

EUROPE'S REFUGEE SITUATION

UPDATE #33

November – December 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

362,376

Refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe in 2016.

5,022

Refugees and migrants estimated to have died / gone missing at sea in 2016. Compared to 3,771 in 2015.

173,450

Estimated sea arrivals in Greece in 2016 compared to 856,723 in 2015.

181,436

Estimated sea arrivals in Italy in 2016 compared to 153,842 in 2015.

25,846

Estimated unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived by sea to Italy in 2016 compared to 12,360 total UASC in 2015.

USD 669.9M

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

USD 439.8M

Funding received for UNHCR's activities thus far in Europe in 2016.

- During the reporting period there was an overall decreasing trend in sea arrivals. Through the Eastern Mediterranean, 1,991 people arrived in Greece during November and 1,665 in December. While in Italy, 13,581 persons had arrived by sea in Italy in November 2016 and 8,428 in December.
- This past year has seen a tragic increase in the loss of life with a total of 5,022 dead/missing at sea, marking 2016 as the deadliest year yet.
- UNHCR continued to support authorities in winterization efforts through distribution of non-food items and site improvements. In response to the cold weather, UNHCR and partners in Serbia distributed over 1,800 blankets, 2,300 winter jackets, 1,300 raincoats and footwear as well as clothing donated by Zara to refugees in November.
- As of December 2016 UNHCR and its partners distributed close to 360,000 winter items to refugees and migrants residing in sites on the Greek islands and mainland. Additionally, provision of 128 water/sanitation facilities and over 2,000 shelter upgrading solutions (family tents, Refugee Housing Units, beds) were carried out in December.
- The overcrowding on the Greek Islands, in particular in the Registration and Identification Centres on Lesbos (Moria) and Samos (Vathy), dramatically exacerbated protection risks, increasing tensions among the population, particularly due to slow procedures.
- Improving living conditions for asylum-seekers and migrants continued to be the number one priority for humanitarian actors in Greece with the onset of winter. People living in tents in the open were moved to alternative accommodation with improved shelter and UNHCR's accommodation scheme, funded by the European Commission, which reached its target of 20,000 places for refugees and asylum-seekers in early December. UNHCR, in cooperation with the Greek Authorities, made consistent efforts in transferring over 1,300 vulnerable and other asylum-seekers, without geographic restriction, from entry points to the mainland.



A Syrian refugee family at Greece's Filipiada accommodation centre as they awaited a decision on their long-term future in 2016. UNHCR helped provide them with improved living accommodation in the form of prefabricated homes. © UNHCR/Yorgos Kyvernitis

PRIORITIES

- Boost reception capacity, winterize shelter facilities and provide emergency assistance in receiving countries through support for States, civil society and local communities.
- Strengthen protection systems and support access to asylum for those in need of international protection.
- Ensure access to durable solutions for persons found to be in need of international protection.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Trends of sea arrivals

In 2016, 362,376 refugees and migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. In Italy, sea arrivals in 2016 reached 181,436, compared to 153,842 arrivals last year which is an increase of 18 %. In November, 13,581 persons arrived by sea, compared to 3,218 who disembarked in November 2015. In December, 8,428 persons arrived by sea, compared to 9,637 whom disembarked in December 2015. Persons reaching Italian shores mainly originate from sub-Saharan African countries (main countries of sea arrivals include: Nigeria: 21%; Eritrea: 11%; Côte d'Ivoire Guinea; The Gambia: 7% each; Senegal, Mali: 6% each; Sudan: 5%; Bangladesh and Somalia: 4% each). Approximately 90% departed from Libya. Since the beginning of 2016, 28,223 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were disembarked in Italy, a 109% surge compared to UASC arrivals in 2015. The trend of sea arrivals in the Eastern Mediterranean decreased in November with 1,991 arrivals compared to 2,970 in October. In December, 1,665 persons arrived by sea, compared to 108,742 whom made the crossing during December 2015. Figures are drastically lower in 2016 with 173,450 arrivals compared to the 856,723 recorded arrivals in 2015.

Relocation

According to the European Commission's (EC) eighth report on relocation and resettlement published on 06 December, "November saw an increase in the number of transfers with 1,406 persons relocated – the highest number in a single month so far". The EC's report states that eight Member States and two Associated Countries pledged around 1,560 places for relocation in November. At the end of December 7,222 asylum-seekers (only 10.8% of the initial target of 66,400) were relocated from Greece to other EU countries. In Italy, the relocation rate in December, was the highest ever since the start of the process. In the month of 764 asylum-seekers were relocated to Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. By the end of November the total number of relocations from Italy reached 2,654 (6.7% of the 39,600 initial target).

Situation Overview in Greece

With winter setting in, the situation for refugees and migrants across Europe including Greece, and particularly the Aegean islands, became increasingly worrying. On the islands, the processing of asylum claims continued to be slow for certain nationalities (particularly of Iraqi and Afghan nationals), which contributed to overcrowding in sites, especially on Lesbos and Samos, and exacerbating the reception conditions, protection risks, and increasing frustrations. UNHCR and partners continued to focus their activities to provide assistance in response to the harsh weather conditions. Transfers of people to better accommodation along with the closure of sites that were unsuitable for winter were prioritized in November and December as temperatures plummeted and heavy snowfall hit large parts of the country. UNHCR and partners worked continuously in order to prepare, adapt and upgrade existing shelter and reception facilities. Nevertheless, the harsh winter wave hit many sites in the north and on the Aegean islands, exposing the remaining populations to serious hardship and jeopardy. Prior to the winterization plan most facilities were exposed to cold and adverse weather conditions, but efforts to supply emergency shelters and equip existing facilities with heating improved conditions at some sites. Despite ongoing efforts, and while some sites were fortunately evacuated in time, the warehouses particularly in the proximity of Thessaloniki were unsuitable for winter. At reporting, efforts to move people to improved accommodation were an ongoing priority.

