

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

13–19 October 2015

2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-SEPTEMBER)

154,677

Registered intentions to seek asylum

38%

of registered intentions were expressed by minors

810

Capacity of Asylum Centres

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

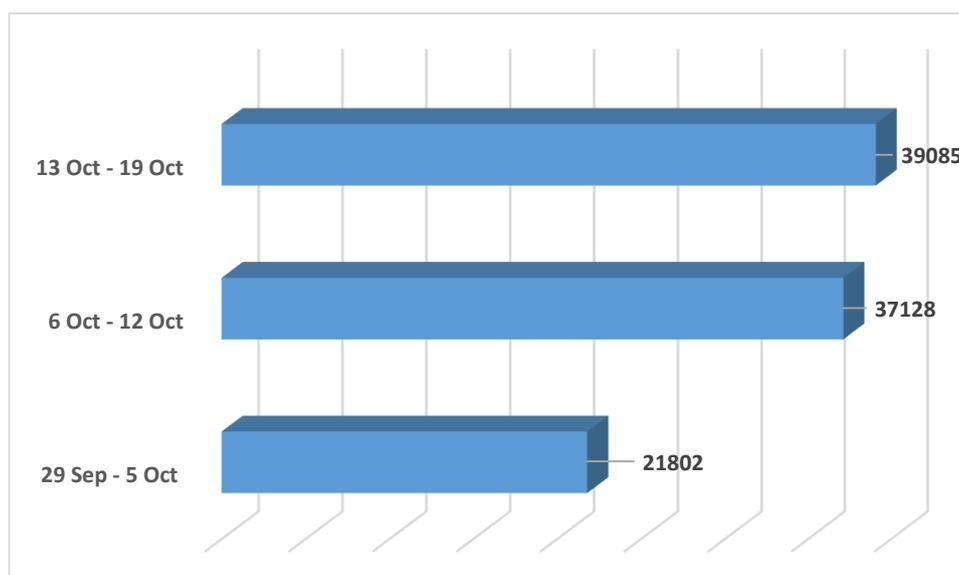
Highlights

- The number of refugee arrivals from fYR Macedonia averaged 6,000/day in the reporting period. Registration capacities were stepped up to over 6,000 persons/day in Preševo and 500/day elsewhere. As at 19 October, 253,014 intentions to seek asylum were registered in 2015.
- Numbers of refugees observed in Belgrade and in the area close to the border with Hungary at any time further reduced to around 70 in Belgrade and 15 in the Subotica-Horgosz-Kanjiža area at the end of the reporting period.
- The Government and UNHCR agreed on important works to urgently improve the reception conditions, layout/processing and emergency shelter of the One Stop Centre in Preševo.



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

39,085 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. The majority are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. UNHCR estimated that at any given time over 10,000 refugees were on Serbian territory in the reporting period. Strict control of registration forms by the Serbian police continued.

Very few asylum-seekers made use of registration procedures in the Hungarian transit zones near Horgoš 1 and Kelebija. The readmission of foreign nationals from Hungary to Serbia, which had been suspended a month before, resumed as of 14 October. Serbia agreed to readmit a maximum of 10 migrants/day. UNHCR and its partners will monitor the implementation process and identify persons in need of international protection amongst those readmitted.

Refugees continued to exit to Croatia on foot, primarily at Berkasovo/Bapska border crossing but also through Šid/Tovarnik, with 4,900 estimated exits on average daily.

On 16 October, having received the news of Hungary-Croatia border closure, Croatia temporarily ceased transporting refugees from Bapska. As a result, by midnight, a long queue of over 20 busses with asylum seekers was waiting to disembark at Berkasovo. UNHCR/HCIT distributed UNHCR blankets, raincoats and high-energy biscuits to the refugees who had to spend the night on the ground, as well as to those who were stranded in buses. Slow admittance of 2,000 stranded refugees continued the following day.

While improvements of the reception conditions at the border with FYRo Macedonia progressed according to plan, new shelters for asylum-seekers (tunnel tents) and service delivery (containers) were put at a test by rains at the border with Croatia.

On 18 and 19 October, Croatia again slowed down admission of refugees. Some 2,000-3,000 refugees and migrants (including many families with young children, pregnant women, elderly and disabled persons) were stranded on each of these days on the Serbian side of NML in cold, rainy and muddy conditions, without adequate shelter, resting and sanitary facilities, visibly desperate. UNHCR, its NGO partner HCIT and other humanitarian organizations, as well as volunteers, were present 24/7 providing assistance. In the afternoon of 19th October Croatia allowed entry again and 3,000 refugees rushed in through the border.

