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Information bulletin

IFRC Regional Office for Europe

Migration response

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information bulletin n° 3

Brief situation update at 2 December 2015

Summary of the situation

Throughout the year, Europe is experiencing an **unprecedented population movement**. Most of the migrants travel via Turkey to Greece, and continue their journey on the Western Balkans migratory route through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia towards central, western and northern Europe, with Austria, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland being the main countries of destination. The vulnerable people on the move are in need of shelter, food and water as well as first aid, psychosocial support and medical care. Community engagement and information are also key needs for the migrants on the move nowadays so they can make safe and well informed decisions. This is especially important when it comes to vulnerable population with special needs who require specific response (single mothers, unaccompanied children, people living with disabilities, etc.). This humanitarian crisis affects a large part of Europe with around 30 National Societies providing immediate and longer-term relief to the migrants.

Since the beginning of 2015, more than 874,000 migrants have moved through Europe¹, and more than 3,500 people have died or are missing. Only in Greece, the number of arrivals by sea in 2015 is 727,000 so far, with over 92% of these arrivals coming from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries*. The top nationalities or countries of origin are Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. An average of 5,000 people keep moving every day through the Western Balkan migratory route in spite of worsening weather conditions and other factors which makes their journey more difficult. Recent policy changes in several Balkan countries are causing major bottlenecks as only people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are being allowed to cross the border, leaving other nationalities stranded - especially on Greece's border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Currently, the IFRC is scaling up its response to meet the migrants' needs through individual, **country-based Emergency Appeals** and **DREF operations**.

The IFRC **regional appeal on migration coordination, response and preparedness**² was launched on 20 November 2015 to complement the current country-level Population Movement Emergency Appeal operations along the migration trail. The aim of this appeal is to strengthen and scale up operational support, coordination, communication, capacity building and preparedness for at-risk countries in the region..

Emergency Appeal operations are in progress in Italy, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. The evolving situation is continuously monitored and the needs of the migrants are re-assessed regularly so as to best position the support provided to those in need.

At the beginning of October 2015, **DREF operations** were launched in Croatia and Slovenia to assist the response of those National Societies. The IFRC is directly supporting the latter National Societies to reassess the humanitarian situation and needs to scale up our response operation in coordination with other humanitarian partners.

Despite **deteriorating weather conditions**, sea arrivals in Greece and onward movement on the land through the Western Balkans have continued. Trends and eventual changing routes are being examined and analysed. Some areas (like the border between Greece and Turkey, and the one between Greece and Bulgaria) may turn into **alternative routes** for migrants, especially during the winter, when crossing the sea would be more challenging. Preparations **for the winter** are on-going in the reception facilities and at the transit sites. Additionally to the various challenges already present in the region and along the route, the climate situation is worsening (ECHO source) with reported high discharges/floods warnings during the last 24 hours by the national services (EFAS) in

¹ Not counting the countries bordering on Syria.

² The appeal can be reached via this link: <http://adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=115325>.

Romania and Germany. Some “orange” alerts for heavy winds in Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Sicily (Italy) and Germany have also been set up during the week-end.

Regarding the profiles of the migrants, according to OIM UNICEF, children make up at least one fifth of the 870,000 refugees and migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean Sea so far this year. The share is greatest along the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece and through the Western Balkans, where children make up over one quarter of arrivals. About 10 per cent of arrivals in Italy are children, with nearly three quarters unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. Children are among the most vulnerable of the migrants and refugees travelling to Europe. More than one third of all deaths in the Aegean Sea this year have been of children, many of them infants ([UNHCR and UNICEF confirmed Children Account for 20% of Maritime Arrivals to Europe in 2015](#)).

Recent developments

- **Transfers and registration** processes in several locations were **delayed** by a very high number of arrivals and transits as well as bad weather, leading to **tensions** in several places, particularly in Greece, Croatia and Serbia.
- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia introduced **new policies on border restrictions** on Friday, 20 November 2015 along with Serbia and Croatia, which have resulted in sporadic border closures and the screening of **migrants** on the basis of nationality. The changes have led to thousands of people stranded in various parts of the migration route from Turkey to Europe, including Idomeni, on the Greek side of the border. Estimates suggest there were 3,000-4,000 people waiting to cross to former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Tensions escalated among migrants and police forces. The Red Cross teams kept providing medical services and distribution of food and non-food items to those in need.
- The **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** and **Austria** have started the erection of **physical barriers** on their borders.
- In **Slovenia**, the authorities started putting up a **razor wire fence** along its border with Croatia to control irregular border crossings. Border crossings by train continue and it is expected that refugees and migrants will remain to have access to the territory through the official border crossing points.
- The European and African Heads of State and Government met during the **EU/Africa Summit on Migration** held in **Valletta, Malta** on 11-12 November 2015, in an effort to strengthen cooperation in the area of migration and address the current challenges. The IFRC participated as an observer at the summit. In a Political Declaration, the leaders stressed their commitment to saving lives and respecting international obligations and human rights. An Action Plan was adopted addressing five priority areas: tackling root causes of migration, enhanced cooperation on legal migration and mobility, reinforcement of the protection of displaced persons, fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking, advancement on returning persons who are not entitled to stay in Europe.
- **Turkey and European Union leaders** struck a deal on Sunday to try to control the flow of migrants to Europe. Turkey will receive 3 billion € and political concessions such as resuming the EU membership negotiation and easing visa restrictions for Turks.

