

SERBIA

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE

24-30 November 2015

2015 KEY FIGURES

(AS AT END-NOVEMBER)

485,169

Registered intentions to seek asylum in 2015

31.2%

of registered intentions were expressed by minors in November

96%

of registered intentions were from refugee-producing countries in November

Highlights

- The number of refugee arrivals from averaged 2,500/day.
- For the first time in 12 months, there is a decline in the number of arrivals and registrations by around 30,000 in comparison to the previous month (180,307 in October and 149,923 in November). 96% of asylum-seekers in Serbia in November originated from the refugee-producing countries (96.9% in October), of which 47.1% were from the refugee-producing countries (96.9% in October), of which 47.1% were from Syria (down by 6.4% compared to October), 32.6% from Afghanistan (3% more than in October), 11.7% from Iraq (1.8% more than in October). The number of asylum-seeking children continued to increase from 29.5% in October to 31.2% in November.

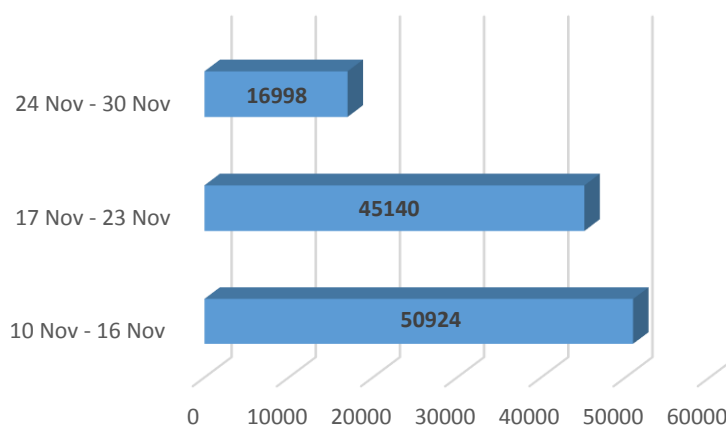


*Serbia (AND KOSOVO: S/RES/1244 (1998))
Printing date: September 2015 Sources: UNCS, UNHCR
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- Only 1 asylum application was actually submitted to the Asylum Office of the Ministry of Interior (Moi) in November (3 in October, 34 in September), and no asylum-seekers were given asylum (refugee status). 101 asylum-seekers were in procedure and residing in asylum centres in Serbia at end-November.

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

16,998 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. UNHCR estimated that at any given time some 4,000 refugees were on Serbian territory in the reporting period.

Arrivals from FYR Macedonia declined on 30 November to 1,009. 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, in increasingly poor shape due to weather conditions. 60-120 asylum-seekers were observed resting in Belgrade at any one time.

The practice of denying entry to new arrivals originating from countries other than Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq continued throughout the region. Stranded asylum-seekers are at high risk to fall prey to smugglers and take illegal routes to the European Union instead. UNHCR and partners continued to advocate for protection-sensitive management of migration, and for the stranded asylum-seekers (5-10 daily) to be allowed access to asylum procedures. The SCRM continued to host them in the refugee aid points (RAP) and asylum centres, where they had access to humanitarian assistance.

Increase of winterized waiting and shelter areas in Preševo and Šid areas continued at full speed, with 93% of available accommodation winterized thus far.

Wet weather conditions made the road from the FYR Macedonia border to Miratovac RAP muddy and inaccessible to UNHCR, DRC and MSF vans, creating major problems with transferring persons with disabilities and/or mobility issues, who consequently had to walk the distance of 2, 5 km from the border. On 27 November, after a heavy rain, DRC workers were forced to create drainage channels in the 'Friendly Waiting area' at the refugee housing units (RHUs) in Preševo Reception Centre (RC). UNHCR, MSF, IOM, DRC and Mercy Corps discussed a plan of action for night transportation (11 pm to 7 am) of refugees and migrants from Miratovac to Preševo and the need for police escort.

