Bulgaria. An increase in numbers of unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) from Syria and Afghanistan was noted. Even with and hastened by the snow and freezing temperatures, UNHCR and its partners continued providing assistance and protection in all sites and the existing winterized facilities to help refugees get out of the cold.

In **Hungary**, the police apprehended 74 refugees and migrants after irregular entry, mainly from Serbia. The transit zones along the Serbian and Croatian borders remain inaccessible or serve primarily as an expulsion channel to Serbia. The total number of arrivals between 1 January 2015 and 7 January 2016 is 391,384. The number of asylum applications registered during the same period is 177,135.

In the reporting period, 19,709 people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq arrived to the Winter Reception and Transit Centre (WRTC) in Slavonki Brod in **Croatia**. There are only three trains daily to transport refugees and migrants from Sid (Serbia) to Slavonki Brod (Croatia) and then to Dobova (Slovenia). On 1 January, the Croatian police introduced a limit of 940 persons per train departing from Sid. The authorities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been

informed accordingly and expect soon to be requested to issue each refugee with an individual registration form, and to share the complete list of people transiting to Serbia with the Serbian Border Police in advance. Logistical arrangements and additional resources are required to implement this new practice in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

There were 19,444 new arrivals to **Slovenia**, mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Due to the cold weather conditions, no registration has been conducted at the train station in Dobova for a couple of days and all registration procedures took place in Livarna. Some 1,500 people were returned to Slovenia from Austria. Those returned include nationals of Morocco, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, India, and Mauritania. According to available information, they were returned because of inconsistencies with their personal information (including providing false nationalities and names) that have been detected by the Austrian police. They were re-interviewed by the Slovenian police for further verification of personal details (nationality and names) and were later allowed to continue to Austria. UNHCR continued to counsel persons of concerns (PoCs) and provide information on the right to seek asylum in Slovenia, including access to protection and asylum procedures.

There were 20,159 new arrivals to **Austria**. The political debate about introducing an upper limit for receiving refugees intensified with one part of the Federal Government (the conservative People's Party) supporting it and another one (the Social Democratic Party) against it. The Austrian Federal President, Mr. Heinz Fischer, dedicated most of his new year's speech to the refugee situation, rejecting an upper limit and emphasizing that everyone should rather join forces and contribute to finding appropriate solutions. He also stated that the European Union's (EU) external borders needed to be managed in a better way and that more solidarity among EU Member States was necessary.

Between 1-7 January, no sea arrivals occurred in **Italy**.

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

Achievements and Impact

- Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) will support the Hellenic Coast Guard in conducting search and rescue operations in the sea area south of Samos and north of Kos, a critical and large area where frequent reports of distress boats are received. In order to facilitate collaboration, UNHCR linked MOAS with Watch-the-Med, an organization that receives and forwards distress calls. Even though numbers have gone down during winter, due to high winds and rough sea conditions, many people still take their chances often on the promise of a good weather window.
- In Eidomeni, UNHCR identified and referred cases of potential family separation, rejected persons with refugee profile and UASC to Save the Children, Arsis and the Greek Council for Refugees. UNHCR continues to advocate with the police for sufficient time to identify and refer cases in need of assistance at the border area with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Eidomeni, following the newly applied practice by the Greek police to guide buses directly to the border without stopping at the transit site, the provision of humanitarian services still takes place at the corridor on the way to the check point on an ad-hoc basis. Even if the police is more cooperative and refers vulnerable cases directly to UNHCR, this is not enough. UNHCR is advocating for sufficient time with the PoCs to identify and refer those in need of assistance.
- Many cases of false documents were noticed at the border and the holders (the majority was from North Africa and Iran) are handed back by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Greek police. Most have to return by their own means. Sometimes, very vulnerable cases are loaded on free buses.
- More cases of informal return from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Greece were recorded with people claiming that they were severely ill-treated allegedly by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Border Police and local criminal rings.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Achievements and Impact

- The Working Group under the lead of the Ministry of Health continued working on the first draft of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for assisting victims of SGBV. In addition to providing protection to persons exposed

to violence, the national authorities, supported by UNHCR and other international and national organisations and institutions, have begun putting in place measures and activities for refugees and migrants entering the country. The activities will be adapted to the emergency context of the refugee crisis while employing existing protection mechanisms. The SOPs are envisaged to provide procedures and services in a number of sectors, including health, social support, psychological support, legal assistance, and security. The final text of the SOPs is expected to be finalised within the first trimester of 2016.

