

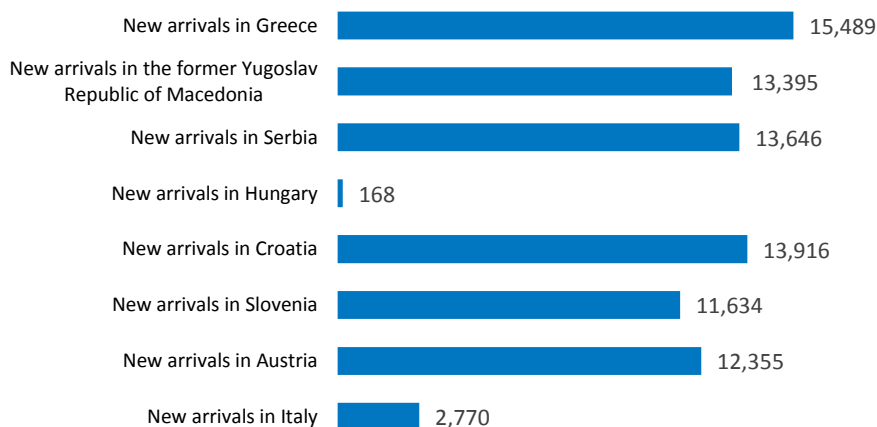
EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #20

22 – 28 January 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 28 January, the heads of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNHCR called on governments to scale up efforts to help refugees integrate allowing them to contribute to the societies and economies of Europe. The two organizations co-organised a joint [high-level Conference](#) on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Paris, have. The OECD and UNHCR stressed not only the moral imperative but also the clear economic incentive to help the millions of refugees living in OECD countries to develop the skills they need to work productively and safely.
- On 27 January, UNHCR launched a new and innovative information platform reaching out to Eritreans and Somalis who are considering taking the perilous journey across the Mediterranean into Europe. "[Telling the Real Story](#)" is a collection of testimonies by persons who have made this voyage. This community-based information project counters the narrative of smugglers and traffickers and helps Eritreans and Somalis take an informed decision about traveling to Europe.
- On 25 January, UNHCR and IOM launched the [Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\)](#) with requirements of USD 550,539,647 (out of which, USD 235.8 million for UNHCR's activities) to respond to the crisis in Europe, Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans route. The RMRP (January to December 2016) reflects the inter-agency planning process and was coordinated by UNHCR and IOM with government representatives and 67 partner agencies in Turkey, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

New arrivals from 22 to 28 January 2016¹



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

KEY FIGURES

54,518

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016.

236

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

2,213

Average daily sea arrivals in Greece from 22 to 28 January 2016.

369,971

UNHCR thermal blankets distributed since the start of the crisis.

47,170

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 4.2M:

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 people of concern.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

In **Greece**, arrivals to the shores continue amidst cold temperatures and strong winds. Many boats in distress are aided by the Hellenic Coast Guard and Frontex. The transfer of North African nationals from the islands to pre-removal detention facilities on the mainland began: however, many others remain on the islands, particularly on Samos. Another two-day ferry strike was announced by the Panhellenic Seamen's Federation on 27-31 January which negatively affected departures from the island to the mainland. The border crossing between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was intermittently closed, allowing only a limited number of people to cross at any one time. It was closed for most of the day on 27 January, requiring 1,300-1,350 people to remain at the Eidomeni site until crossing resumed later that in the evening.

On 24 January, following two deadly shipwrecks, hundreds of people protested at the security fence along the land border with Turkey demanding safe routes. On the same day, the EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship, Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, warned against recent suggestions that Greece may be expelled from the Schengen area if Greece fails to take more effective action on managing the flow of people through its borders. The Greek Foreign Minister, Mr. Nikos Kotzias, requested Frontex support to return to Turkey those people who were ineligible for asylum in Europe, such as those of North African nationality.

On 27 and 28 January, two new shipwrecks occurred near Kos and Samos islands, taking the lives of at least 26 people. Only 10 survived and many more are missing. Since the beginning of the year, according to the Hellenic Coast Guard, 94 people have lost their lives in the Greek territorial waters (including at least 35 children and 29 women) and over 34 are missing. In Turkish waters, 65 people died and at least 28 are missing.

During the afternoon and evening of 27 January the borders between the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** and Greece closed, as a reaction to the closure of the Serbian border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Serbian police monitoring the borderline instructed refugees who were trying to cross to return to the Tabanovce to wait – around 500 individuals spent the night in the transit centre. After the border with Greece re-opened the Chief of Police informed UNHCR that only small groups would be let in on an hourly basis.

