

HIGHLIGHTS

507,745

People passed through
Eidomeni since 1 September

5,600

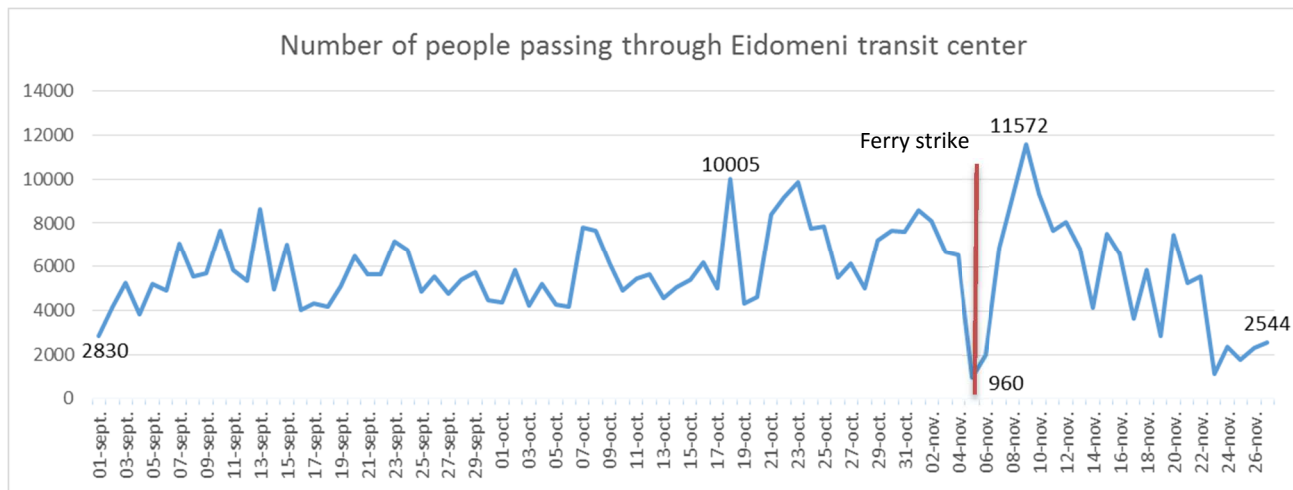
Average daily crossing in
November (as of 27 Nov)

9

UNHCR's staff members
deployed in Eidomeni

2,500

Total accommodation capacity
in the site



MAIN ACTIVITIES

Operational Context

Eidomeni, small town in northern Greece, is the sole crossing point between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia opened for refugees and migrants. At the end of August 2015, when the influx of refugees and migrants started increasing, the situation in Eidomeni was marked by high level tensions, use of violence by Polices on both sides of the border, hazard as people were waiting on the rain tracks and lack of basic services. And thus despite, retrospectively, a relatively limited number of people present. This tense situation led the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to close its border between the 21 and 23 August.

From September, thanks to an increasing numbers of partners, a better collaboration between all stakeholders, the implementation by the authorities of a system to organize the crowd and the crossing, and the installment of facilities to meet the basic needs of people of concern, the overall situation has notably been improved and tensions became exceptional.

In November, an average of 6,200 people a day have crossed the border mainly in calm and dignified conditions, with exceptional tensions, especially related to the new policy implemented by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 18 November, allowing to cross only certain nationalities. Two times since October, the number of crossing exceeded 10,000 persons a day, without tensions to occur.

On 17 November, Serbia started to profile people of concern on the basis of their alleged nationalities, and to allow only nationals of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syrian Arab Republic, to cross the border. The following day, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started implementing the same measure. In November, these three nationalities represent 85 percent of the 114,000 arrivals to Greece (as of 23 November).

This new policy led to tensions among the people present, up to 500 people started protesting, calling for the opening of the border, and some taken extreme measures as starting a hunger strike for 60, or stitched up their mouths for 11 people. In cooperation with authorities, UNHCR and its partners immediately adjusted their response to this new situation, especially by increasing the reception capacity of the site. Protection activities were scaled up through the deployment of additional staff to prevent family separation, provide relevant information, promote dignified conditions of transit, monitor the border and therefore ease tensions.

Protection

The crossing of the border is under the responsibility of the national authorities. UNHCR and partners provide protection, information and assistance to refugees and migrants gathered in Eidomeni.

Achievement and impacts

- UNHCR has a team of nine staff members, soon to be 16, present every day in the site, who works on shift to ensure an extended presence, and thanks to its partner Praksis, a continuous presence of a protection actor is ensured 24/7. Since the restriction of access of the border, UNHCR has beefed up its team to be present 24/24 in the site and especially increase the number of Farsi speakers among its staff.
- The provision of information is a fundamental protection tool, which has proven to be also the most effective way to prevent situations of chaos and family separations. UNHCR with the support of interpreters, volunteers, local and international organizations, systematically conducts information sessions in rub halls, targeting all people of concern. The sessions cover legal rights and obligations, including about the asylum procedures in Greece, and also aim at raising awareness and prevent risks such as smuggling and trafficking.
- As, the vast majority of people of concern reach the site by bus, UNHCR started in October to provide information inside the buses about the organization of the site and services available. This has a positive impact in terms of preventing tensions and ensuring that everyone have access to basic services.
- To cope with the new policy implemented, whereby only three nationalities are allowed to enter into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNHCR has reinforced messages about asylum procedures in Greece for those nationalities who may opt to seek asylum in Greece. Leaflets prepared by the Asylum Services are also being distributed by UNHCR.
- On 27 November, UNHCR responded positively to the request of the Ministry of Migration for support to help the authorities transferring, on a voluntary basis, people who were stranded at the border from Eidomeni to the temporary accommodation site Elleniko in Athens. In addition to several buses of private companies, three free of charge buses left Eidomeni in the course of day, and such transfers will continue in the days to come.



