

EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE UPDATE #25

18 April – 09 May 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

184,913

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016.

1,361

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

155,399

Sea arrivals in Greece in 2016 (as of 8 May)

31,205

Sea arrivals in Italy in 2016 (as of 9 May)

54,341

Refugees and migrants present in Greece (as of 9 May)

386

People returned to Turkey under the EU-Turkey agreements (as of 9 May)

USD 235.8M

Total 2016 requirements for UNHCR's activities in the context of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe.

USD 169.7M

Funding received for UNHCR's activities thus far 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.

- The number of people arriving by sea to the Greek shores has sharply decreased since the beginning of April due to a variety of factors, including an understanding amongst refugee and migrant populations that the Balkan route is now closed, the implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement, and increased border control operations at the Aegean Sea. There was an average of 119 daily arrivals in April compared with 870 daily arrivals in March which constitutes an 85% decrease.
- The number of refugees and migrants regularly transiting through the Western Balkans have also decreased following the introduction of restrictive border policies and the "closure" of the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 8 March. People are now resorting to clandestine routes which places them at risk.
- On 19 April, a UNHCR team interviewed and provided support to survivors of what could be one of the worst tragedies involving refugees and migrants in the last 12 months. [As many as 500 people may have lost their lives](#) when a large ship went down in the Mediterranean Sea at an unknown location between Libya and Italy.
- UNHCR launched a large scale Non Food Items (NFIs) distribution on the Greek mainland. The exercise is supported by Oxfam and Samaritan's Purse. The NFI basket is composed of UNHCR's non-food items which will be distributed to all 47,000 persons currently residing in the sites on the mainland; the basket contains blankets, buckets, hygiene items, solar lamps and other useful items for daily use. The distribution is financed by DG ECHO.



©UNHCR/D. Thal pawil, NFI distribution in Malakasa, Greece.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Trends on sea arrivals and returns

The implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement, which began on 20 March, the NATO operation in the Aegean that started two months ago, and the “closure” of the Balkan route, had a significant impact on the number of people arriving by sea to the Greek shores. There was an average of 870 daily arrivals in March in comparison with an average of 119 daily arrivals in April, which constitutes an 85% decrease. So far in 2016, the countries of origin include the Syrian Arab Republic (49%), Afghanistan (26%), Iraq (16%), Pakistan (4%) and Iran (3%), amongst others.

The number of arrivals on the Italian shores in 2016 are similar to the trend observed in 2014 and 2015. In the first month of 2016, arrivals fluctuated in comparison to 2015, with 9,149 in April compared to 9,676 in March. In addition, the arrivals in April 2016 (9,149) have decreased by 43% in comparison to April 2015 (16,063). Nigerian nationals (16%) continue to represent the largest group of sea arrivals, followed by nationals of Gambia (10%), Somalia (9%), and Ivory Coast (8%). The number of Eritrean nationals arriving by sea remains below those of 2015. However, 1,233 Eritrean nationals were rescued between 6 and 8 May, out of 2,495 people rescued.

On 19 April, a UNHCR team in Greece in cooperation with Praksis provided assistance and accommodated survivors of what could be one of the worst tragedies involving refugees and migrants in the last 12 months. [As many as 500 people may have lost their lives](#) when a large ship went down in the Mediterranean Sea at an unknown location between Libya and Italy. The 41 survivors (37 men, three women and a three-year-old child) were rescued to Kalamata, in the Peloponnese peninsula of Greece on 16 April. UNHCR continues to call for increased regular pathways for the admission of refugees and asylum-seekers to Europe, including resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes, family reunification, private sponsorship and student and work visas for refugees. These will serve to reduce the demand for people smuggling and dangerous irregular sea journeys.

Since 4 April, 386 individuals have been returned to Turkey from Greece under the EU-Turkey agreement. Main nationalities include Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, India, Morocco, Egypt and Palestine. Fourteen Syrians have been returned to date.

Situation in the Western Balkans

Following the closure of the Western Balkan route, some 597 refugees and migrants remain in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 950 in Serbia, 92 in Croatia and 41 in Slovenia. Returns to Greece from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are steadily on the rise.

In Serbia, limited numbers of refugees and migrants continue to arrive through the green borders with Bulgaria and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. According to UNHCR and its partners, there were some 1,148 irregular arrivals, including 815 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and 333 from Bulgaria between 18 April and 9 May. The number of refugees and migrants accommodated in the Refugee Aid Points, the Reception Centre and Asylum facilities continued to decrease, from 308 people on 18 April to 223 on 9 May. On average, 274 people were awaiting admission into Hungarian “transit zones” on the Serbian side of the border.