The following organizations and entities were providing assistance 24/7 at the Preševo RC: UNHCR, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), the Police, the Medical centre, Red Cross, UNICEF, Caritas, DRC, UNFPA, Natan (IsrealAid) and Remar. The Police and the Medical Centre provided assistance 24/7 at Miratovac RAP, while for security reasons UNHCR, IOM, DRC, Philanthropy and MSF were providing assistance only during daytime until 6 pm. Humedica provided medical aid in Miratovac village from 7am to 11pm.

UNHCR, HCIT, WAHA, and SCRM were present 24/7 at the Šid train station.

The following organizations and entities were present 24/7 at Adaševci RAP: SCRM, Asylum Protection Centre (APC), the Police, the Medical Centre, MSF, Czech volunteers, INTERSOS, BCM/CRS and Red Cross.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Training on “Trafficking of human beings in the current context” organized by Ministry of Labour/Social Policy and the Centre for Victims of Trafficking/IOM took place in Preševo.
- National conference on strengthening the joint response for unaccompanied and separated children in the refugee emergency took place on 27 November in Subotica, organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, UNICEF and civil society organizations.
- In Preševo and Šid, UNHCR, DRC, IOM and HCIT assisted around 1,000 PWSNs and reunited 21 families.
- IOM, MSF and UNHCR continued to transport up to 2,300 refugees and migrants daily from Miratovac to Preševo Reception Centre (RC). Women with infants were escorted to the UNICEF/DRC mother and child tent, which was used by over 260 mothers and over 500 children.
- With the Assistance of Ministry of Labour and the Police, UNHCR managed to facilitate re-registration of 3 Afghan unaccompanied separated children (UASCs) who had been staying at the Save the Children Shelter in Preševo since 20th November, who were then able to proceed to Šid with their appointed guardians.
- UNHCR continued conducting Participatory Assessments with asylum-seekers in Adaševci and Šid RAP, focusing on protection and shelter issues along the journey.
- UNICEF child friendly space (previously in containers outside) was moved inside the Adaševci RAP. It is managed by World Vision and operates from 8 am to 8 pm.
- INTERSOS and SOS Children’s Villages provided Wi-Fi and charging services, as well as mobile phones for urgent cases at Adaševci RAP.
- Save the Children's (SC) Child Friendly Space at Miksalište in Belgrade was redesigned in order to cater to the children aged 12-18, as the age group of children using these services changed meanwhile. 103 children (of which 79 boys) attended this CFS. 82 babies and 49 mothers passed through the mother & baby corner at the Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade.
- SC 24/7 Safe Space, with 13 beds, 2 showers, a bathroom and a kitchenette in Preševo assisted 255 adults and minors (182 children, incl. 26 babies and 2 UASCs).
- Three SC Mobile Safety Units, focused on identification and referral of vulnerable refugees and migrants, were operating in Dimitrovgrad, Preševo and Šid. These three teams also provided information to asylum-seekers, direct support through psycho-social support activities and NFI distribution and referral to other services where appropriate. Each team consists of child protection facilitators and cultural mediator/translator for Arabic and Farsi where appropriate. The teams assisted over 200 refugees with information and referrals and provision of 300 raincoats.
- SC finalized the *Rapid assessment on unaccompanied minors and separated children transiting through Serbia* in Preševo, Belgrade and Šid. The document is available upon request.
- APC assisted SCRM in providing numbers to the arrived buses, and distributed second hand clothes in Adaševci RAP.
- Balkan Center for Migration (BCM)/Catholic Relief Service (CRS) interpreters assisted over 1,000-2,100 refugees who arrived by train to Šid daily.
- People in Need (PIN) and Czech volunteers were providing information to refugees and supporting coordination among the different actors at Adaševci.