Refugees and migrants continued to arrive into Serbia from Bulgaria, with an average of 300 asylum-seekers arriving daily across the entire stretch of this border. On 19 October, the Ministry of Interior introduced a new rule that NGOs must announce by phone their visits and get permission to enter the RAP in Dimitrovgrad.

In Belgrade, the Public Utility Services ploughed the trampled land in the parks and there were no more refugee tents on the ground.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and HCIT enabled for successful reunification of at least six refugee families in Preševo and Berkasovo each day. 7 UAMs were identified and referred to relevant authorities, including cross-border with the assistance of UNHCR Croatia.
- IOM and UNHCR continued to transport up to 5,200 most vulnerable refugees daily from Miratovac refugee aid point (RAP) to Preševo Centre.
- IOM brought to Miratovac RAP wooden pallets and plywood in order to facilitate the walking path.
- UNHCR assisted around 20 families with specific needs, assisted over 100 PWSNs and referred up to 130 medical cases to doctors each day at the Preševo Centre and Berkasovo. Women with infants were escorted to the UNICEF mother and child tent. Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Protection Officers and the network of volunteers also continued assisting vulnerable categories of refugees and persons likely in need of international protection in Preševo Centre.
- DRC/UNICEF Mother and Baby Corner in Preševo Centre provided assistance 24/7.
- UNHCR installed a tent for family reunification at Preševo Centre next to Red Cross and UNHCR containers to provide for best coverage and monitoring. UNHCR also had a meeting with refugee women at the Centre, who expressed their concerns about travelling with children among the majority of single men, the usage of female toilets by men and hardships of walking and waiting on the queue with their children
- Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC) provided "Safe space" services for 160 children and mothers in Berkasovo during afternoons and evenings (from 15.00 to 21.00), with recreational activities for children at Berkasovo/Bapska.
- Over 3,500 children have benefitted from the three UNICEF child-friendly spaces (CFS) operating in Preševo, Belgrade and Šid. With the opening of Bujanovac Reception Centre (RC), UNICEF plans to deploy a mobile CFS team every time this RC is operational. The CFS working hours in Preševo have been extended to 8 p.m., after which time the tent is used for families with children to sleep.
- UNICEF social workers were assisting refugees/migrants night and day and fast-tracking vulnerable children and families through the registration process in Preševo Centre.
- UNICEF/DRC initiated additional activities with adolescents in the CFS in Belgrade, even though the number of both children and adolescents was rather small, and kept decreasing on a daily basis. Some families still kept arriving in Belgrade and the CFS therefore adopted a mobile approach.
- UNICEF in Croatia and Serbia were able to complete cross-border family tracing for three children (aged 3, 6 and 14) who got separated from their families. The youngest child was appointed a legal guardian and spent the night in Belgrade, while the Red Cross in Serbia and Croatia were implementing international procedures on identification and reunification.
- UNHCR and partners continued psycho-social, legal and interpretation services to the family of the Syrian mother who died in the bus accident a few days ago near Vranje. It attended to the Islamic funeral of the victim, a meeting of her husband with the public prosecutor (who is pressing criminal charges against the bus driver and encouraged the husband to also sue the bus-companies insurance for a high indemnity payment), as well as the family in their public shelter.
- SOS Children Villages and Save the Children Serbia were assisting refugee families in Belgrade.
- Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM) continued to provide an information officer/interpreter for state institutions involved with refugees in Kanjiža (single shift) and 3 interpreters for authorities in Šid (3 shifts), funded by Catholic Relief Services (CRS).
- Asylum Info Centre continued to provide information, referrals, aid, counselling and internet access to refugees in Belgrade.
- Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) was identifying UAMs in Belgrade and referring them to the Social Care Centre and accompanying groups of refugees to Miksalište in order to get some dry clothes and shoes.
- UNHCR's partners Amity and Sigma Plus had mobile teams consisting of social workers and psychologists present in Negotin, Zaječar, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Niš 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

- The need to capture more accurately, in the registration process, relevant data such as numbers and ages of children, UAMs, separated children and other PSWNs for protection intervention and other follow-up purposes, remained unmet in the reporting period.