Syrians arriving by bus are being organized into a group before being accompanied to the site where services and shelter are provided © UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis, October 2015

- UNHCR is actively involved in the prevention of family separation, the identification and referral of vulnerable cases, including Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) and survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Standard Operational Procedures for UASC referral have been developed as well as a rapid Best Interest Assessment form adapted to the context of transit, in order to structure and standardize the collect of information and the assessment of protection risks faced by UASCs.
- Through its partner Save the Children, which supports the local NGO Arsis, UNHCR has developed child protection monitoring and activities. A child-friendly space opened 24/7 has been set up where, among others, drawing workshops have been organized for children in order to express themselves and channel their potential traumas. Moreover, child-friendly information material are being developed. UNHCR and Save the Children has also trained stakeholders present in the site, including authorities, on child protection. In addition, 'Clowns without borders' (Spanish branch) performs in Eidomeni on a daily basis. Beyond lifting the moods of the children, the shows are also a way identified the most vulnerable cases.
- Standard Operational Procedures in crowd management in emergency have been developed with partners, to cope with difficult conditions. As often as possible, UNHCR organizes recreational activities, mainly based on singing and dancing, with refugees and migrants in order to eliminate tensions and calm down anxious people. Clown without borders have contributed to this stress release activity as well as two concerts performed on site both by a Syrian and a Greek artist from Thessaloniki.

Identified needs and remaining gaps

- Protection of people with specific needs, including children and survivors of SGBV, needs to be further strengthened. UNHCR will continue to conduct capacity building activities, adapted to people in transit, targeting volunteers, NGO and authorities.
- There is a need to improve the response to cases of domestic violence. UNHCR will develop messages on domestic violence as a measure to raise awareness and alert the police about this issue and ensure that adequate response is given.

Humanitarian Assistance

- In order to ensure the protection of people in Eidomeni and make waiting conditions more dignified, UNHCR and partners opened a site on 24 September 2015 to provide shelter and services to people of concern.

The site is composed of rub halls, installed by UNHCR, MSF and IOM, for people to be protected from weather conditions. In addition, there are medical centers, a child friendly space with also a breastfeeding area and a counselling room, a meeting room and a distribution point. These places are for common use and ensure a smooth and constructive collaboration with all actors presents at Eidomeni, including volunteers.

Following the implementation of the new policy of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNHCR and partners opened a second site, adjacent to the existing one, to increase the accommodation capacity. In a joint effort of IOM, MSF and UNHCR, 1,000 additional places were made available in less than 2 days thanks to the setting up of 2 additional heated rub halls and 23 family tents, the latter provided by UNHCR. In addition, 12 gas heaters have been installed in the rub halls as measure of winterization. In total, 2,500 people can accommodated in the sites. The second site remains a contingency site.

- Food, core relief items as well as clothes are distributed to refugees and migrants by volunteers and humanitarian actors present in the site. UNHCR mainly distributes core



*Distribution of water and food to new arrivals
© UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis, October 2015*

relief items in complementarity with those provided by partners. The organization of distributions has been steadily improved to ensure an optimal identification and targeting of the people with specific needs and make sure that the distribution is smooth and not source of protection concerns. The distribution of food, cooked and dry, as well as core relief items targets all people of concern and is conducted upon arrivals.

- The sudden implementation of border's restrictions, led to a situation of confusion and tensions with up to 3,000 people staying overnight in the site. In order to meet needs of people of concern, UNHCR increased its stock of items with additional 3,000 blankets and 1,000 sleeping mats. All actors have increased their capacity to respond to the needs. Save the Children has, for example, provided 8,000 cooked meals on 20 November to cover needs.
- Six medical actors are present on the site and have developed Standard Operation Procedures for cases of Health emergencies in order to ensure the most effective medical care. A system of referral with medical actors in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has also been put in place to ensure a comprehensive medical care.
- To cover the WASH needs, MSF and A21 and Caritas have installed 30 showers, 48 latrines, 2 toilettes accessible to people with mobility handicaps, and 3 water points, both for women and men.



