

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

17-23 November 2015

2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-OCTOBER)

335,021

Registered intentions to seek asylum in 2015

29.5%

of registered intentions were expressed by minors in October

93.5%

of registered intentions were from refugee-producing countries in October

PRIORITIES

- Assist the Government and the civil society in responding to the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs of the refugees
- Strengthen the asylum systems in line with applicable international standards

Highlights

- 4,360 refugees/migrants arrived on average every day.
- As at 23 November, 467,960 intentions to seek asylum were registered in 2015.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres visited Serbia on 17 November, met with the Serbian Minister of Interior Nebojša Stefanović in Belgrade and visited the Reception Centre (RC) in Preševo together with Serbia's Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, the Chair of the Government of Serbia's (GoS) Working



Printing date: September 2015 Sources: UNCS, UNHCR
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Group on Mixed Migration Minister Aleksandar Vulin and other representatives of national authorities. The Prime Minister and the High Commissioner (HC) insisted that the refugees should not be held in any way connected to the terror attacks in Paris. HC praised the GoS for its consistent and constructive approach as well as ownership over the refugee crisis response.

Intention to apply for asylum (Source: Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia)

45,140 registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.



UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Serbia is situated along the preferred route through the Western Balkans for refugees originating from the Middle East and Asia, aiming to seek asylum in Europe. Arrivals from FYR Macedonia declined on 23 November to 2,201. Refugees and migrants continued to arrive into Serbia from Bulgaria, with an average of 200 asylum-seekers arriving daily across the entire stretch of this border. Numbers of refugees observed in Belgrade fluctuated between 70 and 120 daily.

No asylum-seekers made use of registration procedures in the Hungarian transit zones near Horgoš 1 and Kelebija.

The situation in Šid at the border with Croatia was generally calm. Serbian and Croatian police officers worked together, facilitating the refugees' boarding of trains, with appropriate attention given to children, women and elderly.

However, as of 18 November, following newly introduced practice by Slovenia, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Greece, Serbia started to deny entry to new arrivals other than nationals of Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Around 300 asylum-seekers of nationalities other than the aforementioned three were stranded on Serbian territory. UNHCR and partners perceived these developments as an opportunity to continue advocating for protection-sensitive management of migration, to strengthen the quality of registration and the asylum system in Serbia.

Increase of winterized waiting and shelter areas in Preševo and Šid areas continued at full speed, urged by forecasts which predicted that the weather would turn wet and fairly cold.



Preševo - UN High Commissioner with the Prime Minister of Serbia visiting the Reception Centre, Photo:@UNHCR