Increased tensions between residents at Souda site in Chios and the local community were reported during the month of November. Despite intermittent police interventions, unrest and clashes arose between 16 and 17 November causing serious damages to the site and affecting those staying there. Following the events, UNHCR was able to find alternative accommodation in hotels and apartments and assisted in replacing damaged shelters at the site. Furthermore, UNHCR met with the police and local authorities to provide training to staff in the field on reporting crisis violence. On Samos, heavy rainfall in early November affected 1,000 people sleeping in small tents. UNHCR issued a [press release](#) on Sunday 13 November, appealing to local authorities to act swiftly to ensure adequate accommodation for refugees and migrants on the island and calling all actors to address the humanitarian needs of refugees and migrants on Samos. Other RICs in

various sites throughout the islands and mainland faced similar critical situations during the reporting period. On Lesbos, a propane gas explosion killed two residents at the Moria RIC on 25 November. UNHCR intervened to transfer 200 people, including all the UASC from the site, to apartments managed by its NGO partner Iliaktida and installed 25 tents to replace the burned shelter.

On the mainland, rising tensions and scuffles among different communities of asylum-seekers continue due to frustration as regards to the lengthiness of asylum registration and processing, the slow pace of relocation and inadequate living conditions among other matters. The situation in the Evros region, with the increase in arrivals of third country nationals, is being closely monitored by UNHCR's protection team. Delays in the transfers of new arrivals in police detention facilities continue to raise serious concerns, as up to 130 people are held in the Fylakio Pre-Removal Centre pending referral to the RIC, as transfers take place gradually and in small groups. The main obstacle remains the capacity of the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and the transfers of those completing reception and identification procedures to accommodation sites. UNHCR is following up with the inter-ministerial body KEPOM (Central Coordinating Organization for Migration), to ensure quicker transfers without undermining the quality of the procedures.

Situation Overview in Italy

On 31 December, 176,554 persons were accommodated in reception centres in Italy. With the increase in sea arrivals more people are staying in Italy compared to previous years. Efforts by the authorities to identify and fingerprint new arrivals and increased controls at the land borders to France, Switzerland and Austria were also observed. In this context, persons chose often to move in unsafe and irregular ways to cross borders. In December, an increasing number of casualties by persons who attempted onward movement were reported on the borders to Austria, France and Switzerland. Some refugees and migrants were injured while walking along the highways or rail tracks, while others were hospitalized due to hypothermia after having reached Austria on board of freight trains. In the context of the EU AMIF-funded ACCESS project, UNHCR has deployed a team in northern Italy. The team conducted missions to transit facilities close to the northern borders, with a view to assist the authorities in providing persons in transit with information on asylum and relocation, ensuring that asylum-seekers and potential relocation candidates are made aware of and channeled into relevant procedures in Italy. The team also monitored access to such procedures.

In recent months, transit facilities were opened at the Italy-France border in Ventimiglia and at the Italy-Switzerland border in Como in order to address the needs. These facilities are run by NGOs, under the coordination of the Italian Ministry of Interior. UNHCR carried out missions to border areas near Austria, France, Slovenia and Switzerland, visiting transit facilities in Ventimiglia, Como as well as in Milan, where information on relocation was provided to people. During its missions, UNHCR conducted capacity building activities on asylum and relocation for local authorities and NGOs. Furthermore, UNHCR monitored the potential impact of readmission agreements implemented at the northern borders on access to the international protection procedure. UNHCR also regularly monitored the situation of children on the move, raising protection concerns with the relevant authorities. In November, UNHCR met with UNICEF, IOM and Save the Children in order to strengthen coordination mechanisms related to child protection in Italy and discuss plans for operational engagement in the framework of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP).

In the context of sea arrivals, UNHCR also supported the intra-European relocation programme by providing advice and counselling support to potential beneficiaries. Furthermore, UNHCR carried out missions to reception facilities in Rome during the reporting period where relocation candidates are accommodated, liaising with the authorities to ensure the prompt registration of unregistered candidates and adequate follow-up of individual cases.

In December, a Code of Conduct for staff dealing with RSD and Guidelines for the identification and adequate protection of victims of trafficking within the asylum system were finalized: both tools were developed by the National Commission for the Right of Asylum, in cooperation with UNHCR.

Situation Overview in Serbia

Authorities, UNHCR, and partners saw a continued increase of around 6,200 to 7,000 refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants present in Serbia during December. UNHCR and partners met and provided assistance to over 1,600 new arrivals.

According to available data, most are children (46%), followed by men (39%) and women (15%). Some 80% are from so-called “refugee-producing countries”, including Afghanistan (49%), Iraq (19%) or Syria (10%). By the end of December, some 83% were accommodated in 16 heated governmental centres, while the others were counted sleeping rough in Belgrade City or close to the border with Hungary. The arrival of winter weather and falling temperatures particularly affected those not accommodated in government facilities such as the estimated 1,200 squatting in inadequate buildings throughout Belgrade.

Several tragic incidents were reported during November and December highlighting the risks people are willing to take, when placing their lives in the hands of smugglers. Such incidents included, a 26-year-old man from Afghanistan who was killed and another severely injured in a knife fight between smugglers in Belgrade city centre and the death of a 17-year-old Afghani boy from an electric shock on top of a train at the Subotica train station. In December, two incidents involving smugglers were also reported near the Bulgarian border where five refugees died and 12 more had to be hospitalized following a car crash of a vehicle driven by a smuggler and the death from hypothermia of a young Iraqi woman after smugglers left her in the mountains as she could no longer walk.