Coordination, partnerships and funding

The IFRC Regional Office for Europe (ROE) is organising regular WebEx teleconferences to ensure an exchange of information across the Movement. The latest WebEx teleconference was organized on 24 November 2015.

The IFRC Regional Office for Europe is also coordinating closely with the ICRC Regional Offices in Belgrade and Paris so as to coordinate, harmonize and join their efforts along the migratory trail.

The below table provides an overview of the funding situation of the five population movement emergency appeals responding to the Europe migration crisis as of 30 November 2015. The overall coverage is 60%.

Name	Start Date	Target	Total Pledges	Hard Coverage %	Total Commitments	Hard+Soft Coverage %
Serbia - Population Movement	17/08/2015	3,233,828	2,337,909	72.3%	2,337,909	72.3%
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Population Movement	19/06/2015	3,258,043	2,446,213	75.1%	3,094,819	95.0%
Italy - Population Movement	24/04/2015	2,775,269	2,872,757	103.5%	2,872,757	103.5%
Hungary - Population Movement	05/08/2015	3,582,099	1,025,566	28.6%	1,025,566	28.6%
Greece - Population Movement	22/05/2015	12,670,715	4,014,518	31.7%	6,535,075	51.6%
Europe Migration: Coordination, response and preparedness	20/11/2015	2,264,552	756,901	33.4%	756,901	33.4%
		27,784,506	13,453,864	48.4%	16,623,027	59.8%

Operational context

In the context of the migration response plan, a number of new IFRC positions have been opened and partially filled with the valuable support from PNSs, which include Disaster and Crisis Response Delegates (2 persons), an Emergency Communications Delegate, two Information Management Delegates, a Water and Sanitation Delegate, a Resource Mobilization Surge Capacity Delegate and a Logistics Delegate deployed to the IFRC Regional Office for Europe. A Relief Delegate was selected and deployed to support the operations in Greece. An Interim Head Of Emergency Operations (HEOps) was also deployed to Greece to analyse the situation, to ensure that we are scaling up as well as to support the development of the operational strategy. Additional positions are in the pipeline due to the on-going operational scale-up.

The response operations (both the DREF and the Emergency Appeal operations) are being coordinated between the IFRC Regional Office for Europe and the respective National Societies regarding the process of implementation. The below section provides a brief overview of the current implementation status of the operations.

Emergency Appeal operations

Italy

- The IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal on 8 May for 2.7 million Swiss francs to support the Italian Red Cross in assisting 85,000 people with food, water and non-food items such as hygiene kits, feminine kits, and baby kits.
- The Italian Red Cross is present in all ports in southern Italy providing medical assistance and information, relief distribution, psychosocial support, and services such as Restoring Family Links services, translation by cultural mediators, and accompanying migrants to other centers after providing immediate support.
- In total, 3,600 volunteers are involved in the activities to support vulnerable migrants.
- The Red Cross is also present in transit camps in the north where food and health care are provided in addition to managing centres for asylum seekers and reception centres unaccompanied migrants across the country.

- Sea arrival trends during 2015 have been largely similar as in the same period last year – with the exception of September, in which an unusual drop of 40% was observed compared to September 2014. The open waters` instability in Libya and the longer sea travel has caused arrivals from Italy to decrease.
- *On 2 November 2015, a Revised Emergency Appeal for CHF 2,775,269 was published reflecting an increased number of beneficiaries (from 85,000 to 105,000) and an adjustment of the planned activities reflecting the high appeal coverage, based on continuous re-assessment of the situation.*

