

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

15-28 February 2016

KEY FIGURES

(FEBRUARY 2016)

36,141

Transit registration papers issued

712

Registered intentions to seek asylum in Serbia

39.5%

of registered refugees and migrants were minors

17

Applications for asylum

1

Persons granted refugee status

1

Persons granted subsidiary protection

PRIORITIES

- Ensure that urgent humanitarian and protection needs of refugees are being met.
- Assist the Government to strengthen the asylum system in line with applicable international standards

Highlights

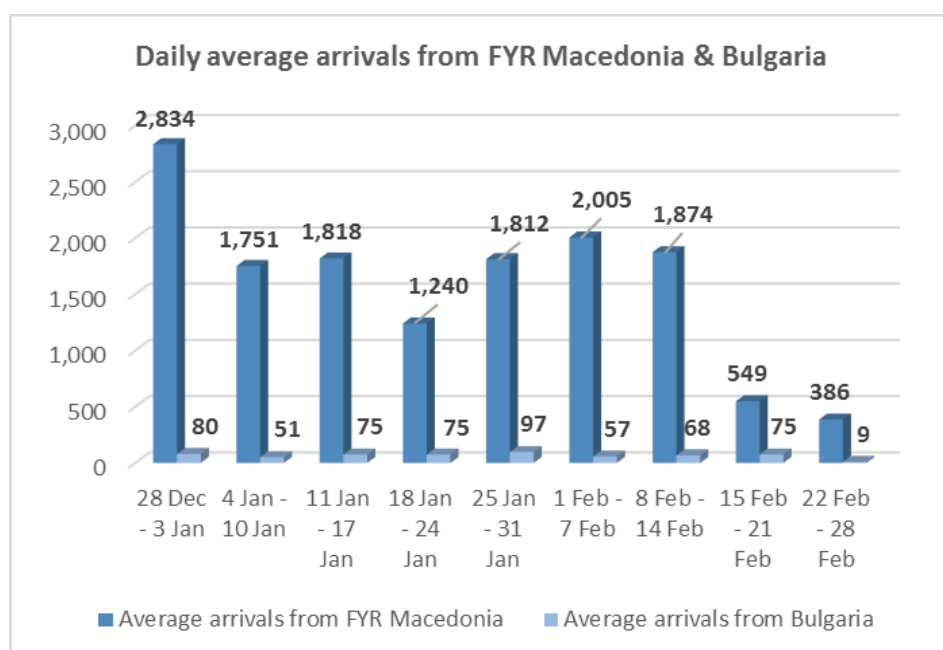
- The weather remained cold, with occasional downpours making the crossing of the green border between FYR Macedonia and Serbia, across muddy terrain, fairly difficult for the refugees.
- The number of average daily refugee arrivals decreased to below 400 per day. 7,131 refugees arrived in total in the last two weeks of February. The percentages of women and children continued to rise. Arrivals from Bulgaria practically ceased from 24-25 February.



*Serbia (AND KOSOVO: S/RES/1244 (1998))
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.

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

472 refugees and migrants registered their intention to seek asylum during the reporting period.



UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Discriminatory screening and denial of entry and exit to nationalities other than Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan became stricter once again, and only asylum seekers with a set of 3 documents - Greek registration document with a photograph, the new unified registration document issued in Macedonia and new "Personal Data of Migrant" form issued in Serbia - were allowed to enter the Republic of Croatia as of 24 February. In addition, as of 19 February, entry to Serbia has been denied to nationals of Afghanistan.

On 25th February, Slovenian Government informed its Croatian counterparts that no more than 500 refugees would be admitted on a daily basis.

Following the 24-hour legal gap between 24th and 25th February, due to the process of introduction of the new unified registration system between the three transit countries in the Balkans and technical difficulties with the registration in the same period, a number of refugees arrived in Šid from the border with Bulgaria without the necessary registration papers and were left stranded in Serbia, adding to the groups of refugees denied boarding the train bound to Croatia, all of which resulted in overcrowded conditions in the three refugee aid points in the Šid area.