UNHCR and partners in Serbia during November and December received reports of more than 1,500 instances of foreigners pushed back from Hungary and over 550 from Croatia to Serbia after entering these countries irregularly during December and without having been granted access to asylum-procedures there. Many reported severe mistreatment by authorities. In December, 1,117 intentions to seek asylum in Serbia were registered: 32% by men, 19% by women and 49% for children, these applications were filed by citizens of Afghanistan (50%), Iraq (28%), Syria (11%), Pakistan (4%), or other countries (7%).

Situation Overview in Hungary

Between November and December 1,310 asylum-seekers and migrants entered Hungary out of which the police apprehended 456 people inside the country after crossing the border irregularly, while 854 people entered through the transit zones at the border with Serbia. Since the new border regulations came into force on 05 July 2016 allowing the police to collectively expel to the other side of the border fence those intercepted within 8 km from the border, the police have reported that 19,003 people have been prevented from accessing the Hungarian territory. A total of 10,496 people were blocked upon attempting to cross the border irregularly and 8,507 were intercepted inside Hungary and pushed back to the other side of the border fence.

UNHCR observed that the daily admission rate was reduced to 10 people per day per transit zone from 02 November. The Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) now follows general office hours in the transit zones (8:00 – 16:30) on weekdays with no entry over the weekends, resulting in a further reduction in total admission numbers (from around 210 to 100 per week). Only the police, the military medical team and a social worker are present in the transit zones during the weekend as opposed to the previous presence of OIN staff that used to carry out the border procedures for the admitted asylum-seekers. The OIN decided that as of 15 December, no asylum procedure in the transit zones shall be suspended based on EURODAC matches in Greece (instead, the safe third country concept relevant to Serbia shall be applied). However, deteriorating weather conditions added to the hardship of those who remained staying outside the transit zones.

The installation of a new high-tech border fence between Gara and Bácsszentgyörgy, two small towns along the Serbia-Hungary border, was completed. Reportedly fewer police officers and soldiers will be needed on the southern border if the government decides to complete this type of high-tech security fences on the entire Serbia- Hungary border.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND IDENTIFIED NEEDS

Protection, Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR focused its winterization efforts on four priorities: replacing of tents with prefabricated housing units, evacuating sites that are not suitable for winter, winterization of appropriate tents and upgrade of

electricity/infrastructure. In eight government-run sites on the mainland, where UNHCR assumed the replacement of tents with prefab housing units.

- UNHCR assisted in improving and maintaining 15 sites. In eight government-run sites, up to 4,000 people living in tents were moved into 755 UNHCR prefabricated houses. In a joint effort by humanitarian organizations and authorities under the coordination of Greece's Ministry of Migration Policy, conditions were improved in the majority of the over 40 official sites, including through upgrades of infrastructure.
- Upon the request by the authorities, UNHCR moved people from Cherso and Malakasa to temporary apartments and hotels at special rates. Between 1 June and 30 December 2017, UNHCR assisted the transfer of 3,521 asylum-seekers from the islands to the mainland, including 1,492 to UNHCR accommodation and 434 to state-run sites (KEPOM).
- The reception capacity established in Greece by UNHCR and its partners, with EU funding, in support of the relocation scheme, exceeded the target of 20,000 in December 2016. As of 30 December, the total reached 21,114 places (105%). The programme continues to offer accommodation for those eligible for relocation and asylum-seekers with specific needs.
- By the end of November 2016, about 1,000 refugee children hosted in open accommodation sites started attending school (primary and secondary education), in particular the afternoon classes that are gradually established in the country. Alongside this, 459 children hosted in UNHCR accommodation currently attend school – 297 children primary education (14.34% of hosted children, 6-12-years-old) and 162 secondary education (21.72 % of hosted children, 13-15-years-old).
- In formal sites across Greece 18,656 people are currently being provided with or have previously received cash assistance, as well as approximately 7,800 people living in hotels and apartments receiving a combination of cash and vouchers through the UNHCR accommodation scheme.
- UNHCR has established 646 accommodation places for UASC, including 418 on the mainland and 228 on the islands. This makes UNHCR the biggest provider of accommodation for UASC in Greece. As of 28 December, the total number of such places is 1,256.
- UNHCR remains active, through a variety of interventions, in all 16 sites remaining open in Northern Greece, Epirus, Central Greece and Attica. As requested by the Greek authorities, UNHCR provided Site Management Support in four sites: Nea Kavala, Alexandria, Lagadikia and Vasilika. Activities included installation of prefabricated houses, provision of heating solutions, upgrading of the electrical infrastructure, installation of safety devices and trainings on fire hazard, as well as distributions of winter clothes and footwear.
- UNHCR teams on the islands continue with core protection functions that address immediate and long-term needs: teams provide information on legal rights and obligations in Greece, as well as on applied procedures; in cooperation with the Registration and Identification Service (RIS) and the Asylum Service, targeted actions are undertaken to identify and prioritize persons with specific needs within the registration, the asylum process as well as for accommodation; in cooperation with a range of expert partners, UASC are channeled to formal procedures and to proper interim accommodation; legal aid, through teams of qualified lawyers, is provided to asylum-seekers within the procedure; procedural safeguards on initial treatment upon entry and on returns are constantly monitored, and relevant observations sent to competent authorities locally or centrally.
- In December, UNHCR continued the distribution of winter items in all sites by delivering winter clothing and footwear donated by ZARA, UNIQLO, Falke and YoungOne. Alongside partner Samaritan's purse UNHCR distributed over 7,700 (such as jackets, blouses, trousers and boots) throughout seven sites in Northern Greece another 4,600 items were handed over to volunteer organizations for kiosk distribution in five sites in Epirus and in Alexandria. Together with winter clothing, UNHCR also distributed additional NFIs, such as thermal blankets (2,693), hygiene items (2,325) and portable solar lights (350). In total, 74,261 NFIs were provided to asylum-seekers in site in Greece during December.
- On 05 December, UNHCR jointly organized a strategic planning workshop regarding cash assistance for 2017 alongside European Commission's Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO) and the government. In connection to this, UNHCR also finalized the selection of a financial service provider to deliver prepaid cards for its cash assistance scheme. By the end of the year, UNHCR was supporting over 8,000 asylum seekers in 13 sites across the country with cash assistance.
- The chairs of the Child Protection Working Group (UNHCR and Save the Children) held an orientation mid-December on Best Interest Determination (BID) for eight members of the BID panel that have been established to review cases initially for the UK Dubs Program. UNHCR and partners will support the UK Home Office by preparing BID reports for children that will fit the criteria.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There is still an urgent need to fully equip non-winterized sites. UNHCR will build the capacity of the local authorities for WASH and shelter while continuing to assist and guide the RICs (Reception and Identification Centres) in dealing with protection issues, particularly with the referral of the cases regarding those with specific needs and the provision of adequate information according to international standards.
- Poor living conditions in several sites, combined with a prevailing feeling of uncertainty, particularly on the islands, continued to fuel despair and frustration among asylum-seekers.
- Some 250 persons were held at the Pre-Removal Centre of Evros (Fylakio closed facility) and other police stations in the region. These included persons held under administrative detention in view of deportation, but also persons awaiting their transfer to the Reception & Identification Centre (RIC Fylakio) for screening/identification procedures. In December, the RIC was sufficiently staffed with the arrival of new permanent civil servants, as well as short term staff, but challenges remained in regards to its capacity. UNHCR also raised concerns on the number of UASCs in the Evros RIC, whom majority are Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and stay for prolonged periods till their transfer to open facilities. UNHCR also raised concern to the authorities in regards to the delays in transfers of new arrivals to the RIC of Evros for reception and identification procedures, which results in prolonged detention in border guard police stations.
- In December, Thermopiles and Oinofyta continued to address residents who complain of not having access to Skype in order to register their asylum claims. Due to the lengthy waiting period, many asylum-seekers decide to leave the sites independently and seek accommodation in other places in Greece.
- Due to overcrowding in the RICs on Lesbos (Moria) and Samos (Vathy), SGBV prevention and child protection remained extremely challenging. Most of the sites have developed SGBV response referral pathways, although prevention remains challenging due the increasing insecurity in many sites.
- With an average of 190 UASC arrival per month, 277 UASC were stranded in the RICs by end of December, waiting for a referral to an alternative care facility. Lack of security in the RICs and protection risks, such as SGBV is a major concern.
- Survival sex and sexual exploitation of UASC is a major protection concern with different reports on this practice taking place mostly in Athens. UNHCR has carried out a comprehensive assessment on such protection gaps and is strengthening the protection support to UASC to prevent these incidents. The results of the assessment were presented and discussed at a workshop with the judicial authorities and other stakeholders ending in the mapping of joint concrete steps to be taken to address the situation.