An increasing number of people have reported to be arriving to Hungary from Greece with the help of smugglers. UNHCR is collecting detailed individual information on the current travel routes to the country. The interviews conducted so far (507 people) show that the vast majority of new arrivals (70%) travelled through Turkey-Greece-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-Serbia, while the remaining (30%) arrived through Turkey-Bulgaria-Serbia.

Achievements

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

- In support of the Greek Asylum Service, UNHCR will provide technical guidance, logistical support, equipment and staffing to conduct a pre-registration exercise in the coming weeks. EASO and IOM will ensure information and counselling is provided on relocation and assisted voluntary return during the exercise. EASO will be also part of the mass information campaign, which is integral part of this exercise. An estimated 47,000 persons who arrived to Greece before 20 March, many of whom wish to apply for international protection and are currently residing on the mainland, are targeted with the pre-registration exercise which is the first step to apply for international protection in Greece. This could eventually lead to (i) recognition as a beneficiary of international protection by the Greek authorities, or (ii) transfer to another EU Member State (EU MS) in the context of Dublin III provisions, or (iii) transfer to another EU MS in the context of the relocation scheme. Those wishing to apply for asylum, relocation or family reunification will be provided with an asylum seeker card during this exercise, as well as with an appointment for the complete asylum application.
- Decongestion of Eidomeni and Piraeus Port is ongoing. Several hundred people were transferred to Malakasa and Skaramangas in the last few days. The Government announced that a large scale decongestion exercise will be pursued in the next days. To this end, the Alternate Minister of Migration Policy met with partners in Northern Greece to discuss how best to conduct the exercise.
- Standards in the emergency accommodation sites on the mainland vary from one site to another. UNHCR and partners are working with the Government to improve reception conditions, providing basic services and ensuring that necessary upgrades in infrastructure are provided in a timely manner. Improvements include in particular shelter, such as the substitution of Army emergency tents with UNHCR larger family tents in the Nea Kavala site in Northern Greece.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The situation on the islands, in particular for children accommodated in the closed facilities, remains of concern. The continued worsening of reception conditions, overcrowding and prolonged stay in the detention facilities triggered several security incidents amongst refugees and migrants. In most hotspots, people are increasingly frustrated with dire living conditions. However, the transfer of children and other people with specific needs to alternative accommodation is on-going on some of the islands.

The Western Balkans and Hungary

Achievements and Impact

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- In Vinjojug temporary reception facility, 138 refugees and migrants were vaccinated against Polio. WHO provided assistance in drafting the information leaflet on the vaccination campaign, which was translated into Farsi and Arabic.
- Centralized kitchens are well functioning in the temporary reception facilities in Vinojug and Tabanovce. Three hot meals are provided daily by the Red Cross and local NGOs to refugees and migrants.

Serbia

- Since 21 April, people who expressed their intention to seek asylum in Serbia and those without a referral letter issued by the police are accommodated in Krnjaca Asylum Centre. As a result, the number of refugees and migrants staying at night in the parks in Belgrade did not increase further.
- UNHCR and the Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT) maintain a permanent presence at the border with Hungary and distribute food and non-food items to the 350 people (on average) awaiting admission into the "transit zones" of Horgos and Kelebija and near Subotica. On 24 April, the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) re-opened the Subotica Refugees Aid Point (RAP) to accommodate refugees and migrants.

- So far in April, 26 people were voluntarily returned to their country of origins under IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return programme. Two people departed to Afghanistan, nine to Morocco, six to Iran, five to Algeria, three to Iraq, and one to Turkey.
- On 27 April, Minister of Labour, Mr. Vulin, UNHCR and DRC inaugurated the rehabilitation of the third phase of the Tobacco Factory aimed at improving reception and safety conditions at the Reception Centre in Presevo.

Croatia

- UNHCR's partner, the Croatian Red Cross (CRC), provides daily psychosocial support and community services in the reception centres for asylum-seekers in Porin and Kutina. The Croatian Law Center and Jesuit Refugee Service, are present in reception and detention facilities to provide counseling and legal information on asylum and integration.
- 62 bunk beds and 124 mattresses donated by IKEA were delivered to the Porin reception centre for asylum-seekers to improve the living conditions.
- Croatian Minister of Interior, Mr. Vlaho Orepic, confirmed that the first group of 50 people will be transferred to Croatia, including 30 refugees resettled from Turkey, 10 asylum-seekers relocated from Greece and 10 from Italy between 8 June and 8 July. Overall, Croatia has pledged 1,600 places under the resettlement and relocation schemes.