Šid – Protest of refugees denied boarding the train to Croatia, Photo@UNHCR

Achievements



Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR's implementing partner HCIT maintained a 24/7 presence at the Šid train station, Šid refugee aid point (RAP) and Principovac and Adaševci RAPs, providing legal aid/protection and information (1,600 asylum-seekers), fast tracking (12 PWSNs) and referrals (444 referrals to medical staff of WAHA and Šid doctors and 2 referrals to Centre for Social Welfare (CSW) Šid for 2 unaccompanied minors) and assistance to Serbian Police in crowd control and interviews. HCIT conducted detailed interviews with 25 asylum-seekers and assisted in cases of family reunification. In the majority of 2,041 instances where asylum-seekers were refused entry on board of trains headed to Croatia, UNHCR and HCIT provided counselling on the asylum procedure in Serbia. UNHCR prioritized at least 260 PWSNs in Preševo RC.



Šid - UNHCR/HCIT provided counselling to those denied boarding the train to Croatia,
Photo@UNHCR

- UNNFPA gender-based violence (GBV) Regional Coordinator completed the GBViE Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that will be rolled out in Serbia. SOPs were previously presented and endorsed in fYR Macedonia.
 - UNHCR buses continued to transport up to 1,600 refugees and migrants daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre (RC). UNHCR/DRC, IOM, Mercy Corps, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and MSF vans transported up to a dozen PSNs and their family members from the border with fYR Macedonia to Preševo RC each day.
 - DRC Mobile Protection Teams continued conducting regular Protection Monitoring and Protection Assistance activities in two shift covering Preševo, Dimitrovgrad and
- Šid/Adaševci 24/7. 9,319 refugees and asylum-seekers were provided with information and 5,051 were assisted through immediate response, internal/external referrals, etc.
- DRC assisted and followed up on cases of unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs), in cooperation with the Local Social Welfare Centres, HCIT and UNHCR as well as other relevant national institutions. DRC Women Protection Counsellor and DRC Child Protection Officers assisted in and followed-up on individual cases of vulnerable women and children.
 - IOM mobile team deployed to support Border police in Miratovac refugee aid point (RAP) assisted approx. 6,200 refugees upon arrival by providing necessary information and referral towards the RC in Preševo. IOM assisted vulnerable families and individuals with transportation assistance from Miratovac to Preševo (approx. 2,100, of which around 1,100 were children, the elderly, the disabled, etc.).
 - In Preševo RC, IOM mobile team engaged in assisting the work of police in preparatory activities for registration of refugees and migrants (filling in the questionnaires prior to registration) and assisted the refugees/migrants in filling in 7,000 questionnaires.