The Western Balkans and Hungary

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Achievements and Impact

- In preparation for winter warm clothing was distributed by the City Red Cross (CRC) to residents at Transit Centre (TC) Tabanovce throughout November and December. With the support of UNHCR, personal distribution cards were translated into Arabic for a better understanding of the NFI distribution process. As previously agreed, UNHCR NFIs were also delivered to NGOs Legis and Gradjanski Razvoj Vaksince (GRV) for distribution.
- Since the first week of November, the laundromat in Tabanovce TC became operational and available with washing and drying machines installed to be used by residents for the first time. A semi-industrial washing machine was also provided, enabling washing of blankets and conserving the need for new NFIs. In collaboration with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) laundry detergent has been procured and will be provided for residents.
- Among efforts to engage residents in social and educational activities at TC's, two residents at Vinojug TC have begun teaching classes as part of partner organization La Strada's activities. One will be teaching art and methods of drawing and the other science. Additionally, UNHCR and partner DRC have worked together to bring infrastructure improvements such as the installation of two large heaters to the TC Tabanovce social area.
- On December 19 and 20, the last of six workshops organized by UNHCR and partners was concluded in Strumica, aiming to further strengthen the institutional capacities of relevant institutions and practical implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for UASC and vulnerable categories. Following the workshops, the Centre for Social Work

(CSW) organized two additional presentations on SOPs for UASC and vulnerable persons for frontline workers in Tabanovce and Vinojug.

