

EUROPE'S REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE- UPDATE #2

1 – 16 September 2015

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

411,567

Refugees and migrants arrived to Europe by sea so far in 2015.

2,900

Refugees and migrants estimated to have died / gone missing at sea in 2015.

288,020

Sea arrivals in Greece as of 14 September.

121,500

Sea arrivals in Italy as of 14 September.

79,778

Registered/arrivals in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from 19 June to 16 September.

125,522

Registered/arrivals in Serbia as of 16 September August.

200,000

Arrived in Hungary as of 15 September.

PRIORITIES

- Boost post-rescue reception capacity 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.

- On 11 September, UNHCR has declared the situation in Hungary as a Level 2 Emergency. On 15 September, the border fence was completed and a set of amendments to the law started to be implemented, resulting in extremely limited access for refugees at the border. Hungary has also begun to return asylum-seekers to Serbia, against standing UNHCR advice to governments.
- In Greece, tensions between the police and also between different groups of refugees and migrants on Lesbos, Kos and Leros were reported as a result of the congestion on the islands, registration backlogs changing registration policies and lack of dedicated sites. The Government has implemented some exceptional measures to accelerate preregistration for Syrians and started to gradually decongest the island of Lesbos. Following negotiations, two military sites have been offered but formal agreement is pending.
- In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNHCR continued to work with the Government on improving the conditions at Vinojug reception centre close to the town of Gevgelija. While some visible improvements have taken place in the areas of shelter and provision of assistance, the progresses made to enhance registration remain insufficient in light of the increasing numbers of arrivals. UNHCR will continue to support this process, including through the development of SOPs and the provision of additional data entry clerks.
- The Government of Serbia has worked to improve its reception and registration capacity. However, further efforts are needed in light of the increase in the number of arrivals and the urgent need for sanitary installations, water, clothes and other humanitarian aid is to be expected. Following the closure of the Hungarian border, UNHCR, partners and NGOs, together with the support of authorities, provided humanitarian assistance to some 3,000 refugees stranded at the border crossings in Horgoš. Most of them have now left this location proceeding to the Croatian border



© UNHCR/Igor Pavicevic, Refugees in front of HORGOS border crossing at the Serbian-Hungarian border.

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

During the reporting period, over 65,000 refugees and migrants arrived on the Greek Islands, mainly from Syria (70%), Afghanistan (19%) and Iraq (4%). Two new tragedies took place from the coasts of Greek islands claiming the lives of 38 people. Some tensions between the police and also between different groups of refugees and migrants on Lesbos, Kos and Leros were reported as a result of the congestion on the islands, backlogs in registration, changing registration policies and lack of dedicated sites. To ease these tensions, the Government implemented some exceptional measures for the accelerated registration of Syrians and started to gradually decongest the island of Lesbos, where some 20,000 refugees and migrants were present. In three days, over 17,000 refugees and migrants have left Lesbos to the mainland. Since then, an average of 5,000 refugees and migrants left islands to the mainland on a daily basis.

Decongestions efforts by the Greek Government led to increasing numbers of refugees and migrants moving towards the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. The number of arrivals to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia peaked at 8,660 persons on 13 September. A similar trend was also observed in Serbia. It is reported that over 200,000 refugees and migrants entered Hungary so far this year. Most of these move onwards to Austria and Germany.

On 4 September, the Hungarian Government adopted a set of amendments to the law, including making irregular crossing of the fence, as well as the obstruction or damage to the fence criminal offenses. The dramatic increase in the number of refugees and migrants, combined with increased border control measures, are creating a critical situation. In light of the urgency of the situation facing the affected persons and the complex and fast-changing operational context, UNHCR has declared the situation in Hungary as a Level 2 Emergency on 11 September. Some significant onward movement from Hungary to Austria and Germany took place in the past weeks, with some 80,000 (estimated number) and 93,000 arrivals (as of 14 September). This led Germany to reinstate selective border control measures on 13 September.

Following the restrictions at the border which started on 15 September, reports indicate that some 200 persons have applied for asylum at the border crossing. Some of these, mainly families from Syria, have been taken to reception centres for further processing. Some 3,000 refugees and migrants were stranded on the Serbian side of the border when tensions erupted. UNHCR regrets having witnessed refugees, including families with children, being prevented from entering the European Union, including by the use of water cannons and tear gas. Hungary has also begun to return asylum-seekers to Serbia, against standing UNHCR advice to Governments. On the Serbian side of the border, UNHCR counseled refugees and migrants about transportation back to the Refugee Aid Point in Kanjiža, provided by the authorities.