- The UNICEF co-chaired Child Protection Sub-Working Group, in collaboration with the global Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) network, developed a dashboard capturing MHPSS interventions and services available in the transit areas. A dedicated group for the Serbian response was opened on mhps.net.
- UNICEF-supported child-friendly spaces (CFSs), where children could access recreational and psychosocial services, continued to be operational in Preševo and Miratovac (in partnership with DRC) and in Adaševci and Šid (in partnership with World Vision and SOS Childrens' Villages). UNICEF assisted 2,726 children and 854 mothers and caregivers in the reporting period, through the services provided in these four CFSs.
- Mercy Corps (MC) continued the implementation of the Cash Transferring Program (CTP) in Preševo. In collaboration with its referring partners – UNHCR, ADRA and MSF – MC assisted extremely vulnerable families and individuals with EUR 210 or EUR 70 pre-loaded MasterCards - **120** beneficiaries in total.
- In coordination with UNHCR, MSF, IOM and NPA, MC transported PSNs from Miratovac RAP/green border with FYR Macedonia to Preševo RC. Over 1,140 refugees were assisted by MC, including 336 children.
- In cooperation with the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), UNHCR and Divac Foundation, MC ran video presentations on TV screens located in the Šid RAP and the street wall of MC's office. Presentations provided the most relevant information on services available to refugees at their current location and on the remaining part of their journey, as well as on behavioural/hygiene practices. The setting up TV screens for the same purpose in Preševo was underway.
- MC team continued providing internet connection and information through distribution of updated leaflets in Arabic and Farsi/Dari, as well as translation services at train stations in Šid and Preševo (in collaboration with UVP). Through NFI distribution and provision of information, MC and Divac Foundation's mobile team reached over 11,500 in Šid, Belgrade (Miksalište) and Dimitrovgrad in the reporting period.
- At Adaševci RAP, Intersos provided phone charging to 2,347 asylum-seekers, internet access to 2,624 and emergency phones to 1 asylum seeker. Intersos supported another 450 asylum seekers with referrals and information.
- SOS CV Mobile team in Adaševci provided 985 refugees with translation and provision of information, while mobile team in Šid 468 with the same services.
- SOS CV Mobile team in Preševo organized outreach activities for the CFS, implemented by DRC, and distributed food and NFIs.
- SOS CV's IT spot at Adaševci RAP (charger units and Wi-Fi) provided 2,480 Wi-Fi connections. Charging stations provided electricity for around 1,700 users. Wi-Fi spot in Šid, at the Train Station, provided for 4,030 connections to the Informative web page www.refugeeinfo.eu, with information in 4 languages regarding the present location/map, registration process, legal rights, transportation, accommodation and shelter, medical aid, other services/support organized at reception centres and contacts along the Balkan route (in cooperation with MC). Wi-Fi spot at the train station in Preševo provided 2,150 connections and charging stations provided electricity to 1,500 users.
- SOS CV opened up an ICT corner at Preševo RC, where users can also charge their phones. 99 refugees used the Internet and the computers, while 26 used the charging stations.
- SOS CV Serbia organized two 4 days' "Trauma healing program" sessions (February 15-18 and February 19-23), in order to support better understanding of effects of trauma and stress on aid workers and better coping with the effects. Trainings were conducted by an experienced psychotherapist and trauma expert Mr. Paul Boyle. 38 participants from SOS CV and partner organizations attended the trainings (including DRC, World Vision, Asylum Info Center, ADRA, Centre for Youth Integration and Philanthropy).
- Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC) was present 24/7 at Adaševci RAP, providing recreational outreach activities to 525 children and 123 parents and assisting 157 beneficiaries with psychological first aid, with the support of Terre des hommes (TDH). With the support from IRC, NSHC provided protection services to 2,774 refugees (information, referrals to providers of medical, psycho-social and other assistance).
- Philanthropy continued with the distribution of cash cards (value €40) in Preševo and Zaječar. Cash cards were distributed to vulnerable refugee families so that they could meet their immediate needs while in Serbia. 738 cash cards were distributed to 431 refugee families (1,945 individuals).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Following the meeting of the Police Directors of Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and fYR of Macedonia on 18 February in Zagreb, almost every day new arbitrary restrictions to access to Croatia and/or to Serbia were introduced, leading to misinformation and desperation amongst stranded refugees.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- NSTR