- UNHCR alongside the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors organized the Annual Round Table on Refugee Law and Practice in Mavrovo between 21 and 23 December. The round table was attended by judges, the Sector for Asylum, the Ombudsman and MYLA. During the workshop, they reviewed developments and gaps for 2016 and challenges for 2017. Separate sessions were held on safe third country/safe country of asylum/safe country of origin, family reunification and country of origin information.
- The issue of lack of transport to the hospital for asylum-seekers in RC Vizbegovo was noted and raised with the authorities and addressed by the management of the RC. In December, with the support of UNHCR two allocated vehicles were made available leading to access to better care for those who suffer from various medical conditions.
- Family reunification procedures via the RFL (Restoring Family Links) of partner, the Red Cross, were applied during the month, as one new procedure was initiated and another two were completed. Family reunification remains among the few legal modalities that persons have at their disposal to resolve their legal status, especially in cases where they are not interested in seeking asylum in the specific country.
- A separate space, specifically designated for women, was established in TC Vinojug after UNHCR identified as a need from the feedback mechanisms in place. This should provide a space for women to have more privacy and comfort during their stay in the TC. The aim is to make it easier for women to communicate between each other on issues they might be facing collectively and allow them to voice their concerns to service providers comfortably.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Infrastructure improvements and coordination among meal service providers is still needed at sites such as Vinojug TC.
- It has been observed that medical assistance is provided to refugees and migrants who do not reside within the transit centres. However they are not accepted for accommodation in the sites, but are left to continue their journey after receiving medical assistance. Notably, TC Tabanovce has seen more movement which has caused unrest and security concerns with the current residents of the site. UNHCR and UNICEF urged the authorities to take measures against irregular entries into TC Tabanovce.
- Registration criteria according to which registration is carried out has been selective and unclear. In some cases, registration has involved the fingerprinting and photographing of apprehended persons, without the issuance of registration documents. Such persons are almost invariably pushed back into Greece after registration.
- Pushback operations continue through the reporting period, with most pushback incidents concerning persons who were caught on fYRo Macedonia territory and were pushed into Greece, followed by persons who were returned to fYRo Macedonia territory from Serbia. A newly emerged practice of persons being pushed back and forth between fYRo Macedonia and Serbia was also identified. It was also noted that persons were pushed back into fYRo Macedonia despite them originally never traveling through the country. Such back and forth pushbacks injected further instability into the already fragile situation for refugees and migrants. Such incidents expose individuals to protection risks – including, but not limited to kidnappings, physical assaults, robberies, extortion by smugglers. In addition, this also made it more difficult for persons to obtain legal status of any kind in either country.
- Consistent usage of smuggling services by refugees and migrants who cross the border of fYRo Macedonia irregularly persists, with high numbers of smuggled persons constantly reported. Most cases are reported by local partners present in the villages of Lojane and Vaksince in the north, as those villages are known as hubs for smugglers operating in the country. Evidence of general irregular movement through the country, regardless of whether or not smugglers' services are used, were also frequently reported by the local population and other sources during monitoring missions of the UNHCR border monitoring team.
- A worrying trend of asylum-seekers increasingly leaving RC Vizbegovo emerged at the end of the month. The reasons for the departures ranged from dissatisfaction with the conditions offered in the centre, security concerns and the additional pull factor of persons who managed to cross into Serbia relaying information of their successful crossing to persons who stayed behind in the RC.

Serbia

Achievements and Impact

- Serbian authorities opened five new centres throughout the country, between November and December. Thus increasing the total of government centres sheltering refugees and migrants from 13 to 16, this now contributes to over 5,000 sheltered places.
- UNHCR continued its support to the authorities to increase and improve winterized accommodation for refugees in Serbia. On 08 December, UNHCR opened a Medical Unit in Krnjaca Asylum Centre, constructed by Danish Refugee Council (DRC) with UNHCR funding supported by ECHO. On 21 December, two newly renovated barracks for 58 refugees each were rehabilitated at the centre by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation with the Department for International Development (DFID) funds.
- With the arrival of winter, UNHCR partners, Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), Asylum Info Centre (AIC) and the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) distributed over 2,700 UNHCR blankets, 2,460 winter jackets, 2,260 pairs of footwear, 600 raincoats, 750 bed linen sets, and thousands of other clothing items (many donated by Zara).
- The Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), supported by UNHCR, organized an event "Serbia: From the Country of Transit to the Country of Destination" which gathered over 40 participants from authorities, civil society, embassies, international organizations, the private sector, as well as refugees. Discussions focused on good integration practices from other countries, regional aspects of integration, the current situation in Serbia and a way forward.
- On 30 November, the UN Country Team and the Government of Serbia held the 13th monthly Partner's Briefing on the refugee and migration situation in Serbia. In addition to providing a general overview of significant developments since the previous briefing of 28 October, the briefing applied the NY Declaration to the Serbia context, in particular relating to access to territory and asylum, UASC and solutions.
- UNHCR is grateful to the authorities of France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for having swiftly accepted resettlement cases of refugees and to the German authorities for granting visas to two UASC under family reunification. UNHCR continues to promote and facilitate orderly legal pathways for refugees to safeguard family unity and access to effective protection.
- Under the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR chaired weekly UNCT Refugee Task Group and field-coordination meetings as well as a meeting of the Refugee Protection Working Group on 03 November and the 13th Partners Briefing on 30 November, each gathering over 70 reps of authorities, civil society and donors. On 22 November, UNHCR briefed a public hearing of Parliament on the current situation and proposed ways forward.
- On 13 December, the Psychological Innovation Network (PIN), supported by UNHCR, held a public presentation of the results of its study on "Mental health of refugees – establishing communication and trust". The event, attended by representatives of the authorities, UN, civil society, media and some refugees, was an opportunity to stress the importance of psychosocial support to the refugee population staying longer in the country.
- Efforts to treat and contain body lice epidemic continued, with residents and facilities undergoing consecutive disinfection rounds reducing levels of infestation, with a fifth round of screening and disinfection completed in all three Transit Centres (TC) in the West, and a third one in the Presevo Reception Centre. Asylum Centres were reportedly declared body-lice free. As a result, the epidemic was significantly reduced and /or eradicated in most places, except in the three Transit Centres in the West and in Belgrade city centre.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR requested clarification from the Ministry of Interior about reports that a group of 41 asylum-seekers, including families with children, who had registered for asylum on 05 November and received referral letters but instead were expelled to fYRo Macedonia. UNHCR continued to routinely submit reports of collective expulsion from Serbia to the Ministry of Interior.
- UNHCR was able to corroborate some key facts regarding a reported incident concerning a Syrian refugee family that had been taken to a remote location near the border with Bulgaria on 17 December and left there until they were rescued. The family in question were holding valid Intention to seek asylum Certificates issued by Serbian authorities and were taken off a public bus on their way to a designated government centre and transported to a remote area close to the border with Bulgaria, reportedly by joint security forces. UNHCR is awaiting the outcome of the authorities' investigation into the case and their decision on any consequent disciplinary measures. This incident could have had tragic consequences for the refugee family and the alleged conduct would constitute a violation of Serbia's responsibilities under international and national law.