- The national authorities continued to transfer persons held in the detention-like reception centre for foreigners in Gazi Baba (Skopje) to the reception centre for asylum-seekers in Vizbegovo (Skopje) who were held in relation to smuggling incidents. Their asylum applications were registered after they provided statements against their smugglers in criminal court. According to the information provided by the persons themselves, they are mainly from Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, and Pakistan. There are currently 80 persons accommodated in the Gazi Baba centre, and the maximum length of stay there is 38 days. UNHCR continued to monitor the situation related to persons held in Gazi Baba by conducting regular visits with the support of its legal partner, the Macedonia Young Lawyers Association, and provided relevant information on the asylum procedure in the country and legal assistance to those interested in applying.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The Border Police do not check on the registration status of refugees, who, upon arriving at the Tabanovce transit centre, claimed to have not been issued registration documents or to have lost them after being registered in the Vinojug registration centre. The police have explained that they are still lacking the necessary equipment, such as scanners, to adequately complete this task.
- Water was not available at Tabanovce rest area or in the restrooms as a number of the fixtures were broken and pipes froze on account of the cold weather. The Crisis Management Centre started repair work on the faucets and the toilet block area.
- Throughout the reporting period, UNHCR staff and NGOs reported that religious promotional materials were found inside the site, and were distributed to refugees. Camp management representatives are informed in order to take action with the responsible ones.
- The WiFi connection was very weak for the last ten days in Vinojug, with total lack of connectivity in some areas. NGO, Télécoms Sans Frontières installed new equipment on 6 January making it functional again.

Serbia

Achievements and Impact

- On 4 January, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy convened a coordination meeting with key Government actors, donors and organizations involved in the refugee and migrant response in Serbia. The meeting discussed achievements and lessons learnt in 2015 and plans for 2016.
- Due to freezing temperatures, the fuel for heating the Sid Refugee Aid Point (RAP) and rub halls got frozen. UNHCR bought 160 litres of Euro Diesel and MSF provided additional 80 litres to ensure no interruption in heating the facilities. In the meantime, the authorities are looking into provision of additives to prevent further freezing of the fuel.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Due to the harsh weather conditions leading to poor and risky road conditions, UNHCR, in consultation with the authorities, suspended the UNHCR-funded bus rotations between Miratovac and Presevo reception centre during the night. As a result, a number of asylum-seekers, mainly families with children, stayed overnight at the Miratovac RAP. UNHCR advised the PoCs at Tabanovce to wait there until the morning, when the transportation from Miratovac to the Presevo reception centre resumes.
- The recently introduced requirement by the Croatian police for detailed lists of those boarding trains in Sid, led to lengthy boarding procedures and consequent prolonged stay in the Sid RAP. Due to extremely cold weather, all asylum-seekers wait inside the Sid RAP, leading to overcrowding at times. The Croatian and Serbian police expedited checking and boarding procedures to avoid long waiting time outdoors.

Hungary

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and partner organizations (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Menedek and Cordelia) continue to conduct regular monitoring missions to open reception centres (in Vamosszabadi, Nagyfa and Bicske) and detention facilities (asylum detention, immigration prisons, Alien Police).
- On 5 and 6 January, UNHCR conducted a monitoring visit to Bekescsaba asylum detention centre, which hosts 182 persons; most of them originate from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. UNHCR observed that lack of interpretation capacity results in limited availability of information and difficulties with accessing assistance and services.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The number of people of concern in detention is 729. They are held in the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) asylum detention facilities and Alien Police detention for irregular crossing, pending deportation/expulsion to Serbia. Detention conditions for asylum-seekers remain poor. Medical assistance provided at asylum detention facilities is very basic.
- There have been allegations of mistreatment against asylum-seekers in Nyirbator asylum detention and Alien Police facilities. UNHCR is currently investigating these allegations along with its implementing partners while calling upon the Hungarian Government to treat asylum-seekers with respect and dignity.
- Prosecutors have pressed charges against nine Syrians and one Iraqi citizen in relation to the clashes between the police and asylum-seekers at Roszke border station on 16 September 2015. They are accused of irregular entry and of participating in a riot. UNHCR is extremely worried since the accused include asylum-seekers among whom one is an elderly woman with critical health conditions, a Syrian who is on wheel-chair (95 per cent paralyzed) and an elderly man with health and psychological problems who recently had an amputation surgery. UNHCR's implementing partner the Hungarian Helsinki Committee is representing the asylum-seekers in court.