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- The following organizations and entities were present 24/7 at Preševo RC: UNHCR, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), Serbian Police, Local Health Centre, Red Cross, UNICEF, Caritas, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), UNFPA and Remar. The following organizations are present 24/7 at Miratovac Refugee Aid Point (RAP): Serbian Police and Local Health Centre, while, for security reasons, UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), DRC, Philanthropy and Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) are present only during daytime until 6 pm.
- In Preševo, UNHCR, DRC and IOM assisted 885 persons with special needs (PWSNs) and reunited 25 families, including 3 unaccompanied separated children. UNHCR assisted in providing information on where refugees and migrants could get medical assistance, where they could charge phones and about food distribution, and were putting up signs indicating potable water.
- DRC, IOM and UNHCR continued to transport up to 2,600 refugees with specific needs daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre.
- Women with infants were escorted to the UNICEF/DRC mother and child tent at Preševo RC, which was used by 493 mothers and 1,199 children.
- ADRA was involved in the following 24/7 protection-related activities in Preševo, Miratovac and Bujanovac: communication, translation (10 translators) and assistance to public officers, identification of hidden basic needs, medical assistance, monitoring of unaccompanied minors and other PWSNs, referral to the protection mechanism and assisting UNICEF, social care institutions and other agencies in managing these cases.
- Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) put in place a high-density satellite Wi-Fi connection in the Preševo RC. The installation was carried out in cooperation with UNHCR. The connection is open to UN Agencies, NGOs, government bodies and the refugee and migrant population. On average, 1,533 unique devices were connected each day.
- SOS Children's Villages protection mobile team provided information services, assisted PWSNs in waiting lines, provided psycho-social support and filled the communication gap between the local police and the refugees in Preševo.
- UNHCR, HCIT, WAHA, Doctors from Šid Healthcare Centre, SCRM, Serbian police officers, Croatian Police officers, MSF and Intersos were present at the Šid train station. HCIT interpreters assisted the police with crowd control and communicating information to asylum seekers while they were waiting in Šid for the following train to arrive.
- UNHCR and HCIT assisted 317 PWSNs, reunited 7 families and identified 19 UAMs, who were referred to UNHCR Croatia for follow-up. They also made 164 medical referrals.
- The following organizations were active at Adasevci RAP: UNHCR, MSF, SCRM, Red Cross, EHO, Asylum Protection Centre (APC), CRS/BCM, World Vision, SOS Children's Villages, Operation Mobilization (OM), DRC, UNICEF, Atina, IOM, Caritas, Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC), CARE, Terres Des Hommes (TDH), Intersos, NGO "Welcome to Europe" and Czech volunteers.
- Czech volunteers organized play and games for children at Adaševci RAP and were informing refugees about next steps on their journey. They also installed notifications and signs in Arabic and English language at the front entrance of the Adaševci RAP indicating directions to important points at the site, such as to doctors, WiFi point, potable water tanker, toilets, mobile phones and charging points.
- APC helped the SCRM staff to manage the bus movement and parking arrangements.
- NSHC had a mobile team, covering Šid municipality, who reported daily on the influx of refugees, their needs as well as the needs of the local communities and services provided.
- TDH was providing activities for children, while Intersos and "Welcome to Europe" provided charging stations for mobile phones and free Internet at Adaševci RAP.
- SOS Children's Villages provided charging units and Wi-Fi internet at Adaševci RAP.
- SOS Children's Villages started preparations for the establishment of a Child and Mother Friendly Space in Adaševci RAP, in partnership with World Vision and UNICEF.
- SCRM, the Ambulance team of Šid Health Center, Police, Praxis, UNHCR and Intersos were active in the Principovac RAP.

- On 21 November, UNHCR and HCIT organized a football match with some of the asylum seekers waiting to board the train at Šid train station.
- The Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade, supported by ADRA, Savski Venac municipality, Klikaktiv and UNHCR, as well as Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) continued providing information, referrals, aid, counselling and Internet access to refugees in Belgrade.
- Klikaktiv – Center for Development of Social Policies outreach volunteer teams, composed of psychologists or psychology students and medical doctors and students, were a part of the Asylum Info Centre team in Belgrade. Klikaktiv team provided support to 69 children under 5, 55 children between 6 and 16 y.o., 597 young persons aged 17-30 and 150 adults aged 31-60 (871 refugees and migrants in total). Since the refugees were staying longer in Belgrade, many of them repeatedly received the same or different kind of support. Around 43% of all interventions was provided through provision of information, 15% of interventions were psychological interventions, 14.5% provision of humanitarian aid, 10% provision of medical aid and 9% mediation between refugees and institutions.
- SOS Children’s Villages provided child protection through Safe Place for Children at the Info-Center in Belgrade. 27 children (17 boys and 10 girls) and their 16 families (5 from Syria, 11 from Afghanistan) were hosted at the Info-Centre premises. Through field work in Belgrade parks, SOS Children’s Villages team supported 95 adults and 22 children. Altogether, the team supported 156 adults and 49 children with psycho-social support, information, referral, food and NFIs.
- SCRМ continued to provide free shuttle service twice daily to the AC in Krnjača for refugees in the Belgrade region to shelter from the elements.
- Foundation B92 placed a container to serve as an information centre at Dimitrovgrad RAP.
- UNHCR’s partners Amity and Sigma Plus had mobile teams consisting of social workers and psychologists present in Negotin, Zaječar, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Knjaževac and Bujanovac, who reported daily on the influx of refugees in these municipalities, their needs as well as the needs of the local communities and services provided. They had an Arabic-speaking team member in Zaječar and mobile teams used services of locally recruited translators.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Many refugees and migrants arriving from Bulgaria continued to report abuse by Bulgarian police.
- Many asylum-seekers approached the GoS, the NGOs and UNHCR claiming that they had no funds to continue their travel, often because they had been robbed, which creates protection risks and makes the asylum-seekers more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.
- Many NGOs were facing access issues to RAPs, since the new policy requiring work authorisations was introduced by the authorities. A location for the Child Friendly Space has been identified and UNHCR/World Vision will start child activities shortly in Adaševci RAP, having obtained access permission.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- In the Banja Koviljača, Krnjača, Bogovađa and Krnjača asylum centres, UNHCR funded DRC activities for children, including a kindergarten supervised by qualified care-givers, and English and Serbian language lessons three times per week to improve their chances of integration within the community.
- The Bogovađa asylum centre conducted sewing classes for women and mothers who are protégés of this centre. This activity boosted refugees’ psychological well-being and self-confidence, and empowered them with transferable skills. Products include bed sheets used in other asylum centres and the One-Stop Centre in Preševo.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Notwithstanding the above-mentioned efforts, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection continued to face challenges of integration and education opportunities.