The refugee/migratory route has now turned towards Croatia, where the first group of 20 Syrians arrived at 7 am on 16 September. So far, the Croatian-Serbian border remains open, and access to territory has been maintained. Refugees are arriving at the green border, very close to the international border crossing point of Tovarnik. On 16 September, almost 2,000 arrived and a significant increase is expected in the coming days. The Ministry of the Interior has been designated as the Emergency Crisis Coordinator.

In this fast changing context, the EU Minister for Justice and Home Affairs met on 14 September in Brussels to discuss the package of proposals put forward by the European Commission, including the relocation of 120,000 persons in clear need of international protection from Greece, Italy and Hungary, amongst others. The Council formally adopted the initial relocation proposal for 40,000, though not all Member States were able to agree on the proposal for the relocation of an additional 120,000.

With the growing complexity of the situation, the High Commissioner appointed the Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe, Mr. Vincent Cochetel, as Regional Refugee Coordinator (RRC) for this crisis on 1 September. Ms. Diane Goodman, Deputy Director for Europe, has been designated as the operational focal point in UNHCR's Headquarters, in addition to her continued function of Bureau Deputy Director.

Achievements

Protection

Greece

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR continues to monitor new arrivals and to provide information on procedures, rights, responsibilities, and assistance to new comers.
- UNHCR is also monitoring the implementation of registration procedures on the Islands and supporting local authorities to prioritize persons with specific needs.
- UNHCR's partners the Ecumenical Refugee Programme, Praksis and METAction, have supported the provision of legal assistance and information on rights and obligations, the addressing of immediate relief/medical needs of persons of concerns and the transfer of unaccompanied children to specialized facilities on the mainland.
- UNHCR played an important role in mitigating tensions between refugees and local population as well as between different groups of refugees on the islands and at the border area with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- UNHCR is supporting the authorities in ensuring that no families are separated when crossing the border into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The reception infrastructure, services and registration procedures still fall short of real needs.
- A system to ensure the identification, referral and follow up on persons with specific needs is needed.
- Some health and hygiene concerns were reported on the islands as well as at the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, together with a heightened risk of sexual and gender based violence due to lack of privacy.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR has stepped up its protection capacity at the Vinojug reception centre, established close to the town of Gevgelija on 21 August, to meet the needs of the newcomers. It has also established an information point close to the centre to inform refugees on procedures, registration and services.
- UNHCR supported the setting up of registration software and network to enhance registration at the Vinojug site.
- Two child friendly spaces have been established at Vinojug. Two pedagogues and two psychologists, two social workers and translators are present on site to cater for the needs of children.
- Funded by UNHCR, the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) offered free legal advice at the site and also assisted asylum seekers at the Vizebegovo reception centre with their asylum procedure. These activities are funded by UNHCR.
- In light of the increase of arrivals over the weekend of 12-13 September food, NFIs, counselling, medical and psychosocial services, child friendly spaces and monitoring have been stepped up and registration is ongoing 24/7.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- While the registration procedure has improved, UNHCR is in the process of drafting Standard Operating Procedures for referrals, procedures and registration to ensure further consistency.
- The Ministry of Interior has requested UNHCR to hire additional data entry clerks to support registration.
- Further information material (leaflets, posters, etc.) is in the pipeline and will be distributed at the Vinojug centre.

Serbia

Achievements and Impact

- Anticipating the closure of the border with Hungary on 15 September, UNHCR strengthened its presence at the Subotica-Kanjiža-Horgosz region and is providing humanitarian assistance there in coordination with its partners.
- With the increased number of arrivals, UNHCR decided to accelerate the setting up of a Field Office in Preševo, enhanced its daily presence and engaged additional volunteers for food and water distribution and information dissemination in both Preševo and Miratovac.

- With the installation of 3 additional fingerprinting machines, donated by the UNHCR, and the increased presence of police officers conducting the registration, the capacities of Preševo One Stop Centre have almost doubled to over 2,000 registrations per day.
- UNICEF opened a child-friendly space at the Preševo Centre, where three social workers are working in shifts.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Following a request by the Ministry of the Interior UNHCR will further assist authorities in addressing the shortcomings in registration.
- UNHCR is advocating for the mother and child rooms of the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) in the Preševo Centre to be available during daytime as well due to the increasing numbers of families with small children and pregnant women.
- Further coordination with the newly arrived humanitarian agencies at Kanjiža RAP is needed. UNHCR will organize and co-chair meeting with the authorities in charge of the RAP.