DRC protection staff assisting refugees arriving in Miratovac from FYR Macedonia, Photo:©UNHCR

- The Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade, supported by ADRA, Klikaktiv, Savski Venac municipality and UNHCR, as well as Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR) continued providing information, referrals, aid, and counselling and Internet access to refugees in Belgrade.
- Through the safe place for children at the Asylum Info Centre and field work in Belgrade, SOS Children's Villages Serbia provided support for 229 adults and 52 children and supported 533 refugees and migrants with psycho-social support, information, referral to medical support and referral to legal support; the team also distributed 70 food items and 17 hygiene packages for women and babies.



Adaševci - Czech volunteer and refugee children in the child friendly space, Photo@UNHCR

- SCRM continued to provide free shuttle service twice daily to the AC in Krnjača for refugees in the Belgrade region to shelter from the elements.
- UNHCR's partners Amity and Sigma Plus had mobile teams consisting of social workers and psychologists present in Negotin, Zaječar, Dimitrovgrad, Pirot and Knjaževac, 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

- A number of NGOs continued to face issues concerning access to RAPs.
- Groups of refugees continued to arrive to Serbia without any means left to continue their travel through Serbia and were approaching the authorities the UNHCR and the NGOs for assistance.

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.
- EHO medical team worked three times per week in shifts in the two newly renovated (by EHO), infirmaries at Adaševci motel.

- International Medical Corps/International Aid Network medical mobile unit provided medical and psychological first aid (PFA) at the train station in Šid. The team had 185 medical and 169 psychosocial interventions.
- An Afghan family of six with two of their children was diagnosed with hepatitis and remained isolated in the Šid RAP for a couple of days, after which they proceeded to Croatia in coordination with medical doctors in Croatia.
- A coordination meeting with all the healthcare providers at the sites of Šid, Adasevci and Principovac was held in Šid on 24 November. SCRIM informed the participants that there would be special quarantine rooms provided at Adaševci, Principovac and Šid RAPs with separate bathrooms for individual cases of infectious diseases.
- UNFPA procured 2 mobile clinics, 5 Ultrasounds and 6 gynecological tables, to be delivered to public health centres on the 'migrant route' in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.
- In cooperation with DRC, UNFPA placed a storage container for dignity items within the Preševo RC. Distribution of dignity items in cooperation with DRC in Preševo was implemented on a needs basis.
- UNFPA distributed information/education/communication materials on reproductive health in crisis areas in cooperation with DRC, UNHCR and UNICEF. Leaflets on complications in pregnancy, antenatal and postnatal care, developed jointly with MoH, were made available in Serbian, English, Arabic, Farsi and Urdu. Through UNHCR Information subgroup, UNFPA was exploring opportunities to expand the distribution network so as to increase coverage of vulnerable population.
- Caritas was providing medicaments and vitamins in the amount of 300 € per month, at the request of the Health Centre Dimitrovgrad.
- At the request of medical doctors operating at Preševo RC, Caritas provided medicaments and vitamins (including Adrenalin injections).
- Out of approximately 3000 beneficiaries of EHO, the most common first medical aid provided to approximately 90 refugees and migrants was in the form of cleaning, sterilizing and treating feet wounds. They were also supplied with creams and ointments for the next few days. Upon their request, and with doctor's approval, 1,500 painkillers were delivered, 310 gastro-intestinal drugs, and 60 packs of tablets for chronic diseases. About 250 packs of vitamins, eye and nose drops were delivered.
- The medical clinics supported by UNHCR continued to work 24/7 in Miratovac RAP and Preševo Centre. Medical team in Preševo RC had almost 500 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 Belgrade and asylum centre in Krnjača with medication and medical supplies.
- MSF provided medical assistance at their camper in Adaševci to refugees and migrants daily. BCM/CRS medical team and Šid Health Centre provided medical assistance from the main lobby of Adaševci Motel, and had over 100 interventions daily.
- WAHA provided medical care at Šid train station 24/7, supported by day by the Šid Health Centre team.
- UNHCR/DRC doctors continued their presence in Svetonikoljski park in Belgrade and provided medical assistance to refugees and migrants daily 07-19hrs.
- WAHA medical team in Dimitrovgrad had up to 60 interventions daily.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- NSTR



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.
- Caritas continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross, to provide 1,000-2,750 food parcels daily in Preševo, Adaševci and Belgrade, based on the needs (5,100 in total). On 25 November, Caritas started distributing hot tea and soup at the RC in Preševo, together with a local NGO "Life Aid" from Vranje. More than 3,300 portions of soup and 1,100 tea cups were distributed.
- Red Cross, World Vision, NSHC, ATINA and Czech volunteers were distributing food, hygiene kits and winter clothes inside all the buses at Adaševci RAP.

- Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) distributed 1500 food parcels per day at Adaševci RAP, each of them containing: water, bread bun, pack of honey, 1-2 apples, banana, juice, plazma biscuits pack, energy bar, raisins, peanuts and chocolate bar. Each of the packages contained as well pocket wet wipes and tissues.
- World Vision provided up to 560 food parcels during the day, and Red Cross distributes food at night at Adaševci RAP.
- SOS Children's Villages mobile team delivered 1,023 jars of baby food to Red Cross at Adaševci, and gave out 600 packs of biscuits, 120 hygiene packages for children, 50 hygiene packages for adults, 30 blankets for children and 340 pairs of socks for children.
- CARE distributed food and clothes to children at Adaševci.
- UNHCR and HCIT distributed 5,582 bottles of water and 9,300 WFP high-energy biscuits (HEBs) at Šid train station.
- UNHCR, DRC and partners distributed water and WFP HEBs in Preševo.
- Red Cross distributed food, water and clothes at all border towns with Bulgaria used by refugees for entry into Serbia.
- ADRA continued to provide, through local Red Cross, 1,000 food and hygiene packages daily, for refugees arriving from Bulgaria to Negotin.
- Philanthropy continued, in cooperation with the Red Cross in Sid to provide 200 - 250 food kits per day and in cooperation with Miksalište in Belgrade food items for 200 people per day. From 24 November to 30 November, Philanthropy distributed over 4,000 food kits and approached to some 6,000 people.
- Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation provided 600 food packages for weekly distribution in Miksalište in Belgrade.
- In cooperation with Merhamet, the charitable organisation of the Islamic Community of Serbia, Save the Children distributed 1300 food parcels - 300 in Belgrade (at Miksalište and in the park next to the Faculty of Economics) and 1,000 at Adaševci.
- Red Cross and Miksalište distributed food and clothes/shoes to refugees in Belgrade.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Water and HEBs were needed at entry points from Bulgaria.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- Construction work for 5 male and 5 female toilets and 5 male and 5 female showers in the Tobacco factory in Preševo RC was ongoing by DRC, Philanthropy and UNHCR. Concrete slabs for 14 toilets and 14 showers (male and female) were placed in front of one of the rub halls.
- Caritas provided a bathroom container with showers, thanks to CRS donation, where refugees can take a free shower in Miksalište in Belgrade. The power generator for this service was provided by Refugee Aid Serbia.
- SCRM, Czech Volunteers, UNHCR and refugees paved the toilets corridor at Adaševci RAP with gravel and bricks to make them accessible after the road became muddy.
- UNHCR was providing for the rental and cleaning services of mobile toilets at 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.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Latrines in Adaševci and Dimitrovgrad RAPs needed more regular cleaning.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- Phase One of the refurbishment of Preševo Tobacco factory was close to completion, with the capacity to accommodate 600 persons.
- MSF erected and winterized 5 rub halls at Adaševci RAP. UNHCR/Vizija started the works on fencing and lighting around the site and insulating the floors of the MSF and UNHCR rub halls in Principovac.
- EHO has completely renovated 3 infirmaries in Adaševci RAP and equipped them with faucets, cupboards and boilers.
- The Police Station in Minićevo (Knjaževac municipality) received and started installing new registration equipment. They expressed appreciation to UNHCR for the equipment and hope that it will speed up the process and reduce the time asylum-seekers spend waiting in the cold.
- UNFPA initiated distributions of dignity items in cooperation with DRC. Dignity items are now being distributed in Preševo. The collaboration with the Danish Refugee Council resulted with the placement of a storage container for hygiene (dignity) items within the registration Center in Preševo.