Health

Achievements and Impact

- WHO provided medical supplies for the RAP in Miratovac as well as medical supplies to 16 health centres in most affected locations, including Preševo, Dimitrovgrad and Šid.
- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre. Medical team in Preševo RC had 739 interventions, and asylum-seekers also used the medical services of MSF and Humedica outside the RC gates.
- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- UNFPA Information-education-communication (IEC) materials on reproductive health were prepared and are expected to be distributed in crisis areas in cooperation with DRC and UNICEF.
- International Medical Corps (IMC)/International Aid Network (IAN) medical mobile unit was providing medical and psychological first aid to the refugees at the train station in Šid. During the week, the team had 166 medical and 120 psychosocial interventions. Among other patients, the doctor assisted 37 children under 15 and had one emergency referral of a pregnant woman who delivered a healthy baby girl at the hospital in Sremska Mitrovica.
- WAHA provided medical care at Šid train station 24/7, to around 300 refugees and migrants daily. Croatian police also allowed WAHA on board the trains in Šid to do quick medical checkups of refugees in need of care who were eager to continue their trip as soon as possible.
- BCM/CRS doctors were providing medical services in the morning and MSF from 16:00 throughout the night at Adaševci RAP. Most patients suffered from respiratory problems, diarrhea and physical injuries. Medical assistance was provided to up to 550 cases per day.
- UNHCR/DRC doctors continued their presence in Svetonikoljski park in Belgrade and provided medical assistance to some 20 refugees and migrants daily 07-19hrs. Doctors from Belgrade municipal health centres were also present.
- Caritas was providing medicaments and vitamins for the refugees, in the amount of 300 € per month, at the request of the Health Centre Dimitrovgrad.
- WAHA medical team in Dimitrovgrad helped up to 70 refugees and migrants daily.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Medical team in Dimitrovgrad lacked medication and equipment to adequately assist the new arrivals.
- Medical team in Adaševci lacked an interpreter for Farsi.
- Principovac RAP lacked an on-site medical team.



*Šid – WAHA doctor immobilizing a refugee girl's broken arm,
Photo: @UNHCR*



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- Distribution of up to 600 UNHCR-funded food rations by the Red Cross continued daily at Preševo Centre.
- UNHCR and DRC distributed 1,050 bottles of water and 130 boxes of WFP HEBs in Preševo.
- SCRM distributed food and water in Principovac RAP.
- Red Cross and Caritas were distributing food and non-food items in Adaševci RAP.
- Red Cross was distributing food parcels in Adaševci RAP. Czech volunteers distributed hot tea.
- UNHCR and HCIT distributed 8,844 bottles of water, 16,300 WFP high-energy biscuits (HEBs) and 210 loaves of bread at Šid train station.
- HCIT also distributed baby and children food and chocolate bars, which had been donated by UNICEF and a local church, at Šid RAP.
- SOS Children's Villages distributed 3218 food items (baby food/jars, biscuits, water and juices) in Preševo and 1560 food items in Šid.
- NSHC distributed 1,930 food packages, funded by CARE International, to refugees in Adaševci RAP, regularly throughout the day, in coordination with Red Cross Šid. One food parcel covered daily nutritional needs for one person.
- Mobile team of Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation delivered 600 food packages to Šid, which were distributed by Red Cross Šid.
- World Vision distributed food and water at Adaševci RAP.

- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide 1,300-2,750 food parcels daily in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade, based on the needs. So far, Caritas provided more than 49,000 food parcels, including some 500 food parcels which were distributed in Bosilegrad.
- SOS Children's Villages distributed 78 food parcels and 43 hygiene parcels for women and babies in Belgrade.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross, 1,000 food and hygiene packages daily, for refugees arriving from Bulgaria to Negotin.
- Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation and the staff of Procter & Gamble (P&G) Serbia distributed food items (tuna cans, milk, jam, honey and cookies) to 300 refugees at Miksalište in Belgrade.
- Red Cross distributed up to 200 food packs in Belgrade daily.
- Miksalište distributed food and clothes/shoes to refugees in Belgrade.
- Red Cross distributed food and water at all border towns with Bulgaria used by refugees for entry into Serbia.
- Volunteers engaged by ADRA were serving hot meals at Dimitrovgrad RAP and distributing clothes.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Provision of food for single refugee and migrant men still records gaps yet to be filled.
- Mokranje border crossing near Negotin needed potable water.



Belgrade – Procter & Gamble and Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation distributing NFIs and food at Miksalište.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- UNDP continued to rent a garbage truck on behalf of the Preševo municipality from Vranje PUC, which served to keep Miratovac and Preševo litter-free.
- UNHCR WASH Expert produced the draft WASH winterization strategy for Preševo RC.
- UNHCR was providing for the rental and cleaning services of mobile toilets at Miratovac RAP and Preševo RC.
- Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation delivered 10 mobile latrines to Šid RAP: 5 for men and 5 for women.
- Potable water was available at Adaševci from a tanker provided by Sremska Mitrovica municipality.
- The cleaning of latrines in Šid and Adaševci was performed by private company hired by UNHCR.
- Czech volunteers regularly cleaned Adaševci bus parking area and the SCRM also mobilised convicts to clean the Adaševci site.
- Philanthropy continued works on the new toilet block at the Tobacco Factory in Preševo.
- UNHCR, in cooperation with MSF, identified new locations for toilets inside and outside the Reception Centre in Preševo.
- Czech volunteers had a massive cleaning campaign, which also involved the asylum-seekers at Adaševci RAP. The volunteers put in place and were disposing of large plastic bags for waste collection at Adaševci.
- Caritas provided a bathroom container with showers at Miksalište in Belgrade, thanks to a donation from CRS, where refugees can take a free shower. The power generator for this service was provided by Refugee Aid Serbia.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NTR



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- The new flow and site plan for Preševo RC, which the Government had agreed on and developed together with UNHCR, was put into effect.
- UNHCR placed portable heaters in all the rub halls in Preševo RC. 47 out of 50 delivered refugee-housing units (RHUs) were erected in Preševo RC. UNHCR Office Container arrived and was placed inside the RC on 18 November.
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide from 200-500 hygiene packs for women and 50-150 hygiene packs for babies daily in Preševo, Belgrade, Bosilegrad and Adaševci. Caritas had distributed more than 12,700 hygiene packs for women and more than 4,000 baby hygiene packages. Caritas also distributed 1,323 raincoats in Preševo, over 500 fleece jackets, 590 rain jackets, 680 winter hats, 1,500 socks and 570 winter shoes for children and adults in Preševo, Bosilegrad, Belgrade and Zaječar.
- UNHCR and DRC distributed 540 blankets, 299 raincoats, 45 pairs of boots and 550 bags in Preševo.
- UNFPA initiated distributions of dignity items in cooperation with DRC. Dignity items are now being distributed in Preševo. UNFPA's collaboration with the DRC resulted in placement of a storage container for hygiene (dignity) items within Preševo RC.
- SCRM sheltered mothers and children in a heated room inside the Šid RAP ("The Grey House"). MSF and UNHCR continued with the winterization of the Šid RAP with installations of heated tents, refurbishment and installation of over 150 beds.
- A small army tent was set up by Serbian border police at the railway entrance in Šid to shelter the police officers and the asylum seekers queuing to board the train.
- UNICEF installed 2 containers in front of the Adaševci RAP to serve as temporary dry and warm space for mother and child protection activities. The containers will be used until the premises in the RAP are renovated.