Hungary

Achievements and Impact

- The Director of UNHCR's Bureau for Europe and Regional Refugee Coordinator for this emergency travelled to Hungary from 7 to 9 September. During his mission, he reiterated UNHCR's readiness to assist in dealing with number of refugees and migrants arriving in the country and raised concerns over some provisions of the new law and the consequences of its application for asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Following the declaration of the Level 2 Emergency in Hungary, the Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply and the Deputy Director of the Bureau for Europe and Heads of Operations for this emergency undertook a mission to Hungary, the Hungarian-Serbia border and Croatia on 15 to 17 September to review the response to the unfolding situation and the UNHCR's response in coordination with partners.
- UNHCR has access to the transit zone and registration and interview processes. Prior to the restriction at the border, social and legal assistance were provided through NGO partners Menedek Association and Hungarian Helsinki Committee at collection points before restrictions at the border.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR is particularly concerned about a series of restrictive measures recently introduced by Hungary and the way they are being implemented. In particular, the penalization of irregular entry and return to Serbia on the basis of third safe country concept. It also does not take into account that the asylum system Serbia is currently building is not able to cope with the magnitude of the current inflow of people who require effective protection.
- Following the restrictions at the border and the tensions were reported at the border on 16 September. UNHCR witnessed the use of water cannons and tear gas against refugees and migrants, including families with children.
- Full access of UNHCR's partners to asylum-seekers in transit zones need to be ensured, negotiated with the Government in accordance with articles 8 of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive (APD), by which Member States shall ensure that organizations and persons providing advice and counselling to asylum applicants have effective access to applicants present at border crossing points, including transit zones and at external borders.
- Detention of asylum-seekers inclusive of families is a growing phenomenon which needs monitoring and interventions.

Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Support

Greece

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR provided technical advice to the Greek authorities on the construction of sites, Lesvos, Kos and Idomeni, and the setting up of tents. Some advancement on the establishment of reception sites was made on the Islands, 13 refugee housing units were set up on Lesvos, out of 200 planned, and 80 RHUs will be set up in Moria.
- UNHCR continues to provide core relief items, especially to those with specific needs on all islands as well as in Idomeni at the border area with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Through direct implementation or with the support of partners, such as Praksis, UNHCR distributes biscuits, water, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, solar lamps.

- UNHCR and partners provided support to the survivors of the boat incident, which took place off the coast of Farmakonisi on 13 September.
- NGOs, civil society and volunteers provided assistance to the group of some 200 Afghans resting at Victoria Square in Athens and contributed to the cleanliness of the area. UNHCR provided information on possibilities for accommodation at the Elaionas site.
- UNHCR installed a rub hall near the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia where assistance is provided together with partners.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- While two military sites were offered for reception on Kos and Lesvos, and one site was identified in Leros, following negotiations with authorities the formal approval is still pending. The potential establishment of these sites is source of tensions with the local population. A transit site is being set up near the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- Despite some improvement of basic reception conditions (shelter, water, food, sanitation), these continues to fall short of the needs on many islands.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Achievements and Impact

- A weekly plan for the distribution of food and non-food items at Vinojug centre has been agreed upon by various NGOs. The water bladder is now operational on site. 12 Refugee Housing Units and 3 rub halls are providing some storage capacity and service area.
- With the drop in temperatures, UNHCR has been distributing more blankets and warm clothing to refugees.
- In Tabanovce, large numbers of volunteers and NGOs are distributing food and non-food items. The Red Cross is also present with medical teams.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Garbage collection remains a challenge at the Vinojug site as well as between the train station and the border line with Serbia.
- The recent worsening of the weather conditions, drop in temperatures and the start of torrential rains, put refugees at greater health risks.

Serbia

Achievements and Impact

- Following the closure of the Hungarian border, UNHCR, partners and NGOs, together with the support of authorities, provided water, blankets, tents, sleeping mats, medical and humanitarian assistance to some 3,000 refugees stranded at the border crossings in Horgosz. Most of them have now left and the location is slowly emptying out with people proceeding to the Croatian border.
- As part of its contingency planning for the winter, the SCRMM will increase the capacity of the Preševo Centre. Army personnel is assisting with preparing the site.
- Additional latrines were installed and WASH system was put in place at the Preševo Centre and the Miratovac RAP.
- UNHCR and partners continue to provide assistance at the different sites and have distributed food and non-food items, including high energy biscuits, blankets, sleeping mats.
- UNHCR provided medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac, Kanjiža and asylum centre in Krnjaca with medication, medical supplies and equipment. At Kanjiža, UNHCR ensures the daily presence of a nurse.
- Arrangements were made for the cleaning and collection of garbage at the Miratovac RAP and the Preševo Centre respectively.
- In Belgrade, UNHCR and partners continue to provide information, medical, psychological and legal aid as well as food and non-food items to refugees resting in parks.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Water, Health and Sanitation needs further improvement at Kanjiža and Miratovac, where medical team still lack water supply.
- The recent worsening of the weather conditions puts refugees at greater health risks.

