

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

27 October – 2 November 2015

2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-OCTOBER)

335,021

Registered intentions to seek asylum in 2015

29.5%

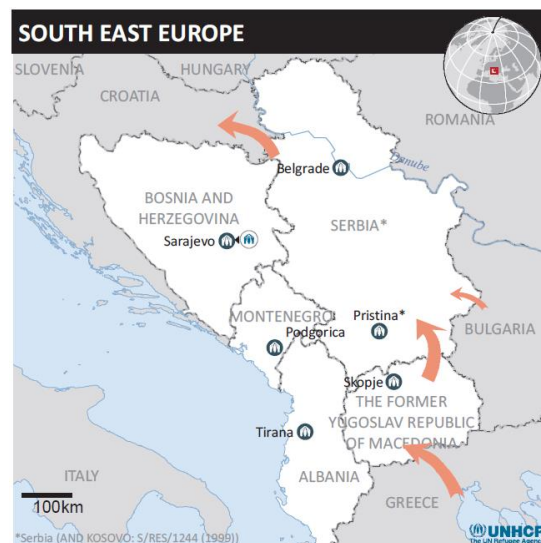
of registered intentions were expressed by minors in October

93.5%

of registered intentions were from refugee-producing countries in October

Highlights

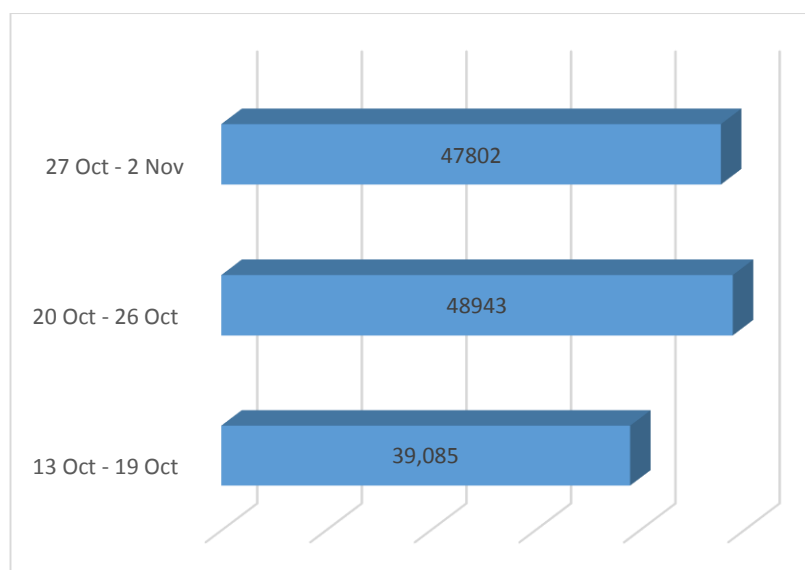
- The number of refugee arrivals from averaged 7,500/day. Registration capacities were stepped up to over 8,000 persons/day in Preševo and 500/day elsewhere. As at 2 November, 349,766 intentions to seek asylum were registered in 2015.
- Due to greatly increased registration capacities the police registered 180,307 asylum-seekers in October as compared to 51,048 in September. Almost half of all registrations for the year were thus undertaken in October alone. 99,714 were male adults, 28,367 female adults, 33,819 male children, and 19,430 female children. The number of children rose to 29.5% in October. 93.5% of claimants originated from refugee-producing countries.
- 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.



Printing date: September 2015 Sources: UNCS, UNHCR
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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

47,802 registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.



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

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 some 12,000 refugees were on Serbian territory in the reporting period. Strict control of registration forms by the Serbian police continued.

The weather was sunny but increasingly crisp. Power-outages in Preševo and lack of busses on the Croatian side of Berkasovo exit point led to occasional backlogs and tensions.

Very few asylum-seekers made use of registration procedures in the Hungarian transit zones near Horgoš 1 and Kelebija.