- Over 1,000 refugees and migrants, including several hundred UASCs, continued sleeping rough in derelict buildings in most inhumane, unsafe and unhygienic conditions in the Belgrade city centre. Ministry of Labour/Government Coordination convened a meeting on 12 December, which accepted UN and civil society support in managing the refugee situation in Belgrade. UNHCR and partners continued promoting access to registration and referrals to government centres, and coordinating further measures and capacities to support the authorities in finding a solution to this situation.
- While the opening of new accommodation centres in the north and East, increased shelter places to over 5,000, of which some are yet to offer adequate standards and services, further investments will be urgently needed to adequately accommodate twice that number of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants away from isolated border regions.
- UNHCR is awaiting agreement from the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration to extend Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) conducted by authorities, UNHCR and partners UASCs in Presevo and Bujanovac Reception Centres to all other 15 governmental centres. In addition to BIAs, profiling and identification for potential resettlement and/or family reunification should also be considered.

Croatia

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and its implementing partner, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), organized an integration study trip in November to the Netherlands to learn about EU best practices. Additionally, 12 participants from Government stakeholders and civil society organizations attended the four day study trip.
- Under a UNHCR project, its partner the Croatian Red Cross, established a workshop at the Kutina Reception centre for asylum-seekers, where they organized a working therapy for asylum-seekers to voluntarily take part in minor reconstruction work in the Reception Centre (painting the walls, repairing wooden items, etc).
- UNHCR supported the "Knowing and Accepting Each Other" project by its partner the Croatian Red Cross, which focuses on promotion of human rights, tolerance and acceptance of diversity. The project has been implemented in high schools in Sisak and encompasses workshops, debates and direct volunteer engagement of students with the members of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.
- UNHCR and the Croatian Red Cross organized the 3rd Annual Conference on International Refugee Protection on 12 to 13 December in Opatija. Over 80 participants from the government, stakeholders, NGOs and other partners attended a two day conference dealing with issues of access to territory, refugee status determination procedures, integration, reception conditions and protection of UASC.
- On 25 December, 20 Croatian families invited some 50 refugees to their homes for Christmas lunch as part of the "Christmas lunch with a refugee" campaign. The initiative was launched by the JRS through a UNHCR project aimed at encouraging meetings and communication between the local community and persons who have been granted or are seeking asylum in Croatia.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Immunization of children and adults as well as regular initial medical check-ups in line with the national legislation have not been yet established. UNHCR continues advocacy with the Ministry of Health to ensure provision of adequate health care for asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR continues to advocate for the reestablishment of Croatian language courses for asylum-seekers in line with the national legislation. The courses have been discontinued since February 2016.
- On 06 December, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Mr. Dainius Pūras, completed his mission to Croatia and announced his Preliminary Observations (English version: <http://bit.ly/2jk7aOZ>). During his mission, UNHCR briefed him on the health related issues of the refugees and migrants which were also included in the preliminary findings.

Slovenia

Achievements and Impact

- In December, UNHCR officially shared its comments on the proposed amendments to the Aliens Act with the Minister of Interior, Vesna Györköös Žnidar, as well as with the President of the National Assembly, Milan Brglez. UNHCR has not received any reply from the Ministry of Interior, who stated that the amendments were in line with International Law,

as well as the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. The proposed amendments would allow Slovenia to limit access to territory and asylum procedures to asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants in the event of emergency situations.

- UNHCR has met with some of the local municipalities in order to discuss advocacy and approach the situation and concerns regarding refugees with the local communities whom raise civilian's concerns and protests of the potential establishment of refugee hosting facilities in Črnomelj, Lendava and Velenje. The local municipalities reacted very positively and requested for continued cooperation with UNHCR.
- As part of the #IBelong campaign and in effort to raise awareness on statelessness, UNHCR undertook several activities in the month of November. The activities included: partnering with the Slovenian Youth Chapter of the European Network on Statelessness, and distributed information on statelessness at the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Social Sciences; participating at the round table discussion on "Ending childhood Statelessness in Europe"; as well as holding a lecture on statelessness at the Faculty of Social Sciences.
- On 19 and 20 December 2016, UNHCR organized a workshop on statelessness with the objective to identify ways to support Slovenia in aligning its policies in accordance to international standards, as well as raising awareness on the issue of statelessness. The participants of the workshop (international organizations, civil organizations, and academics) brainstormed ways to advocate for the accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness with the Slovenian government. The conclusions from the workshop will form a part of UNHCR Slovenia's protection strategy and work plan for 2017.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In response to the proposed amendments to the Aliens Act, which introduced potential restrictive measures for persons in need of protection, UNHCR met with several factions of political parties with the aim to share UNHCR's concerns regarding the proposed amendments and to engage in discussion with the parties' positions on their views regarding the amendments. The meetings have been carried out in preparation to the issuance of UNHCR's Comments on the proposed amendments to the Aliens Act. UNHCR is concerned that if the restricted provisions contained in the amended Aliens Act are implemented, asylum-seekers would not have access to the territory and asylum procedures with the exception of those deemed to have specific needs.
- The government has reached its capacity in the state run accommodation facilities for beneficiaries of international protection. The two integration houses in Maribor and Ljubljana can house up to 60 individuals, but are now at their full capacity. This is resulting in long delays of beneficiaries of international protection in securing housing. The inability to secure accommodation, is causing a delay in accessing social and economic assistance for the beneficiaries of international protection – as social assistance is granted by local authorities, it cannot be accessed if the resident does not have a permanent address in that specific community.
- UNHCR observed a disconnection of coordination among NGOs, resulting in an overlapping activities or lack of services. If better coordination was achieved this could result in improved allocation of resources and effective support for asylum-seekers.