- Following the closure of the border with Hungary, and in the event that refugees do not wish to return to Kanjiža, an urgent need for sanitary installations, water, clothes and other humanitarian aid is to be expected.

Hungary

Achievements and Impact

- The Hungarian Red Cross provides medical assistance and psycho-social support at the transit zone. There are two social workers working in shifts and interpretation was provided by two interpreters covering Arabic, Pashtu, Urdu and Farsi.
- Prior to the restriction at the border, over the weekend of 12-13 September, UNHCR increased its presence at the border by 60 staff to ensure a 24-hour presence. It set up tents at collection points 2 and 3 to facilitate aid distribution as well as some family tents at collection point 1.
- UNHCR distributed blankets, tents, plastic sheetings, raincoats, bags and water at collection points 2 and 3.
- The Hungarian Red Cross (HRC) provided first aid through volunteers at the collection points and the pre-registration centre in Roszke. Doctors and paramedics were present on the sites. Following the closure of the border, the collection points are now empty.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The accommodation capacity at the police pre-registration centres is severely overstretched and hygiene and health risks are of concern.
- Hygiene remained a major concern at the collection points. Increased site cleaning, waste management and toilet facilities are needed.

Working in partnership

- UNHCR continues to closely cooperate with the European Commission and relevant EU Agencies (including FRONTEX and EASO) to jointly assess the needs on the ground and seek complementarity in the support provided.
- UNHCR's emergency assistance and protection services in Greece are delivered through several partners including the Greek Refugee Council, Praksis and METAction, which have supported the provision of legal assistance and information on rights and obligations, the addressing of immediate relief/medical needs of persons of concerns and the transfer of unaccompanied children to specialized facilities on the mainland. In addition, UNHCR supports the Government's coordination efforts by facilitating an information-sharing forum at the Athens level.
- In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNHCR continues to support the Ministry of the Interior and its Crisis Management Team, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Transport and Communications and municipalities; and work with Help the Refugees in Macedonia, HERA, IOM, La Strada Open Gate, Legis, MYLA, Nun, JRS, Operation Mercy, Dorcas, SoS Children's Village, Hilal, Samaritan's Purse, Red Cross, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WHO.
- In Serbia, UNHCR continues to co-chair the Refugee Protection Working Group with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. UNHCR partners include Amity, ADRA, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), CRS, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Humanitarian Centre for Integration, MSF and Tolerance (HCIT), Indigo, INTERSOS, Microfins, Praxis, Sigma Plus and Vizija.
- In Hungary, UNHCR continues to closely cooperate with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (border and detention monitoring, legal assistance and representation, advocacy, strategic litigation), with Menedek Association (social work) and with Cordelia Foundation (rehabilitation of torture victims and holders of PTSD). UNHCR has also been working closely with the new UN OPCAT mechanism at the Office of the Parliamentary Commission for Fundamental Rights (unannounced inquiries at facilities of common interest)
- Of particular note is the impressive role which civil society and volunteers in the countries concerned are playing in supporting and assisting refugees and migrants.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

On 8 September, UNHCR launched its Emergency Appeal for the Initial Response Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe (June 2015-December 2016).

A total of **USD 30.5 million** is requested from June 2015 to December 2016 (USD 14.1 million for June-December 2015 and USD 16.4 million for January-December 2016) for the initial response in the affected countries of Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, France (Calais), Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Serbia, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey.

A total of **USD 2.7 million** has so far been received for this emergency appeal from Germany, Portugal and private donors.

The planning assumptions at the time of the launch of the appeal have been challenged by the recent developments, which urgently require the scaling up of UNHCR's emergency response to address catalogued protection and humanitarian assistance gaps. A revised appeal will be issued in the coming weeks to reflect these additional financial requirements.

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.

Contact:

Melike Trigg, Associate Reporting Officer, trigg@unhcr.org, Tel: +41 (22) 739 8406, Cell +41 79 354 25 41

Links:

UNHCR, [UNHCR urges Europe to change course on refugee crisis](#), 16 September.

UNHCR, [Robust, coherent Europe response to Refugee crisis still urgently needed](#), 15 September.

UNHCR, [UNHCR's proposals in light of the EU response to the refugee crisis and the EU package of 9 September 2015](#), 15 September.

UNHCR, [Initial Response Plan for the Refugee Crisis in Europe \(June 2015-December 2016\)](#), 8 September.

UNHCR, [Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response - Mediterranean](#) (webportal accessible via Google Chrome or Firefox only).



GREECE: Sea Arrivals and Onward Movements

17 September 2015