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR

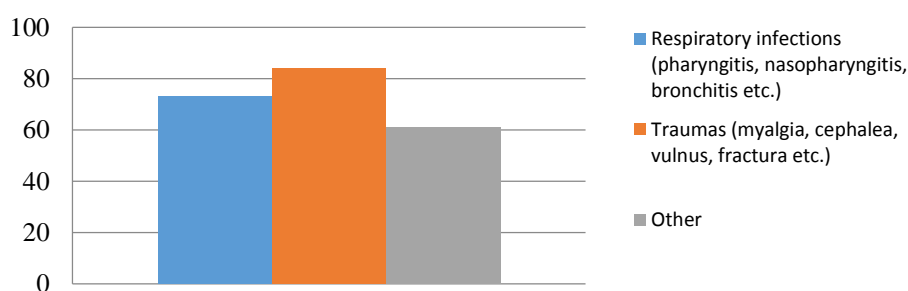


Health

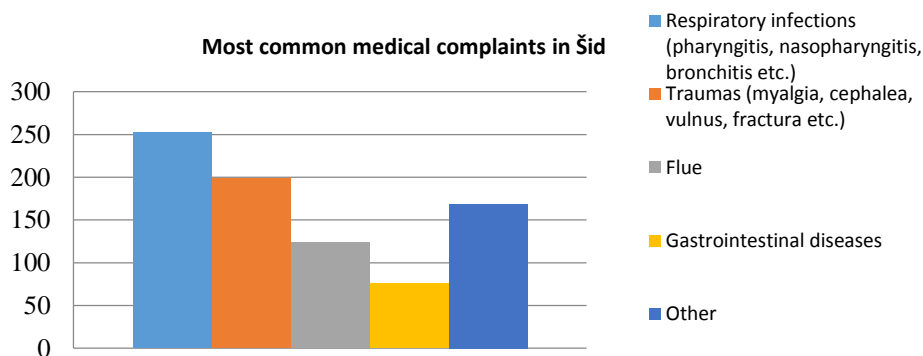
Achievements and Impact

- DRC and UNHCR continued providing medical assistance to refugees in Miratovac and Preševo, through two medical teams, and in Belgrade through another two medical teams, engaged with the support from the local Primary Health Centres. DRC/UNHCR provided medicines for the refugees through contracted local state pharmacies. DRC Medical Team continued to follow-up hospitalised PSNs, in order to ensure additional support. At least 35 refugees were assisted in Miratovac RAP and around 280 refugees received medical assistance within RC Preševo (including at the clinic run by Natan).
- WAHA International continued to provide medical services and consultations: its medical station in Dimitrovgrad assisted **173** refugees, while its medical station in Šid treated **783** refugees. Two pregnant women were examined and **two** cases of hospitalization were recorded, with one other patient refusing recommended hospital treatment. As per standard procedures, this patient was advised on the potential adverse effects of this decision.

Most common medical complaints in Dimitrovgrad RAP



In Šid, **5** pregnant women were assisted by the WAHA team, one suspected case of jaundice and one suspected case of malignancy were recorded, with appropriate hospitalization recommendations. Three instances of recommended hospitalization and medical transport were recorded, and another four patients refused to take time needed to receive specialized treatment. The most commonly distributed medicines continued to be pain killers and anti-inflammation tablets.



- UNHCR and partners distributed one wheelchair and four pairs of crutches in different locations.
- UNFPA rolled out the initial Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health (MISP RH) training in Preševo RC on February 18. Participants represented Natan, UNHCR, Humedica, Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM), Nexus/Care International, MSF, ADRA Serbia and LHC Preševo, as well as INGO partners.
- UNFPA mobile cynics provided services in Šid and Preševo. Patients were either treated on site or referred to local health centres for follow up, as needed. Five pregnant women and two women with gynaecological problems were examined in Preševo, in addition to one adolescent girl, and eight refugee women were examined in Šid.
- In coordination with Preševo RC Medical Unit and RC Management, Caritas was providing plastic neck bags (passport-size, made of transparent plastic) for the medical files (records) for refugees who received medical assistance and therapy in Preševo. Acute and chronically ill migrants will be carrying their medical records around their neck during their travel, and doctors and staff in the ensuing reception centres on the route will be able to follow-up on the diagnosis of their colleagues, whilst providing efficient medical assistance.
- A two-day workshop on health in refugee crises, prevention of communicable diseases and health promotion was organized by NSHC and TDH, in collaboration with the Institute of Public Health of Serbia and the Department of Public Health in Sremska Mitrovica on 26 February in Šid. It was attended by 29 field workers from 11 institutions and NGOs.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- WAHA reported of the difficulty of medical cases in Šid, caused by prolonged stay of refugees there, as well as of the need for more expensive medication than those available.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- As of 16 February, HCIT began distributing lunch parcels in the Šid area, due to increased demands for food assistance in the three RAPs there.
- UNHCR and partners HCIT, Society for Peace Development and Ecology (SPDE), Asylum Info Center (BCHR), Sigma Plus and Amity distributed 8,728 litres of water, 2,250 food cans, 1,411 kgs of WFP high-energy biscuits (HEBs) and 80 kgs of biscuits in Preševo, Šid and Belgrade.
- Remar SOS and OM were distributing tea and soup in Adaševci RAP 24/7.
- CARE/Novi Sad Humanitarian Center (NSHC) distributed 2,440 food packages in Šid/Adaševci and CARE/Nexus distributed 1,498 food packages in Preševo.