Berkasovo/Bapska: Syrian refugee who lost one of his legs in a bomb explosion in Syria two years ago, Photo: @ UNHCR

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

- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre.
- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac, Kanjiža and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- MSF and Humedica were coordinating joint efforts to cover medical needs at the Preševo Centre. Their plan was to rent a space close to the queuing area outside the Centre, in order to best address medical problems of asylum-seekers awaiting registration. Their joint medical line has been operational 24/7 as of 14 October.
- Two UNICEF mother-and-baby spaces were operational - one in Belgrade and one in Preševo - where lactating mothers can continue to breastfeed and receive necessary information on breastfeeding.
- Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM) provided for visits of a mobile medical team to the old brick factory (OBF) near Subotica once per week and visits to Berkasovo and Šid aid points twice weekly.
- On 17 October, the Bosnian NGO Pomozi.ba brought in a medical team to Dimitrovgrad RAP and a translator for Arabic/English who stayed till 3 pm and referred severe medical cases to the local health centre.
- Medical teams of Belgrade health centres continued providing health care services to refugees in Belgrade parks, including the UNHCR/DRC medical team of Zemun health centre.
- International Aid Network (IAN) staff were providing medicines to refugees in Belgrade parks.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- At the OBF there was no regular presence of a medical team and no one to refer the refugees to except the ambulance services in emergencies.
- Mobile medical teams and medications were needed in Negotin and Dimitrovgrad at the Serbia/Bulgaria border.



UNHCR/DRC-supported doctors attended to refugees in Belgrade, 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. Red Cross also continued daily distribution of pastry donated by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) to refugees arriving from FYR Macedonia.
- UNHCR distributed 1000 small bottles of water and 10 boxes of WFP high-energy biscuits in Preševo.
- NSHC distributed more than 2,000 warm beverages (tea, coffee, soup) and 1,200 sandwiches to refugees (donation from International Rescue Committee and private donors) and 370 CARE bags with food and non-food items for babies and their mothers at Berkasovo.
- Red Cross, SCRM, World Vision, Women and Health Alliance International (WAHA), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), INTERSOS, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO), UNICEF, Philanthropy/Solidarnost (funded by CRS), UNHCR and Czech volunteers were present at Berkasovo daily, distributing food and NFIs and assisting the refugees.
- HCIT distributed over 6,000 small bottles of water, over 1,300 bread buns and some 10,000 high energy biscuit (HEB) bars provided by WFP/UNHCR at Berkasovo.
- Philanthropy distributed 200 food kits per day in Berkasovo.
- Islamic Community in Serbia distributed Halal sandwiches at Berkasovo.
- Red Cross distributed food once daily at Vašarište RAP. They also distributed food and water at OBF.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross, 1,000 food and hygiene packages daily, for refugees arriving from Bulgaria to Negotin.
- On 17 October, Red Cross, WAHA, Sačuvajmo bebe, Pomozi.ba, Ana and Vlade Foundation distributed food, water and juice at Dimitrovgrad RAP. Volunteers from Germany and Island distributed warm drinks and provided basic information.
- Red Cross distributed food to refugees in Zaječar.
- Remar Schweiz tent was providing food and aid to refugees in Belgrade parks, the other main point being the Miksalište area.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Baby food and milk were needed in Dimitrovgrad since the food parcels distributed by the Red Cross did not contain these items.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR brought 10 new chemical toilets to Preševo Centre.
- HCIT and Czech volunteers continued cleaning the Berkasovo/Bapska site from litter. BOXI company was cleaning the mobile toilets at Berkasovo twice daily.
- UNHCR and DRC installed 4 mobile toilets at the Šid train station.
- HCIT cleaned the OBF site in cooperation with Subotica communal service.
- Public Services kept the latrines and public areas used by refugees in Belgrade fairly clean.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR



Berkasovo: Volunteers collecting trash, Photo: @ UNHCR



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- DRC/UNHCR teams increased reception capacities in the former tobacco factory in Preševo Centre. The works conducted on preparing the platform for placement of 3 rub-halls in the Centre were in the closing phase. DRC logistics team provided assistance in preparing the soil and improving the conditions in the tents.
- Two UNHCR rub halls were installed in Preševo Centre, and UNHCR tarpaulins sheltered asylum-seekers lining up for registration.
- Volunteers put up two more tents outside the Preševo Centre to shelter new arrivals awaiting entry from the rain.
- As of 16 October, the 'mother and child' UNICEF tent for breastfeeding women and women with young infants at Preševo Centre is operational 24/7.
- On 18 October, UNICEF child-friendly space was moved to a bigger, newly erected tent (with a heater) in Preševo Centre and mother and child space took its place. More than 150 children with mother were assisted in there and UNHCR Team was assisting to bring children/mothers to the tent as they did not want to leave the queue.
- A UNHCR tent was given to Ramer NGO to act as focal organization to distribute winter clothes at the entrance to Preševo Centre.
- UNHCR provided 4 computers and 60 blankets to the new registration/reception centre in Bujanovac.
- In Miratovac RAP, UNHCR distributed blankets for women, children and poorly dressed persons, as well as food, water, baby diapers, and hygiene items. 400 blankets were distributed in Preševo.
- UNHCR donated 30 blankets to the Vranje Shelter for Children and another 30 blankets to the Vranje Orthopaedic Hospital.
- All used UNHCR blankets in Preševo Centre were being collected for recycling.
- SCRM installed three additional pavilions to serve waiting refugees at Berkasovo, providing for temporary shelter for approx. 800 persons.
- A new aid distribution container was placed at Berkasovo, donated by the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation.
- A new UNHCR/HCIT distribution container replaced pavilions, which became unsuitable in rainy weather, at Berkasovo.
- HCIT distributed hygiene items and baby diapers and 1,600 blankets, 4,200 raincoats and 2,200 plastic bags provided by UNHCR at Berkasovo/Bapska.
- World Vision donated 300 blankets to HCIT for distribution at Berkasovo.
- SOS Children's Village and UNHCR/HCIT distributed hygiene items and socks for women and children at Berkasovo.
- NSHC distributed jackets for children and women, rain coats for children, blankets, hats and gloves, socks and underwear, diapers, wet wipes, soap, and sanitary pads donated by Terre des hommes (TDH) at Berkasovo/Bapska.
- Islamic Community in Serbia distributed umbrellas and socks at Berkasovo.
- 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.
- In cooperation with Mixer-House in Belgrade, UNICEF collected second-hand winter clothes for infants and children. Their distribution was organised by DRC in Preševo.
- UNICEF procured 1,200 children raincoats on an emergency basis to be distributed in the three locations where UNICEF is active (Preševo, Berkasovo and Belgrade). Over 300 were distributed in Berkasovo. Additional quantities will be made available shortly by the supplier.
- UNICEF procured 500 waterproof baby changing mats, wet wipes and antibacterial gel and distributed to partners in the field (DRC and World Vision) operating in mother and baby and child-friendly spaces.
- On 17 October, "Ja sam čovek" NGO distributed socks and gloves in Zaječar.
- Red Cross and Caritas were distributing NFIs at OBF.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Amity appealed for warm and dry shelter where refugees can await registration and change into dry clothes and warm up at Negotin border crossing.
- Blankets and heaters were needed at Dimitrovgrad RAP.
- Additional raincoats were needed at entry and exit points in the country.

Working in partnership

- On 13th October, the Senior Emergency Coordinator, together with **site planning/WASH mission**, UNHCR and DRC Preševó teams, met the Senior Advisor of Minister Vulin, the border police and other authorities and agreed on the complete blueprint and forthcoming works to greatly improve reception conditions by re-modelling and expanding **Preševó Centre**. Respective UNHCR/DRC works continued. In the evening, Government of Serbia Coordinator Minister Vulin visited the Centre, met with UNHCR, and praised news of this progress.
- On 15th October, Deputy Minister of Labour visited Preševó Centre to discuss with UNHCR the emergency planning in view of the new developments at the Croatia/Hungary border.
- On 16th October, the **UN Country Team (UNCT) Refugee Task Force** made up of the UN agencies in Serbia met in UNHCR premises in Belgrade.
- On 16th October, UNHCR **site planning /WASH mission** visited the new Registration/Reception Centre (RC) in **Bujanovac** with IOM to check the infrastructure of the building. Government Coordinator Minister Aleksandar Vulin attended the opening of this new RC and then visited the Centre in Preševó to see the improvements undertaken by UNHCR.
- On 18th October, UNHCR participated in the **coordination meeting** with NGOs and volunteers in Preševó, where partners updated each other. UNHCR Team requested all NGOs working outside the PC to assist the people due to high number of new arrivals and to coordinate with UNHCR team.
- On 20th October, a **coordination meeting** was organized in Preševó by Mr. Nikic, Advisor to Minister Vulin, with the participation of UNHCR, DRC, SCRM and Border Police, in view of discussing site planning within the Centre, the responsibilities of each organization and the assistance required.

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