Refugees continued to exit to Croatia on foot at Berkasovo/Bapska border crossing with 6,100 estimated exits on average daily. With the announced establishment of direct refugee transport line between Šid and Slavonski brod in Croatia starting 3 November and closure of Berkasovo crossing point on the same day, aid organisations and the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants (SCRM) moved their facilities and services from Kanjiža RAP and Berkasovo crossing point to Šid train station, Adaševci and Principovac RAPs on 2 November.

Numbers of refugees observed in Belgrade fluctuated between 70-100. There were practically no refugees in the Subotica-Horgoš-Kanjiža area, which led to the official closure of Kanjiža Refugee Aid Point (RAP) on 31 October.

A special EU assistance grant of EUR 7 million for Serbia, for the purposes of resolving the refugee crisis, was divided as follows: the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) was awarded EUR 1.5 mil, whereas CSOs Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe (HELP), Arbeiter Samariter Bund (ASB) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), received grant funding worth EUR 1 mil each, to be used to increase the operational capacities of national and local authorities in Serbia as well as for the purchase of equipment necessary to help the refugees; the remaining EUR 2.5 mil will be used for the procurement of transportation vehicles and other equipment intended for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the SCRM.

On 30th October, Minister for EU Integration Jadranka Joksimovic and Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs Aleksandar Vulin, signed an agreement on behalf of the Government of Serbia with the Council of Europe Development Bank on grant funding worth EUR 2.3 mil intended for ensuring that the most urgent needs of refugees and migrants in reception centres in Serbia are met.

In follow-up to the Leaders' Meeting on Refugee Flows along the Western Balkan route of 25th October, the Government of Serbia undertook to ensure 6,000 hard shelter spaces before the end of the year.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR, Humanitarian Centre for Integration and Tolerance (HCIT), UNICEF, IOM and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) jointly enabled for successful reunification of at least a dozen families in Preševo and Berkasovo.
- 2 DRC staff and 3 IOM staffers assisted UNHCR in protection activities at the Reception Centre (RC) in Preševo. Over 180 PWSNs were assisted on a daily basis and at least 30 referred to the medical team at the RC.
- IOM, MSF and UNHCR continued to transport up to 4,200 most vulnerable refugees daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre. Women with infants were escorted to the UNICEF mother and child tent, which hosted some 1,000 children and their mothers on a daily basis. DRC/UNICEF Mother and Baby Corner in Preševo Centre provided assistance 24/7.
- Approximate waiting time for registration at RC in Preševo was 4 hours on average in the reporting period.
- Two UNICEF child friendly spaces (CFS), equipped with educational materials and toys, were operating in Preševo (managed by the Danish Refugee Council - DRC), and Šid (managed by World Vision). Over 4,300 children have so far rested and played in these safe spaces. Both spaces will soon include an adolescent/youth component. The CFS in Belgrade ceased its operation on 31st October as the number of refugees/migrants had been decreasing, and in the last days of October there were no visits. UNICEF will however continue to support social workers in the Belgrade parks and will closely monitor the situation. The CFS can be reopened if the situation deteriorates.
- The CFS working hours in Preševo were extended to 8PM, after which the tent is used for families with children to sleep. Discussions were ongoing with World Vision to expand the CFS concept to adolescent groups in Preševo. Social workers were assisting refugees and migrants throughout day and night to fast-track vulnerable children and families through the registration process. With the opening of Bujanovac, it was agreed with DRC that a mobile CFS team would be deployed every time Bujanovac is operational.
- Additional social workers were deployed by UNICEF in Preševo and Belgrade and were helping to identify and support the most vulnerable children and families. Negotiations were underway with the Centre for Social Work in Šid to deploy additional social workers in Berkasovo. Training of the first batch of social workers was held on 22nd and 23rd October.
- As the formal registration procedure does not allow for identification of UAMs, UNICEF is supporting the Government and partners towards the establishment of Standard Operating Procedures to identify UAMs and determine a response in the best interest of the child.
- In cooperation with UNHCR, UNICEF is advocating for registration procedures to capture and allow for statistical breakdowns of gender and age. An assessment of the child-sensitive procedures for unaccompanied minors is being finalised.
- At Berkasovo, UNHCR and HCIT assisted at least 70 families with special needs on a daily basis.
- Balkan Center for Migration (BCM)/Catholic Relief Service (CRS) interpreters assisted some 600 refugees who arrived by train to Šid daily. At Berkasovo, the interpreters assisted around 500 people daily, providing them with information, etc. The interpreters also assisted the police, Czech volunteers, UNHCR, DRC in explaining to the refugees that they should move in lines and in a calm manner.
- NGO ATINA initiated its activities on strengthening the capacity to respond to trafficking risks through training of social workers present in Šid. ATINA and UNHCR followed up with UNHCR Croatia on a suspected case of a possible infection of one refugee due to him having sold a kidney back in Lebanon.
- Intersos was present at Berkasovo with WiFi and phone charging services for refugees.
- A deployment from the Kosovo* Innovation Unit assisted the UNICEF CO in conceptualising solutions for real-time monitoring and gathering more reliable information on children to support more adequately plans for the response to the needs of children on the move. An application for tablets and mobile phones is being developed that will enable quick real-time data collection at different points of refugees/migrants route and at service delivery points. It should ease data collection on total numbers, as well as age and gender disaggregated data for children, utilization of services in child-friendly spaces and information on the basic needs of children and their families.