Šid - Distribution of water to new arrivals in the Šid RAP,
Photo©UNHCR

- UNICEF-supported mother-and-baby corners (MBCs), where lactating mothers could continue to breastfeed, receive information on breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding, and access necessary hygiene items, continued to be operational in Preševo and Miratovac (operating 24/7 in partnership with DRC), and in Adaševci and Šid (operating 24/7 in partnership with World Vision and SOS Childrens' Villages). UNICEF assisted 1,059 babies and 824 mothers in four MBCs during the reporting period. UNICEF likewise supported 667 mothers with infant young child feeding counselling and provided 722 babies with nutritional support.
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide food parcels daily in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade (Krnjača asylum centre and the Red Cross container in the park near the central railway and bus station), based on the needs. Caritas distributed: 5,350 food parcels, 10,700 portions of soup and 1,370 cups of tea.
- NSHC and CARE provided food packages to 1,940 refugees in Adaševci.
- Philanthropy continued to deliver food in Miratovac RAP. Aid was distributed 24/7. Approximately 4,000 refugees were assisted. Delivered aid included food items (tuna/sardine cans, dry bread, snacks, juices, baby food, etc.).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Food assistance was challenged by the need for swift transition from having to meet the needs of transiting refugee population to meeting the needs of stranded refugees and asylum-seekers (need to provide hot meals in addition to food parcels, etc.).



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- At Preševo RC, outdoor sanitary blocks constructed by Philanthropy were in full use, supervised by DRC and ensuring proper standards of hygiene and sanitation. The outdoor area of the RC was kept in clean condition thanks to the UNHCR/DRC activities implemented through a cleaning agent.
- Caritas-CRS bathroom container with showers, located in Miksalište in Belgrade, was used to provide refugees a chance of taking a free shower during their travel. 293 refugees used the shower in the reporting period.
- SOS Children's Villages distributed 944 hygiene packages in the CFSs in Adaševci, Šid and Preševo.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Overcrowded WASH facilities in Šid RAP were in need of a more frequent cleaning.

Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and partners HCIT, SPDE, Asylum Info Center (BCHR), Sigma Plus and Amity distributed 2,017 blankets, 2,875 pairs of socks, 1,766 pairs of footwear, 1,647 winter jackets, 136 raincoats, 137 sleeping bags, 2,367 hygiene gels, 325 plastic bags, 931 hygiene packs and 30 plastic sheets/tarpaulins in Preševo, Belgrade and Šid area.
- Mercy Corps used two containers outside of the RC in Preševo as shelter for extremely vulnerable individuals waiting for train departure and as a safe-haven for asylum seekers who were not entitled to continue their journey northwards. A total over 810 beneficiaries (of which 34% women, 38% children) used MC's heated containers as their temporary shelter.
- Phase II of Preševo Tobacco Factory refurbishment, conducted by DRC with funding from Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA), was completed and launched on 16 February 2016 by the Representatives of the Government of Serbia Working Group on Mixed Migration, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, UNHCR, DRC and other agencies, in response to the most urgent needs of refugee influx to Serbia. Completed works enabled for increased accommodation capacity for up to 350 persons within the two rehabilitated Family pavilions and the Child Friendly Space. Auxiliary premises such as the Infirmary, Laundry room and Warehouse were also established and properly equipped. DRC will soon commence the works on Phase III thanks to funding from UNHCR, which will involve rehabilitation of multipurpose surface equipped with the sanitary block for accommodation and reception of additional 650 persons.
- UNCHR-funded accommodation premises for the MoI staff in Čakanovci, comprising of 28 containers, were also opened on 16 February.
- DRC completed rehabilitation works on premises intended for social activities and the prefabricated facility in Šid, funded through DANIDA and DFID funds, and are finalising the tendering procedure for additional furniture.
- At Krnjača AC, DRC completed the adaptation of 3 accommodation pavilions and 3 apartment units, funded by EUD, and is in process of equipping these with basic furniture.
- DRC technical team is currently working on the project design and preparation of tendering procedure for the premises of the implementing agencies' office and a joint distribution area in Preševo RC, with the funding from DFID.
- DRC teams distributed NFIs in three main locations: Adaševci, Preševo/Miratovac and Dimitrovgrad. Through funding from ECHO, DFID and DANIDA, DRC provided winterisation items for men, women and children, targeting the PSNs. DRC assisted 1,700 children with hygiene packages and clothes, through the DRC/UNICEF Child Friendly Space.
- CARE/NSHC distributed 300 pairs of gloves, 300 hats and 300 socks in Šid/Adaševci and CARE/Nexus distributed 58 phone chargers/flash lights, 12 pairs of boots, 56 jackets, 66 jumpers, 74 Sweatpants adults, 94 pants in Preševo.
- Through its partners DRC, World Vision and HCIT, UNICEF reached 3,415 children with winter items (raincoats, sets of winter hats, scarves and gloves, winter jackets, thermal underwear sets, pairs of winter boots, pairs of winter socks, overall outerwear for babies and thermal cover baby sets).
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide hygiene packs for women and babies daily in Preševo, Belgrade and Adaševci. Caritas distributed 1,140 hygiene parcels for women, 265 hygiene parcels for