Croatia

Achievements and Impact

- On 3 January, there were 80 people on board of a sinking boat on open sea between Greece and Turkey. UNHCR Croatia took part of the emergency rescue operation by contacting the Turkish Coast Guard and UNHCR Greece and forwarded them relevant information (coordinates, name of the person calling, phone number). They were all rescued.
- Due to winter weather conditions, people are disembarked wagon by wagon in a way to avoid long stays outside while waiting for registration process. After registration, PoC are accommodated in heated tents, given some food and warm tea and UNHCR blankets as they wait for transportation to Slovenia.

Slovenia

Achievements and Impact

- The Civil Protection in Šentilj requested UNHCR's interpreters to help with translation to maintain discipline and to support police if there is commotion due to over crowdedness. They also requested UNHCR interpreters to help in calming the PoC in case of violence.
- UNHCR continues to provide information on access to protection and asylum procedures. Two people expressed the intention to seek for international protection in Slovenia after being returned from Austria and receiving counseling from UNHCR.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Complaints have been received from PoCs that there is no heating on the trains from Croatia to Slovenia.
- There are still no specific child friendly spaces to address protection needs of children, particularly UASCs.

Italy

Achievements and Impact

- One additional hotspot became operational in Trapani in the second half of December, with a capacity of 220 places, and an overall maximum capacity that can be extended to 400 places. There are currently 137 persons in the centre, including 14 Eritreans and 2 Syrians asylum-seekers who joined the relocation programme. All persons currently present in the hotspot of Trapani have been fingerprinted.

- Under the coordination of the Ministry of Interior (Mol) and in cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), UNHCR carried out information activities for potential relocation cases in Lampedusa and other areas of sea arrivals. UNHCR and EASO are also developing information material on the relocation programme. According to figures released by the EC, the total number of persons relocated from Italy is 190 at the end of 2015.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There are currently over 421 persons in Lampedusa waiting to be transferred to the mainland, including 135 UASCs originating mainly from Somalia and Eritrea. Groups of Eritrean, Sudanese and Somali nationals, unwilling to undergo identification procedures, have been held in the reception centre for several weeks. Some 100 of them, mainly from Eritrea, staged a protest against such protracted stay.
- In Sicily, incidents of denied access to asylum procedures as well as cases of persons of different nationalities, including from refugee producing countries, issued with a rejection order continue to be reported. In particular, 190 persons were served with a rejection order upon arrival in Palermo on 28 December, without adequate screening. These issues are being followed at local and central level.

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 | [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 | [INTEROS](#) | 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 | [Remar](#) | Salvation Army | [Samaritan's Purse](#) | Save the Children | [Shelter Box](#) | Sigma Plus | [Slovene Philanthropy](#) | 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 | [Vlznia Kumanovo, Volunteer Centre Osijek](#) | WAHA Women and Health Alliance International | [WHO World Health Organization](#)

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Links:

UNHCR, [Chios: Greek island battles odds to cope with refugee influx](#)

UNHCR, [A million refugees and migrants flee to Europe in 2015](#)

UNHCR, [Hungary urged to refrain from policies and practices that promote intolerance and hatred](#)

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

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR's [Winterization Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe](#), released on 5 November, appeals for **USD 96.15 million** in additional support for Greece and affected countries in the Balkans for the winter months (November 2015 – February 2016). This is in addition to UNHCR's revised appeal for the [Special Mediterranean Initiative](#) (SMI) of **USD 128 million** for June 2015 – December 2016, which 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 response to the crisis in Europe. Currently, UNHCR's total 2015 requirements in Europe for the response to the refugee crisis, including winterization activities, stands at USD 58.76 million.

As of 31 December, **USD 84.5 million** has been received for the SMI in 2015, including winterization activities which are to be implemented by the end of February 2016.

Contributions have been received from: Andorra; Canada; Denmark; European Union; Germany; Italy; Japan; the Netherlands; Norway; Portugal; Republic of Korea; Slovenia; Spain; Switzerland; United Kingdom; United States of America; WFP; AB Trav and Galopp; Atlas Copco AB; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Ericsson AB; Federation Internationale de Football; Goodman Sachs Gives; Gota Media Group; H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB; Human Rights Watch; Ikea Foundation; Industria de Diseño Textil; Lindex AB; Nando Peretti Foundation; Nordea Bank AB; Pernod Ricard Co; Radiohjälpen; Shroepfer and Hoffmann Foundation; Stadium Sweden AB; Stockholm Globe Arenas; Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget; The Church of Latter-day Saint; Tele2 AB; TRYGG Foundation; UPS Corporate; 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 2015:

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

Europe Refugee Emergency

UNHCR Presence and Key Border Crossings

as of 07 January 2016