Greece

- The IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal on 2 September for 3 million Swiss francs to support the Red Cross in assisting 45,000 people over seven months with food, water, hygiene kits, emergency health assistance, Restoring Family Links services, and psychosocial support.
- The Hellenic Red Cross is providing assistance to vulnerable migrants on the different islands of arrival. The Hellenic Red Cross is training new volunteers in the whole country to scale up its response, and has deployed a rescue team on Kos and Lesbos, and also recently in Idomeni due to the current situation at the border with former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- The Hellenic Red Cross is providing Restoring Family Links services, hygiene and health promotion, first aid and basic health care, psychosocial support, and relief distributions. The Hellenic Red Cross also provides longer-term support for asylum seekers including social and psychosocial support and integration activities, and runs a telephone hotline offering interpretation and information to migrants in their native language (supported by immigrants from local communities).
- *On 21 October 2015, a Revised Emergency Appeal for CHF 12,670,715 was published after the re-assessment of needs following the first distributions and also taking into consideration factors such as the length of stay of the people on the move and the evolution of the climate conditions*
- Although the HRC and IFRC is present in the main entry points (Lesvos, Samos, Chios and Kos) as well as the transit point towards the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Idomeni), the needs are still very demanding and further scale up is required.
- So far, over 93,000 people have been provided humanitarian assistance through the activities funded under the Emergency Appeal.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- The IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal on 10 September for 3.3 million Swiss francs to support the Red Cross in assisting 110,000 people over seven months with food, water, hygiene kits, emergency health assistance, Restoring Family Links services, and psychosocial support.
- The Red Cross of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is providing humanitarian assistance to people on the move throughout the country, primarily at the border points, assisting with food, water, hygiene kits, baby supplies, and medicines. First aid is also provided.
- 11 mobile teams provide assistance on a 24/7 basis at the northern and southern borders. Each team includes at least one doctor, one interpreter, paramedics and additional team members responsible for distributing humanitarian aid. In addition, the Red Cross manages one trained team responsible for building refugee shelters.
- More than 73,000 medical cases have been treated so far.
- The Red Cross has an additional team of 20 people distributing humanitarian aid at the border point near Gevgelija, where the situation currently require more humanitarian response after thousands of migrants are stranded in the border following the new policies set in place by the authorities
- A team of three Red Cross workers is focusing on the Restoring Family Links tracing service in Gevgelija, while a building team of 20 Red Cross workers have built 48 flat pack refugee shelters on the two borders.
- Around 206 staff and volunteers have been mobilized throughout the response.
- An Operations Update No. 1. was published to provide an overview of the implementation and progress of the operation so far. No major changes regarding the activities have been included. The Red Cross of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia keeps implementing their activities as planned.
- *The Emergency Appeal is currently being revised to adjust the main lines of intervention to the current needs.*

Serbia

- The IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal on 9 September for 2.1 million Swiss francs to support the Red Cross in assisting 314,600 people over seven months with food, cash vouchers, emergency health, hygiene promotion, and Restoring Family Links services.
- Following recent developments, the Serbian authorities have limited the number of people crossing into Croatia from Serbia. There is an average of 1,500 to 2,000 people entering Serbia on daily bases, mainly from FYR or Macedonia but also from Bulgaria. Still, people have to wait on the border for hours and days, and the Red Cross continues providing humanitarian assistance. The migratory route keep predominately leading to Sid, in the NW of the country, in the border with Croatia.
- The Red Cross of Serbia is distributing essential aid items near the border crossings including food, hygiene kits, and raincoats in the western part of the country. The Red Cross bakery in Bujanovac is working on a daily basis to provide bread as part of the food parcels to people arriving at the border. Restoring Family Links services are also offered. Specialized Red Cross teams also provide assistance in other regions of the country where migrants are transiting.
- More than 260 trained volunteers and staff have been mobilized during the response.
- *On 28 October 2015, a Revised Emergency Appeal for CHF 3,233,828 was published reflecting a decreased number of beneficiaries due to the changing patterns of migration and the improved coordination of assistance, but an increased budget to include additional winterization activities.*
- More than 299,000 people have received support from RCS so far. The Red Cross of Serbia is also considering contingency stocks for complementing the efforts of the national authorities in provision of relief items for people who might remain in the country.