*Miratovac - Avan Jamal and her daughters, one-month old Elina and Mestan finally resting, after a month long journey, in a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space in Miratovac RAP,
Photo@ UNICEF Serbia/Emil Vas*

children, 987 rain jackets for adults, 448 rain jackets for children, 216 fleece jackets for adults, 871 fleece jackets for children, 825 pairs of winter shoes for adults, 284 pairs of winter shoes for children, 1070 winter hats for adults, 255 winter hats for children, 2781 pairs of socks for adults and 372 pairs of socks for children.

- NSHC and TDH provided 5,540 winter and hygienic items for 2,180 refugees, mainly children and mothers. NSHC and CARE provided 480 hats, 480 pairs of gloves and 480 pairs of socks to 480 refugees in Adaševci.
- Philanthropy continued to deliver NFIs (diapers, baby wet wipes, winter clothes for children, boots, raincoats, etc.) in Miratovac RAP 24/7 and assisted approx. 2,600 refugees.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- As a result of restrictions to access to Croatia, around 1,800 refugees had to be accommodated in all three refugee aid points at the border to Croatia, overwhelming existing capacities especially of the Šid RAP. The need to provide for more longer-term, protection-sensitive accommodation for stranded refugees and asylum-seekers became acute.



Support to local communities

Achievements and Impact

- CARE/Nexus continued to provide financial support to the public utility company Moravica for daily garbage collection in Miratovac RAP and twice per week in Miratovac village (the Mosque), for the period up to 30 April 2016.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR



Adaševci-Šid: A new female dressing room was set up in front of the RAP, (Serbia), ©UNHCR, 24 February 2016

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. The 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). The RTG met on 19 and 26 February.
- The **Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG)**, Co-chaired by UNHCR and the MoL, met on 25 February in Belgrade. It is the key coordination mechanism for agencies/NGOs operational in the country, as well as a source of information for donors/diplomatic missions who attend its meetings as observers. RPWG has over 150 members and meets on a fortnightly basis. 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).
- A Child Protection Sub-Working Group of the RPWG, Co-chaired by MoL & UNICEF, met in Belgrade on 26 February. The meeting focused on challenges faced by child protection actors in providing adequate support to unaccompanied minors, including the appointment of a legal guardian and entering into formal care.
- Field coordination meetings take place every week in Preševo (co-chaired by MoL & UNHCR) and Šid (co-chaired by SCRM & UNHCR).
- The monthly **Partners' Briefing**, where UNHCR/UNRC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MoL/Chair of Government WG on Mixed Migration update the diplomatic corps/donors and NGOs on the refugee/migrant situation and the response of UN agencies and their partners in the previous period, took place on 25 February in Belgrade. The Briefing focused on activities of aid agencies which had been targeting the most vulnerable groups and individuals amongst refugees and migrants. A short video depicting the assistance provided was shown to over 60 participants to the Briefing.

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Links:

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