- Philanthropy set up two containers in Miratovac for distribution of food and non-food items from 8am to 12pm and soon expects the third shift work to start.
- SCRM received 52 bunk beds and 208 mattresses donated by IKEA through UNHCR at Principovac RAP.
- Caritas provided heating gas in the amount of 20 butane bottles for heating of the medical premises in RC Preševo.
- At the request of the SCRM, Caritas provided gas heating stoves and vinyl floor for Admission Centre in Dimitrovgrad, in order to prepare this room for accepting larger number of refugees. Caritas will enable disinfection of these premises and will conduct basic repairs of the Commissariat's storage used for support to refugees in Dimitrovgrad.
- Philanthropy distributed 225 sets of underwear for men, 1.300 pairs of socks, 900 sneakers, 400 blankets, 170 backpacks, 275 jackets, 500 sweaters, 490 long-sleeve T-shirts and 310 boots in Miksaliste, In Sid, in cooperation with the Red Cross and Commissariat, Philanthropy distributed: 350 boots for adults, 250 boots for children, 370 jackets for adults, 100 jackets for children, 625 sets of underwear, 1.400 pair of socks, 670 sneakers, 600 blankets, 190 backpacks, 680 sweaters and 490 long-sleeve T-shirts. In Miratovac Philanthropy distributed 500 raincoats for children, 500 raincoats for adults, 130 jackets for children, 475 socks for children, 500 socks for adults, 300 rubber boots for children, 160 rubber boots for adults, 80 warm pants.
- 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. During this week Caritas distributed more than 1,140 hygiene packs for women and more than 310 baby hygiene packages, as well as 610 raincoats, 70 fleece jackets, 30 rain jackets, 390 winter hats, 965 pairs of socks and 325 winter shoes for both children and adults in Preševo, Bosilegrad, Belgrade and Zaječar.
- In Adaševci, EHO distributed 25 rucksacks, 300 pairs of socks, 45 pairs of shoes, 204 winter hats, 24 tracksuits for children, 36 blankets and 95 pieces of children's underwear and 123 pillows and 246 pillow cases were donated by EHO to the Šid RAP.
- APC and "Novosadski Humanitarni Center" distributed clothes at Adaševci.
- 48 UNHCR refugee housing units (RHUs) were put up in Preševo RC.
- UNHCR donated 3 wheelchairs to disabled refugees in Preševo and Šid.
- UNHCR and DRC distributed 130 blankets, 16 jackets, 119 raincoats, 217 pairs of boots, bags and socks in Preševo.
- UNHCR and HCIT distributed 873 raincoats, 509 blankets, 345 bags, 277 pairs of boots, 442 jackets, 655 pairs of socks and disinfectant gels at Šid train station.
- Red Cross distributed hygiene packages for women and children, clothes, underwear and socks in Dimitrovgrad.

- Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation provided hygienic and food packages for 1,000 people to be distributed in one of the 6 Foundation containers in Dimitrovgrad RAP.
- Asylum Info Centre in Belgrade distributed clothes and hygienic packages. Save the Children distributed 43 hygiene packs for mothers and 112 hygiene kits for babies and 176 supplementary food parcels for babies 6-24 months old at the Info Centre.
- Philanthropy distributed 1,025 hygiene kits at Miksalište in Belgrade and 755 hygiene kits in Šid.



*Preševo - Levelling the surface inside one of the UNHCR rub halls,
Photo@UNHCR*

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

- 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 meeting took place on 27 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 5th November in Belgrade.
- A **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, took place on 9 November. Partners Briefing takes place every first week of the month.
- The **Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO)** hosts **Donor Coordination Meetings** every first week of the month. The last Donor Coordination Meeting took place on 9 November in Belgrade.

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

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