Slovenia

- The first group of 30 asylum-seekers is expected to arrive from Greece under the EU relocation scheme on 12 May 2016. Another group, consisting of 10 Eritrean nationals is planned to arrive from Italy a few days later. The Migration Office has requested UNHCR's technical support and assistance for the first pilot resettlement programme.
- UNHCR is working together with partners to evaluate the SOPs on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and the related referral mechanisms.

Hungary

- UNHCR monitors asylum and aliens police detention facilities and is present daily in the transit zones to monitor the admission procedure and coordinate referrals with UNHCR's office in Serbia to identify people with specific needs and advocate for appropriate support and accelerated entry. The authorities continue to restrict the number of people entering the transit zones to maximum 30 in each zone per day.
- UNHCR and Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) jointly visited the transit zones to assess conditions and procedures. It was agreed that the unaccompanied and separated children will be granted priority for admission. The OIN also proposed an improved admission system and requested UNHCR support in its implementation.
- With UNHCR's support, the Hungarian NGO SOS Children's Villages was granted permission to send pediatricians to the transit zone as of mid-May. This will ensure the provision of health care to children inside as well as outside the transit zones.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- Lack of adequate review and preparation of the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interview by authorities, interpreters without adequate training in RSD procedures, as well as lack of information provided to the asylum-seekers on the RSD process were observed during UNHCR's monitoring of the RSD procedure.

Serbia

- At the border with Hungary, there are on average 274 people awaiting admission in the "transit zones" in Horgos and Kelebija daily, in dire conditions, without any sanitary facilities or shelter. The garbage collection and the hygienic conditions in the area remain a challenge.
- Many refugees and migrants have been staying in country for more than a month and while UNHCR and partners continued to provide counselling on asylum procedures in Serbia, many remain determined to proceed and do not intend to seek asylum in the country.

Croatia

- In light of the need to improve living condition in Porin reception centre, UNHCR will deliver additional 188 bunk beds and 376 mattresses donated by IKEA.

Slovenia

- Identification and support to people with specific needs continues to be challenging. Discussions are on-going to identify areas in which UNHCR could provide capacity building and trainings to government officials, NGO staff, legal guardians and judges.
- The authorities are currently unable to provide interpretation services in a number of languages, such as Tigrinya, due to unavailability of interpreters in Slovenia and delayed procedures of relevant authorities. UNHCR is following up with partners to find a solution, such as the provision of interpretation services via skype.
- The New International Protection Act became effective as of 24 April, a month and a half after it was passed by the National Assembly.. The legislation entails the acceleration of the processing of asylum applications and restrictions for the granting of refugee status.

Hungary

- Access to territory, harsh waiting conditions including the absence of hygiene and sanitation facilities at the border between Serbia and Hungary, as well as the conditions in detention and open centres in Hungary continue to be of concern.
- Hungary's consideration of Serbia as a safe third country remains a major obstacle for asylum-seekers to obtain international protection in Hungary. On 9 May, and for the first time this year, the OIN delivered a final court decisions concurring with OIN decision to reject three asylum applications based on admissibility ground. Despite UNHCR advocacy, OIN accelerated the removal of the three rejected applicants from the transit zones to Serbia. UNHCR and its partner the Hungary Helsinki Committee are following up on this development.
- As of 3 May, UNHCR received reports of push-back incidents involving the use of force, including allegations of verbal and physical abuse. UNHCR is collecting detailed information on such incidents and will report these to the concerned authorities.

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, Slovenia and Turkey. 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. Full list of partners is available [here](#).

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 Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe](#). The RMRP is currently being revised with an expected launch date of 30 May.

As of 9 May 2016, USD 169.7 million has been received for the crisis in 2016, including USD 165.9 million earmarked to the Europe region.

Special thanks to major donors to the refugee emergency in Europe – the European Union and the United States of America – as well as to all of our government donors and private donors for their generous contributions. 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 | United States of America | Netherlands | Norway | Australia | Denmark | Priv Donors Spain | Canada | Switzerland | Germany

As of 9 May 2016 08:00 a.m. EET



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