- UNICEF continued discussions with the corporate partners to leverage better coverage with Wi-Fi hot spots on the route of the refugees/migrants to have them provided with information on the services available (child-friendly spaces, infant feeding, etc.) along their journey. Both Telekom Serbia and Telenor offered to support the establishment of Wi-Fi hotspots. UNICEF is currently liaising with partners to determine the best locations for the Wi-Fi hotspots to be set up for the benefit of refugees and migrants.
- UNICEF provided information on the location of and services in the child-friendly and mother-and-baby spaces to the NGO “Asylum Protection Center APC / CZA” to include them into the Android App for refugees and migrants – “Asylum in Serbia”. The application is available in Arabic, Farsi and English. It provides refugees and migrants with useful service information - from registration and asylum procedures to routes and transportation prices, lists of hotels and hostels, banks, post offices, healthcare institutions, important phone numbers, roadmaps, exchange rates, weather forecasts, situations on border-crossings, etc.
- On 27 October, the volunteers were playing music for the refugees at Berkasovo in an attempt to somewhat relieve their stress and anxieties.
- Asylum Info Centre continued to provide information, referrals, aid, counselling and Internet access to refugees in Belgrade.
- Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) was referring refugees to Miksalište in order to get some dry clothes and shoes and to the shuttle buses provided by SCRM. SCRM continued to provide free shuttle service twice daily to the AC in Krnjaca for refugees in the Belgrade region to shelter from the elements. Around 60 refugees used the shuttle bus on a daily basis.
- UNICEF-funded social workers referred mothers and children to the child-friendly space in Belgrade.
- 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

- 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 – Syrian girl waiting with her family (not pictured) to cross (2 November), 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

- 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.

- WHO did another round of procurement of medical supplies and also facilitated with MOH coordination of NCI support.
- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre.
- Over 150 persons visited the medical services inside the RC daily and also clinics of MSF and Humedica outside the RC in Preševo.
- UNHCR continuously supplied medical teams in Preševo, Miratovac, Kanjiža and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- MSF and WAHA assisted over 200 refugees daily at Berkasovo.
- BCM doctor and nurse, along with an interpreter, assisted 60 refugees at Berkasovo daily.
- MSF installed their medical container on 30 October at Berkasovo and attended to more than 170 medical cases daily.
- Medical teams of Belgrade health centres discontinued providing health care services to refugees in Belgrade parks, but the UNHCR/DRC doctors continued their presence in Svetonikoljski park and provided medical assistance daily 07-19hrs.
- WAHA has been present and servicing the medical needs of the refugees arriving to Dimitrovgrad as of 1 November.
- On 27 October, Slovak volunteers were present with their doctors providing medical assistance at Dimitrovgrad RAP.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Local health centre in Dimitrovgrad lacked medication and equipment to adequately assist the new arrivals.