Hungary

Achievements and Impact

- During the reporting period, several heads of families have started to arrive to the waiting area of Röszke transit zone from Principovac camp in Serbia who claimed to be members of a group of 199 families whose positions in the admission list had been erroneously recorded. The OIN gradually scheduled the entry of the 199 families. UNHCR has advocated with authorities to ensure that information provided to and by asylum-seekers is properly recorded.
- UNHCR held discussions with asylum-seekers in the accommodation sections of both transit zones to encourage establishment of a community focal points who will facilitate two-way communication with OIN and UNHCR regarding general and individual issues that are of concern. Asylum-seekers and OIN are in favour of the proposal and asylum-seekers have appointed their community leaders.
- On 23 November, UNHCR liaised with the OIN transit zone coordinator in Röszke recommending regular meetings where transit zone coordinators would be present along with UNHCR field staff. The purpose of the meetings will be to discuss topics related to issues of mutual concern, procedural practices, individual cases, etc. The OIN welcomed the proposal and agreed to have the first meeting during the first week of December.
- On 06 December UNHCR organized a coordination meeting in Szeged chaired by the Regional Representative and with the participation of seven NGOs and aid groups (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, SOS Children Villages, Community of Sant'Egidio, MigSzol Szeged, Sirius Help, Caritas Hungary, and Red Cross Hungary) along with OIN. The purpose of the

meeting was to improve coordination among organizations to optimize the provision of humanitarian aid, avoid duplication and overlapping, as well as to collaborate on planning for the winter.

- UNHCR is coordinating with NGOs and local aid groups to complement the assistance currently provided to the people awaiting admission to the transit zones by UNHCR in Serbia and its partners. The OIN set up a winterized water tap in the waiting area of Röszke transit zone after the tap was not functional for a few hours due to below zero temperatures. Moreover, Sirius Help continued to distribute cooking oil, tea, sugar and NFIs, including clothes, sleeping bags, insulation material, and sawdust briquettes in the waiting areas of both transit zones.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gap

- By the end of November and through December, around 110 refugees and migrants (50 in Röszke and 60 in Tompa) were in the waiting areas without adequate shelter, awaiting admission into the transit zones while the daily admission rate was reduced to 10 people per day per transit zone as of 02 November with no admissions taking place over weekends. As a result, the total number of asylum-seekers admitted to the transit zones each week decreased to 100 from around 210. Families, UASCs and single men and women transported by IOM or taking public transport to the transit zones from various reception facilities in Serbia spent up to three weeks in the waiting areas prior to being admitted entry into the transit zones.
- The OIN in Tompa raised concerns that newly admitted families often provide fake names and family compositions which results in prolonged registration and processing of asylum claims. The OIN stated that they would return asylum-seekers to Serbia if they provide false identity information or change it during the registration procedure. UNHCR advised the OIN to verify the changes as some people may have valid reasons for adjusting the registered information. UNHCR is also informing asylum-seekers about the importance of providing correct information to the OIN.
- UNHCR raised concerns over the OIN asking asylum-seekers to submit written documents in English. Such documents include additional information on the reasons for not seeking asylum in Serbia and other requests that should be treated with confidentiality. The OIN attributed this new practice to the financial and administrative challenges they face when translating documents they receive from asylum-seekers. UNHCR pointed out that asylum-seekers prefer to submit information on their experience in writing because they are not confident it has been well captured by the OIN as the transcripts of their interviews are not read back to them or provided in a language they understand.
- On 08 November UNHCR conducted a monitoring visit to Nyírbátor asylum detention centre where 71 asylum-seekers were detained. UNHCR observed some improvement in services as the facility there is still room for changes to be made. UNHCR received several complaints from asylum-seekers in regards to physical and verbal abuse committed by armed security guards and the lack of access to warm clothes. Moreover, skin infections were common, walls were dirty, the doors of some rooms were missing and most of the electricity sockets were damaged and not repaired. UNHCR is following up with the authorities to address the identified gaps.
- UNHCR visited Kiskunhalas reception center on 16 November and Körmend tented camp on 24 and 25 November where 75 (mainly Afghans and Syrians) and 10 asylum-seekers were accommodated, respectively. During the monitoring mission, UNHCR observed that access of NGOs to Körmend is limited mainly to UNHCR partners Cordelia and HHC. All residents expressed their wish to be transferred to another reception center as the living condition in the tented camp are inadequate in particular for winter. UNHCR is following up with the authorities to address the identified gaps.
- UNHCR also visited Bicske, Vámosszabadi and Kiskunhalas reception centres. As of 12 December, the OIN has evacuated the open permanent reception centre in Bicske, asylum-seekers were transferred to other OIN facilities. NGOs contacted church organizations with homeless shelters in Budapest in an attempt to arrange adequate accommodation for all those placed in Körmend. Baptist Aid, the Catholic, the Methodist Churches, and volunteers agreed to host some individuals. Vámosszabadi reception centre was under renovation at the time of the visit which adds to the hardship people face in this facility due to substandard reception conditions.

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 support to crisis management teams and 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. A full list of partners is available [here](#).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan 2016 (RMRP), co-led by UNHCR and IOM, brings together more than 60 UN agencies and NGOs in response to the refugee and migrant crisis affecting Southern Europe and the Western Balkans.

As of January 2017, the RMRP is 71% funded; USD 476.7 million in earmarked contributions have been received against USD 669.9 million in total requirements.

UNHCR is appealing for USD 380.3 million under the framework of the RMRP, against which USD 235.4 million in earmarked contributions has been received (62% funded).