Hungary

- The IFRC issued an Emergency Appeal on 17 September for 3.6 million Swiss francs to support the Red Cross in assisting 120,000 people over seven months. The operation will focus on the distribution of water and basic non-food items, prepositioning of food and non-food relief items, health care including first aid, screening, and psychosocial support, hygiene promotion, Restoring Family Links, and National Society capacity building.
- One month after Hungary closed its southern border with Serbia, the Hungarian authorities sealed the border with Croatia on Friday, 16 October. This has greatly reduced the number of migrants arriving into the country at its south-western border.
- In cooperation with the Hungarian authorities, the Hungarian Red Cross has previously been providing food, water, clothes, blankets, hygiene items and first aid at several entry and exit border point along the Croatian and Austrian border as well as supporting government-run reception centres across the country. Hungarian Red Cross volunteers also operate an Information Centre at its Budapest headquarters, which gathers and provides information about the operation, donations and volunteering.
- *An Emergency Appeal Revision is in progress so as to adjust the implementation of the activities to the changing needs.*

DREF operations

Croatia

- The IFRC issued a DREF allocation of 350,000 Swiss francs on 2 October to support the Croatian Red Cross in assisting 20,000 people over three months with food, non-food items, hygiene items, Restoring Family Links services, psychosocial support, and first aid.
- The Croatian Red Cross is present at all relevant border crossings and a temporary admission centre with around 300 volunteers and staff involved on a daily basis. It stands prepared to deploy personnel to several accommodation locations and additional border crossings if needed.
- The Croatian Red Cross is distributing food and water, hygiene items, and clothes. It is also providing psychosocial support, Restoring Family Links services and interpretation services for Arabic and Farsi.

- The Croatian Red Cross is ready to adapt their response as needed and to respond to the changing needs.
- Several reception centres that have been active at the onset are now on stand-by. On 3 November the winter transit reception centre was opened in Slavonski Brod. Following the Croatian authorities' agreement with neighbouring countries, the people are transported directly from the Serbian border to Slavonski Brod reception centre without having to wait. In the centre they are registered and then assisted by the Croatian Red Cross. Also, people are transported from Slavonski Brod centre to the border crossings with Slovenia with no waiting time.
- 788 families have been reunited through the Red Cross's Restoring Family Links service in Croatia. Almost 38,000 raincoats have been distributed and more than 61,000 people have received psychological support.
- An Operations Update was issued on 1 December to provide an overview of the DREF implementation as well as to adjust the budget and operational activities dependent to deteriorating weather conditions and location of people staying in Croatia.

Slovenia

- The IFRC issued a DREF allocation of 286,000 Swiss francs on 3 October to support the Red Cross in assisting 10,000 people over three months with food, non-food items, hygiene items, Restoring Family Links services, psychosocial support, and first aid.
- The Slovenian Red Cross distributes food, water, blankets, hygiene materials and assists with first aid at all five reception centres and two accommodation centres currently in use. The Slovenian Red Cross is providing Restoring Family Links services at the registration centres that are the most frequent entrance point for migrants (Brežice and Lendava).
- 900 Slovenian Red Cross volunteers and 30 staff members have been mobilized from national and local level branches, with approximately 300-400 people involved in the response on a daily basis.
- Following the border closure between Croatia and Hungary on 17 September, thousands of people changed their route to cross into Slovenia from Croatia. The situation regarding the number of migrants and migration routes is rapidly changing. The Slovenian Red Cross monitors closely the situation that is very much dependent on the border control procedures in the neighbouring countries.
- Recently the situation have improved considerably due to better communication between Croatia and Slovenia leading to coordinated arrival of migrants. This also improves the humanitarian response as Slovenian authorities are able to process the large number of arrivals to the country.
- More than 190,000 people have received Red Cross assistance so far.

In addition to the above mentioned countries, several National Societies are providing humanitarian assistance to those in need as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. The major sectors of intervention are focusing on meeting immediate needs; food, water, first aid, clothes, sleeping bags, hygiene kits; Restoring Family Links (RFL) services; first aid, basic health care; psychosocial support (PSS); managing reception centres and accommodation facilities and activities related to social inclusion and integration.

The IFRC Regional Office for Europe has recently introduced an **information management system**, aiming to collect and collate indicator data from National Societies with the aim to enhance the operation throughout the migration route. This system has been in place for a month to improve the data collected and shared. The consolidated data is then shared with the National Societies in the form of maps and dashboards.

An **information management meeting and a communications meeting** took place on **16-17 November 2015** in Budapest, attended by National Societies, the ICRC and IFRC. Discussions took place surrounding past experiences and what currently works, to better our information gathering and use of information in this response. The attendees discussed methods of coordination and technical support to ensure timely data collection and information sharing, to be better prepared and respond to the needs of incoming migrants.