Berkasovo – A hearty volunteer attempting to lift the spirits of refugees waiting to be admitted to Croatia (28 October), 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 were distributing water and WFP HEBs in Preševo.
- UNICEF mother-and-baby space where lactating mothers could continue breastfeeding and receive necessary information on breastfeeding was operational in Preševo 24/7. Nurses were deployed to support breastfeeding

mothers and counsel them on infant feeding. The Belgrade space that was situated within the CFS is now closed. Some 800 babies and 591 mothers benefitted from these spaces in the past two weeks. Deployment of nurses is planned for Berkasovo as well within the contract with the World Vision.

- To facilitate effective counselling, UNICEF produced video materials in Arabic available to mothers through tablets and via internet supported through Telenor. Referrals to paediatricians are organised if needed. Information materials on breastfeeding promotion in Arabic, Farsi and Urdu have also been developed and made available in mother and baby spaces.
- Provision of daily feedings for infant and young children has been organized through in-kind donations received from Nordeus and Miksalište. However, since low acceptance of the jarred baby- food has been noticed in the field, an in-depth assessment with mothers is on-going, which will result in a renewed guidance. Diapers are also being distributed to mothers.
- Development of Standard Operating Procedures on controlled handling of infant formula (including sourcing) are being finalised, as a follow-up to the UNICEF/WHO joint assessment nutrition mission. UNICEF has agreed with UNHCR to organise sensitisation trainings for a number of CSO partners on the standards of nutrition for infants and young children to ensure a consistent and harmonised approach.
- Caritas delivered food packs in Preševo and Berkasovo.
- UNHCR, HCIT, WAHA, UNICEF, World Vision, Red Cross, SCRM, NSHC, EHO, Philanthropy, Local doctors from Sid, Czech volunteers, Police, IDC, SOS Children Village, MSF, CARE International, International Medical Corps, ATINA, BCM/CRS, Intersos, TDH etc. were present in Berkasovo providing food, water, medical and protection assistance to the refugees.
- UNHCR and HCIT distributed almost 6,000 bottles of water, 19,100 WFP HEBs and 2,560 loaves of bread at Berkasovo.
- Foundation SOS Children's Villages MT distributed baby/children meals in Berkasovo and Belgrade.
- Serbian Mufti and his volunteers distributed yogurt and bureks and clothes to the people at Berkasovo crossing point.
- Red Cross distributed food, clothes and shoes in Dimitrovgrad RAP, and the volunteers engaged by the B92 Foundation prepared soup and warm drinks for the refugees in a tent outside the border police station there.
- Red Cross distributed food to refugees in Zaječar.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross, 1,000 food and hygiene packages daily, for refugees arriving from Bulgaria to Negotin.
- Red Cross distributed food and clothes to refugees in Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Caritas was planning psychosocial support to vulnerable migrants staying temporarily in Krnjača AC.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- HCIT and Czech volunteers continued cleaning the Berkasovo/Bapska site from litter.
- UNHCR was providing for the rental and cleaning services of mobile toilets at Berkasovo, Šid train station, Miratovac RAP and Preševo RC.
- 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.
- Caritas donated 20 garbage containers for communal waste to Preševo.
- With a donation from CRS, Caritas provided a sanitary container with showers, which was placed in Miksalište.
- Public Services kept the latrines and public areas used by refugees in Belgrade fairly clean.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees interviewed by UNHCR protection team expressed the need for more toilets all along their route, especially for women.