People queuing to cross the border in Eidomeni. November 2015
© UNHCR/Yorgos Kyvernitis

Identified needs and remaining gaps

- With the opening on 19 November of a new site, adjacent to the existing one, UNHCR and partners need to redefine the coordination, organization of services, and beef up their presence to meet needs in both sites. The second site is planned to be used only for contingency purposes.
- Despite the opening of a new section of the site, the space available remained limited.
- Distribution of clothes needs to be improved to ensure it meets the needs and is conducted in the respect of the “do not harm” principles.
- Through its partnership with Vodafone Foundation, UNHCR will bring connectivity to refugees and migrants in Eidomeni. One satellite-based Wi-Fi access point, and one charger point will be installed in the site.
- Winterization of the 2 rubble halls, set up in the second site, is to be carried out.





WORKING WITH PARTNERS

UNHCR works in close collaboration with 17 humanitarian actors and volunteers present in Eidomeni, covering different sectors: shelter, core relief items, health, protection, WASH. Authorities play also a fundamental role in ensuring security in the site and are also the ones responsible for the crossing of refugees and migrants.

In the implementation of its activities in Eidomeni, UNHCR is supported by three implementing partners:

- **METAction** provides a range of interpretation services for communicating with refugees, and supervises UNHCR information sessions for refugees on registration procedures and other issues.
- **Praksis** ensures protection by presence and identification of vulnerable individuals and persons of concern; undertakes distribution of food and core-relief items; and has enhanced the provision of medical care by deploying one doctor.
- **Save the Children** monitor protection with a specific focus on child and develops child protection activities, especially by capacity building activities. The NGO also conducts distribution of food (and non-food) items

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS PRESENT IN EIDOMENI

	Arsis; Clowns without borders; Greek Council for Refugees; Hellenic Red Cross; IOM; Save the Children; UNHCR
	MSF; UNHCR
NFI	Caritas; Evangelic Church of Greece; DRF; Hellenic Red Cross; Mazi Brosta; METAction; MSF; Save the Children; Solidarity Now; Volunteers; UNHCR
	A21; Caritas; MSF
	Greek Rescue Team; HRC; Praksis; MdM; MSF; Praksis

In addition, UNHCR supports volunteer groups especially by providing capacity building activities and covering storage needs.

Coordination mechanisms have been put in place in Eidomeni to ensure efficiency among humanitarian actors.

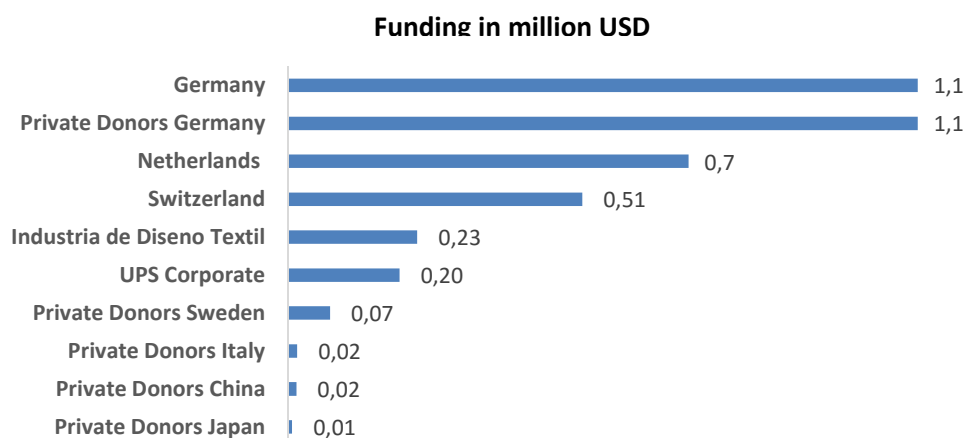
Coordination meetings	Chair	Co-Chair	Working Group Members
Site management coordination meeting	UNHCR	Rotating system	Arsis, Clowns without borders; Greek Council for Refugees; Hellenic Red Cross; IFRC; IOM; MdM; METAction; MSF; Municipality (through the civil engineer); Police; Praksis; Save the Children; UNHCR; Volunteers
Distribution NFI	UNHCR	-	Arsis; Caritas; Evangelic Church of Greece; DRF; Hellenic Red Cross; Mazi Brosta; METAction; MSF; Save the Children; Solidarity Now; Volunteers; UNHCR
Protection Working Group	UNHCR	Save the children	Arsis; Clowns without borders; Greek Council for Refugees; MdM; MSF; Praksis; Save the Children; UNHCR
Health Working Meeting	Medical agencies	-	Hellenic Red Cross; IFRC; MdM; MSF; Praksis;

General coordination meetings leaded by the municipality have been put on hold at the end of September. A strongest involvement of authorities could benefit the overall response and protection of people of concern.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

On 30 September, UNHCR presented its revised appeal of USD 128 million for the Special Mediterranean Initiative (June 2015 – December 2016). In addition, USD 34.2 million are required to address the urgent need to extend assistance measures and therefore protect people of concern from the winter weather conditions (November 2015 to February 2016).

Out of the USD 19.3 million are requested for the humanitarian response in **Greece** in 2015, **USD 3.9 million** have so far been received. UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the situation.



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Contacts:

Marion Muscat, Reporting Officer, UNHCR Greece, muscat@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 69 44 585 806

Ioannis Papachristodoulou, IM & Data, UNHCR Greece, papachri@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 2 106 756 801

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