Detailed funding information on the RMRP (inter-agency and UNHCR-specific) is available [here](#).

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to its operations in response to the emergency response in Europe, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unrestricted and broadly earmarked funds.

Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2016: [United States of America \(200 M\)](#) | [Sweden \(95 M\)](#) | [Private Donors in Spain \(50 M\)](#) | [Netherlands \(46 M\)](#) | [United Kingdom \(45 M\)](#) | [Norway \(40 M\)](#) | [Japan \(24 M\)](#) | [Denmark \(24 M\)](#) | [Private Donors in Republic of Korea \(21 M\)](#) | [Private Donors in Italy \(20 M\)](#) | [Private Donors in Japan \(16 M\)](#) | [Canada \(16 M\)](#) | [Australia \(15 M\)](#) | [Switzerland \(15 M\)](#) | [France \(14 M\)](#) | [Private Donors in USA \(14 M\)](#) | [Private Donors in Sweden \(14 M\)](#) | [Germany \(13 M\)](#) | [Italy \(10 M\)](#)

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Links:

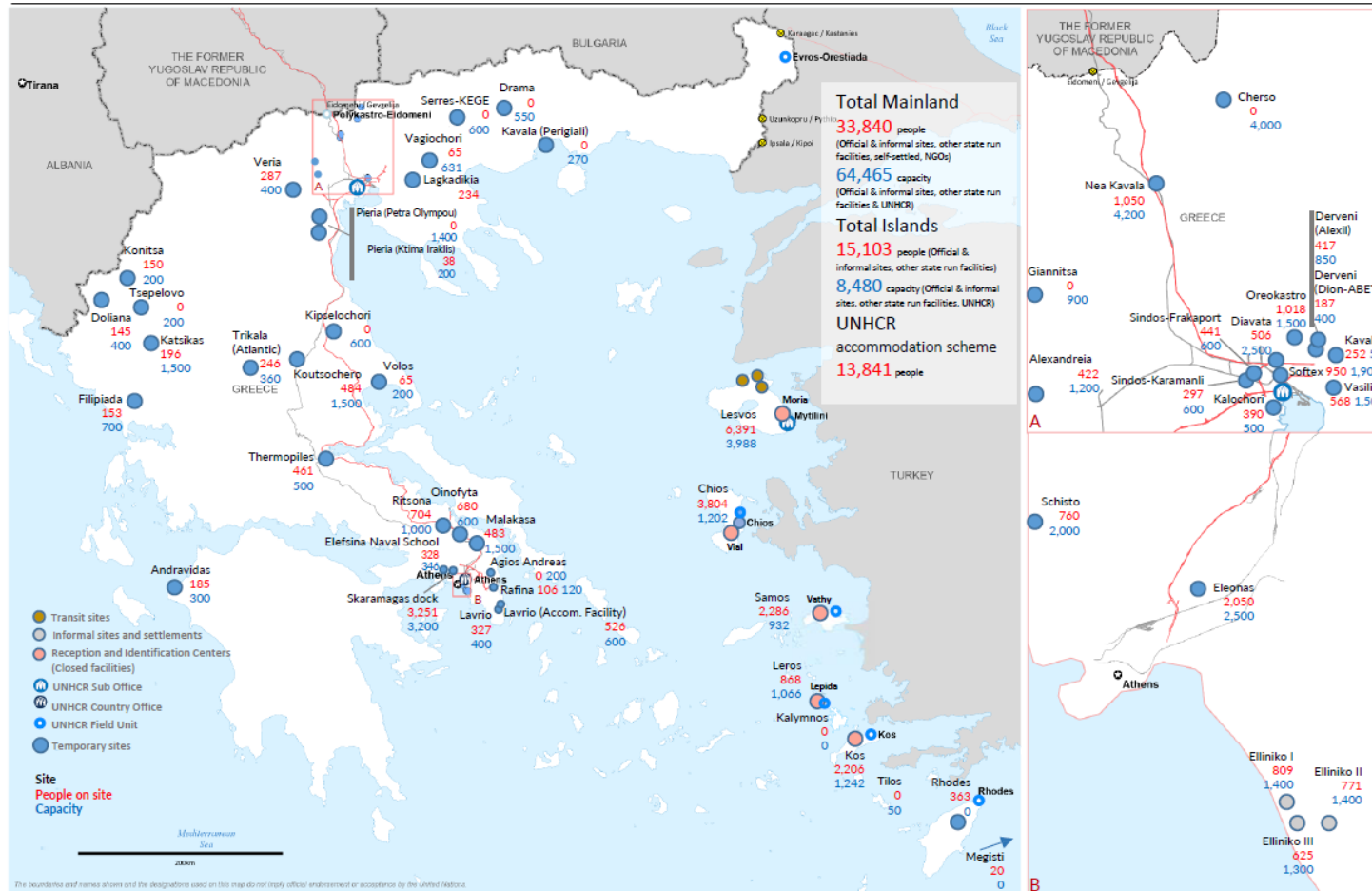
UNHCR, [Mediterranean Sea: 100 people reported dead yesterday, bringing year total to 5,000](#)

UNHCR, [Shelter struggle in Greece as winter arrives, EU urged to speed relocations](#)

UNHCR, [UNHCR moves 1,100 out of tents, beating first snows of winter](#)

ANNEXES

Europe Refugee Emergency
 Daily map indicating capacity and occupancy (Governmental figures)
 As of 20 December 2016 08:00 a.m. EET



Presence and capacity are based on Governmental figures from the Coordination Centre for the Management of the Refugee Crisis, as of 20/12/2016 08:00 a.m. Eastern European Time. Online map with additional information: <http://www.unhcr.gr/sites>