Berkasovo – Disabled 10-year old Iraqi boy was assisted with a wheelchair (28 October), Photo: @UNHCR

Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- At the request of Sector for Emergency Management of the Ministry of Interior, Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center delivered the following items to Šid: 2 big tents (M-30), 2 medium sized tents (M-10), 2 diesel generators, 6 ovens and 1000 blankets.
- HCIT distributed winter items (hats, scarves, gloves, baby soft blankets) for children received from UNICEF according to needs and weather at Berkasovo.
- UNHCR and HCIT distributed over 1,600 blankets, 1,750 bags, over 5,000 disinfectant gels, wellies and feminine hygiene kits at Berkasovo.
- Czech volunteers distributed medical thermal blankets and shared some of their stock with HCIT for further distribution at Berkasovo.
- UNHCR/DRC procured and placed wooden passages for wheelchairs both for the registration building and the medical centre at Preševo RC. UNHCR Preševo received 10 wheelchairs on 27 October and 5 wheelchairs were delivered to the UNHCR field team in Berkasovo.
- On 27 October, 6 UNHCR benches were handed to the Czech volunteers coordinator to be distributed at the waiting areas along the road to the cross point at Berkasovo/Bapska.
- At the request of UNHCR, UNICEF procured on an emergency basis 1,200 children raincoats to be distributed in the three locations where UNICEF is active. Over 300 were distributed in Berkasovo. Procurement and distribution of winterised goods for children (0-12) started in cooperation with DRC in Preševo and HCIT in Šid: winter socks, hats, scarves, gloves, thermal underwear. UNICEF is procuring winter jackets and boots.
- UNICEF procured 500 waterproof baby changing mats and distributed them to partners in the field (DRC and World Vision) in mother and baby and child-friendly spaces, along with wet wipes, antibacterial gel and diapers.

- UNHCR and DRC distributed 250 blankets and 7,000 bags in Preševo, as well as footwear donated by Remar Foundation.
- Caritas delivered hygiene packages in Preševo and Berkasovo.
- Foundation SOS Children's Villages MT distributed hygiene packages, blankets and socks at Berkasovo and in Belgrade.
- NSHC distributed jackets for children and women, raincoats 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.
- SCRIM 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.
- Caritas started distributing hygiene packs, winter clothes and shoes in Krnjača AC.
- 6 containers were placed at Dimitrovgrad to house the refugees, donated by the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation on 30 October, one of which hosted the WAHA medical team.
- Caritas donated gas stoves to heat the RAP in Dimitrovgrad.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Hard shelter was lacking in Negotin and Zaječar and more blankets, shoes and warm clothes were needed all along the Serbia-Bulgaria border at crossings used by refugees and migrants arriving daily from Bulgaria.

Working in partnership

- On 29 October, UNHCR Senior Emergency Planning Coordinator, Senior Field Coordinator, HoFU in Preševo, Field Associate and Site Planner had a **coordination meeting** with Serbian authorities and DRC to agree on a timeframe for joint shelter/WASH projects.
- On 30th October, the **UN Country Team (UNCT) Refugee Task Force** made up of the UN agencies in Serbia met in UNHCR premises in Belgrade.
- **Coordination meetings** of aid agencies took place in Preševo and Berkasovo every two days, chaired by UNHCR (in Preševo) and SCRMM (in Berkasovo).
- **On 30 October**, IOM and MoI held a **workshop on anti-trafficking** awareness in Preševo and UNHCR made a presentation on its role in the European refugee emergency with a focus on Serbia.

Contacts:

Ms. Ivana Žujović-Simić, Principal Secretary, E-mail: zujovic@unhcr.org, Tel: +381 (0) 11 3082 102

Ms. Vera Dragović, Information Management, E-mail: dragovic@unhcr.org, Tel: +381 (0) 11 3082 105

Links:

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