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



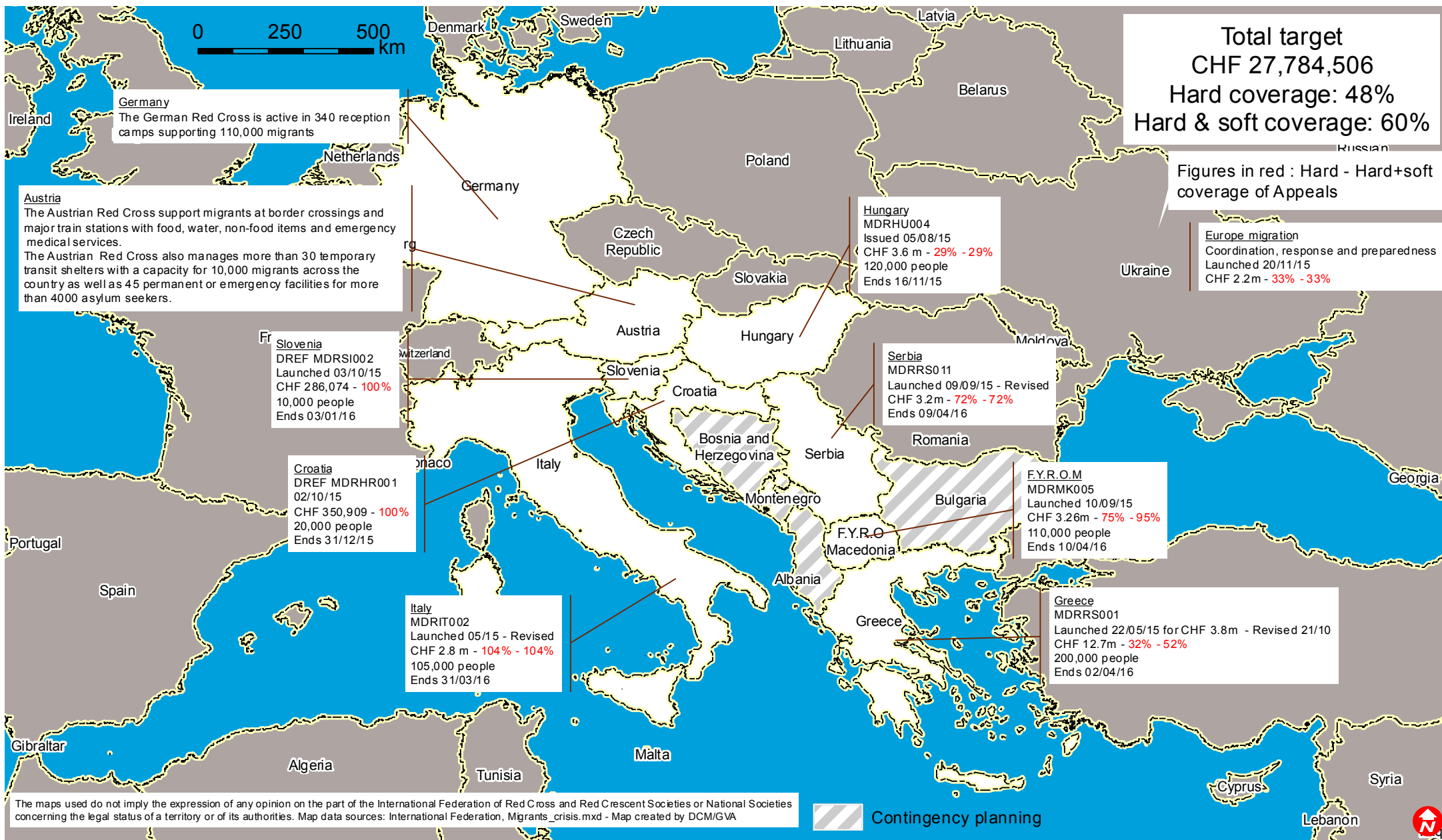
Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.



Migration Emergency Operations



Red Cross Red Crescent

Humanitarian response along the Balkans migratory route to Northern Europe

as of 1 December 2015



EVERY
LIFE
matters

12,406
STAFF
mobilized

at least
445,000
PEOPLE
reached

60,971
VOLUNTEERS
mobilized



The Red Cross Red Crescent is responding in countries in the Balkans, Central and Western Europe*

27



442,955

HEALTH INTERVENTIONS
including medical care, first aid
and psychosocial support



4,811,448

FOOD PARCELS & MEALS
distributed



1,391,169

**CLOTHES, BLANKETS
& SLEEPING BAGS**
distributed



at least
280,000

**PEOPLE REACHED
WITH CONNECTIVITY**
wifi, mobile phone charging



468,239

HYGIENE ITEMS
distributed

The Red Cross Red Crescent is focused on meeting the humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants, protecting them, preventing loss of life, and treating people with dignity. #ProtectHumanity

*Furthermore in Turkey, the Red Crescent has been responding to humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrants since November 2012 assisting 500,000 people displaced by conflicts in the region, primarily Syria. Activities focus on the provision of services in protection camps and on the development of community services and outreach programmes for the displaced population living in urban areas.