In **Serbia**, authorities increased their scrutiny of registration documents belonging to refugees and migrants in Sid train station, including confirming the intended country of destination. Some 1,030, taking into account double counting, were not allowed to board the train by Croatian authorities. The Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants (SCRM) accommodated them at Sid Refugee Aid Point (RAP).

In **Hungary**, there were 168 new arrivals who were apprehended by the police after irregular entry mainly from Serbia. On 22 January, the Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orban, said that a fence should be erected on the borders of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria with Greece to curb the inflow of migrants into Europe.

In **Croatia**, the Ministry of Interior confirmed the readmission of 12 people (two Syrians and one Iraqi family) from Slovenia as they stated their intention to apply for asylum in countries other than Germany and Austria. The Minister of Interior in the caretaker government, Mr. Ranko Ostojic, reiterated that Croatia will not become a collection centre for refugees and migrants.

On 21 January, the Minister of Interior announced that **Slovenia** will start implementing the policy whereby only those who will seek asylum in Austria or Germany will be registered and allowed to continue their travel to Austria. Some 15 people were returned to Croatia as they intended to seek asylum in countries other than Germany or Austria. The Slovenian police forces were uncertain whether the Croatian authorities will accept their return. The Slovenian authorities provided them with a document which mentioned the reason of return as "lack of valid travel documents" or "lack of visa or resident permit" to their countries of destination.

Upon arrival at the screening centre in Spielfeld (border crossing to Sentilj) in **Austria**, refugees and migrants are searched and their documents and country of destination are checked by the police. In case of fraudulent information or documents, they are returned to Slovenia but at any stage can apply for asylum in Austria. Also persons stating another country of destination than Germany or Austria will be returned. Those who want to apply for asylum in Austria or in

Germany are given differently colored wrist bands and undergo registration (national fingerprint system) and more detailed checks of their travel documents. After registration, they can either board buses (if arrival numbers are low) or go to the service area where the Red Cross, Caritas and the Army are providing food, medical care and clothes.

On 26 January, the Austrian Federal Government adopted the draft Asylum Act amendment and submitted it to Parliament. The amendment provides for a so-called 'temporary asylum', that is to say a residence permit valid for three years and an automatic review of the continued need for protection afterwards. In addition, restrictions to the right for family reunification, in particular for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, are foreseen.

In **Italy**, 2,773 persons arrived by sea on ten vessels, mainly in the ports of Augusta, Pozzallo, Trapani and Lampedusa. On 24 January a Somali man died while crossing, probably due to pre-existing health conditions, in Trapani. While relocation cases are being processed by Italy, no departures were recorded in the reporting period.

As of 27 January 2016, 257 individuals were relocated out of Italy and 157 out of Greece, totaling 414 persons relocated so far to 11 Member States. In terms of places pledged, 16 Member States and Lichtenstein have offered relocation places.



A young man from Afghanistan tries to keep his six month old baby warm shortly after reaching the shores of Lesbos, Greece @ UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis, December 2015.

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

- UNHCR and partners continued to provide assistance to survivors of the recent shipwrecks, including accommodation, transport, family tracing, translation, medical and psychological support and access to the services of a forensic doctor.
- On 25 January in Athens, UNHCR chaired a general coordination meeting of all humanitarian actors took place hosted by the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR). Various scenarios were discussed and UNHCR raised the need to plan for contingencies and prepare for rapid response in case of increased numbers of people stranded in Greece. Participants discussed hotspots, the relocation scheme, IOM assisted voluntary return and WASH activities.
- During the temporary border closure at Eidomeni, the majority of people were hosted in heated rub halls, while some were housed in the MSF distribution tent or child-friendly space with electric heaters provided by UNHCR's partner ARSIS. Praxis distributed food and hygiene kits and MSF and volunteers distributed blankets. Persons in need of medical and legal assistance were identified and referred for further support.

- On 28 January, the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Mr. Thomas Bach, and the United Nations Special Envoy for Youth Refugees and Sport, Dr. Jacques Rogge, visited Elaionas temporary accommodation site in Athens, accompanied by the Alternate Minister of Migration Policy, the Mayor of Athens, the President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee and the UNHCR Representative in Greece. During the visit, the IOC President announced that the Olympic Flame for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro will pass through Elaionas site and one refugee will be among the torch bearers. He also announced a financial contribution to UNHCR in Greece and support to sport initiatives for refugees and migrants on Lesbos, through the Hellenic Olympic Committee.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- On 23 January, the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) staff reported to UNHCR that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia police in Gevgelija started turning back Palestinians with residence in Syria whose Greek registration documents say "Palestine" instead of "Palestine-Syria" (even those who possessed a valid Syrian ID card and/or passport). The police are willing to make exceptions to their policy only in cases when there is a clear risk of family separation. UNHCR is following-up with the police.
- An NGO reported to UNHCR that they were threatened by local villagers while they were distributing items to refugees. People from nearby villages were spotted on site taking items (clothes and boots) intended for refugees. This is not the first time individuals, including children, from the surrounding areas enter the site from the railway entrance, an area which is open.