- UNHCR and HCIT distributed 1,220 blankets, 827 raincoats, 680 bags and over 425 disinfectant gels, as well as 393 jackets, 540 pairs of boots, 239 pairs of socks and hats, gloves, scarves, underwear for children and baby clothes donated by UNICEF, at Šid train station.
- SOS Children's Villages distributed 350 NFI items in Preševo and 295 NFI items (blankets, raincoats, socks, hygiene packages) in Šid.
- UNHCR donated 4 wheelchairs and two pairs of crutches to disabled refugees in Preševo and Šid.
- In cooperation with the Czech women volunteers, UNHCR developed an appropriate and discreet distribution of sanitary material for women at Adaševci RAP, which received positive feedback from the women. Some 290 women received sanitary materials. Czech volunteers also distributed diapers and winter clothes alongside World Vision at Adaševci.
- World Vision, Group 484 and Oxfam distributed items for babies and children and hygienic parcels in Adaševci RAP.
- SCRM provided information and free transport to Asylum Centre Krnjača in Belgrade twice daily, where asylum-seekers could find shelter, food and other services in the cold season instead of resting in the open in parks.
- Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation and the staff of Procter & Gamble (P&G) Serbia distributed hygienic packages (shampoos, razors, tooth and shaving paste and soaps) to 300 refugees at Miksalište in Belgrade.
- Upon request from the SCRM, Caritas provided gas-heating stoves and vinyl floor for Dimitrovgrad RAP, in order to prepare it for accepting larger numbers of refugees. Caritas will provide for the disinfection of premises and basic repairs of the SCRM's warehouse in Dimitrovgrad RAP.
- Red Cross distributed hygiene packages for women and children, clothes, underwear and socks in Dimitrovgrad.
- DRC and Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation distributed blankets, hats, food and water and UNHCR delivered 480 blankets to Dimitrovgrad RAP.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Minićevo/Knjaževac and in Zaječar, there was no heated waiting area for refugees and migrants.
- Men's footwear was lacking in Dimitrovgrad RAP.
- Refugees in Šid were asking for more trousers, shoes and bags to replace damaged clothes, shoes and backpacks.
- 350 refugees and migrants who were staying in Principovac RAP needed stronger WiFi signal, more beds, clothes, shoes and socks.



*Preševo – Refugees waiting for registration inside the heated rub hall at the Reception Centre,
Photo@UNHCR*

Working in partnership

- The internal coordination mechanism of the UN system in Serbia is the **UN Refugee Theme Group (RTG)**, which meets every Friday under UNHCR chairmanship. RTG coordinates the 4 sectorial working groups (WGs): a) Refugee Protection WG (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Labour, Employment Veteran and Social Policy (hereinafter: MoL) & UNHCR), b) the WG on Shelter/NFI/WASH (Co-chaired by Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), MoL & UNHCR), c) WG on Health/Food/Nutrition (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Health & WHO) and d) WG on Local Community Support (Co-chaired by the Ministry of Local Self-Government & UNDP), which meet on a fortnightly basis. RTG met on 20 November.
- Field coordination group meetings take place every second day in Preševo (chaired by UNHCR) and Šid (chaired by SCRM).
- **Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG)**, co-chaired by the UNHCR and the MoL, currently makes for the key coordination mechanism for agencies/NGOs operational in the country, as well as a source of information for donors/diplomatic missions who also attend its meetings largely as observers. RPWG has over 150 members, and is constantly growing. Under UNHCR lead, RPWG has given rise to three sub- working groups (SWGs) on: a) Information for Refugees, b) Child Protection and c) Non-Food Items (NFIs). The RPWG met on 19th November in Belgrade.
- **Partners' Briefing**, where the UNHCR, UNRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & MoL/Chair of Government WG on Mixed Migration update the diplomatic corps/donors and NGOs on the current refugee situation and the response of the UN agencies in the previous period, takes place every first week of the month.
- The **Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO)** hosts **Donor Coordination Meetings** every first week of the month.