Serbia

- In the West, in Adasevci RAP, a third heated rubhall of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and UNHCR was opened to accommodate families to stay overnight. In the East, in Minicevo, Knjazevac municipality, two UNHCR donated containers within the compound of the Border Police Station were connected to electricity and furnished with benches, ready to accommodate asylum seekers crossing the border from Bulgaria. UNHCR delivered a container to Dimitrovgrad RAP for use as an office space for UNHCR and its partners.
- Several hundred stranded refugees and migrants, who are denied registration as transiting migrants because they are not from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq and choose not to or lack access to registration for asylum in Serbia, face difficulties in accessing shelter and other services.

Hungary

- There are 735 persons of concern in detention in the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) asylum detention facilities and Aliens' Police for irregular border crossing, pending deportation/expulsion to Serbia (most of them are from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan). UNHCR is concerned about the prolonged detention period for asylum-seekers, which exceeds four months for the majority of them. UNHCR is working closely with its partner the Hungarian Helsinki Committee to liaise with the authorities to transfer them to open reception facilities.
- The Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Four (V4) countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) will hold an extraordinary summit on migration in Prague on 15 February. They are expected to discuss the strengthening of the Schengen borders and the establishment of a reserve defense line on the Greek-Bulgarian and Greek- former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia borders. The Czech Prime Minister, Mr. Bohuslav Sobotka, has stated that if Greece's land and sea border with Turkey is not adequately protected by the 18 February EU summit, the V4 will argue for a stronger defense of the borders of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria.

Croatia

- As of 22 January, the Croatian authorities are issuing registration documents to refugees and migrants indicating their country of destination.
- On 25 January, the newly appointed Minister of Interior, Mr. Vlaho Orepic, toured the Winter Reception Transit Centre in Slavonski Brod with his predecessor, Mr. Ranko Ostojic. Mr. Orepic stated that Croatia was meeting its obligations in the refugee crisis fully and in a humane manner. In response to a question about Croatia's step in the future, the Minister added that Croatia would act in accordance with the needs.

Slovenia

- In Dobova, the reception centre and the new registration system are officially operational. Instead of all information being collected at the registration desk, the new system fast tracks the registration process by pre-

screening and collecting all the necessary data prior to persons of concerns' appearance before the registration desk. People are also separated based on whether they have identity documents and what type of documents. The security search area, in addition to processing a significantly larger number of people than before, also offers gender segregated, private search areas for persons that need more privacy or are required to be searched in private.

- Under the new registration system, only those people with the intention to seek international protection in Germany or Austria will be allowed to continue their journey. Those with the intention to seek asylum in Slovenia are transferred to the Asylum Home where asylum applications may be lodged.

Italy

- UNHCR continues to support authorities in identifying and prioritizing people with specific needs. UNHCR field teams provided information on access to asylum and the relocation programme at ports of disembarkation, in the hotspots, and at second line reception facilities. UNHCR teams visited reception centres in Rome and conducted information sessions to potential relocation candidates hosted there.
- The working group established by the Ministry of Interior intensified efforts to finalize a leaflet, a common script for information providers and other information materials.

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 | [INTERSOS](#) | 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 | [Vlaznia Kumanovo, Volunteer Centre Osijek](#) | WAHA Women and Health Alliance International | [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.

As of 28 January, **USD 18.3 million** has been received for the SMI in 2016, including USD 4.2 million earmarked to Europe region.

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

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:

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

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Links:

UNHCR, [IOM seek US\\$550 million to aid refugees, migrants in Europe](#)

UNHCR, [As a big chill threatens refugees, UNHCR's 'Winter Cell' responds](#)

UNHCR, [Harsh winter makes life even tougher for refugees](#)

UNHCR, [OECD and UNHCR call for scaling up integration policies in favour of refugees](#)

UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed at the plight of refugees and migrants at Bulgaria borders](#)

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



Europe Refugee Emergency

UNHCR Presence and Key Border Crossings

as of 28 January 2016



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