

Summary of the situation

In 2015, Europe is experiencing an **unprecedented population movement**, requiring a response on a scale unseen since World War II. Most vulnerable 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 Hungary) towards northern Europe (Austria, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland as the main countries of destination). This humanitarian crisis affects nearly all of Europe with around 30 National Societies providing immediate and longer-term relief to the migrants.

Since the beginning of 2015, more than 640,000 migrants have moved or are moving through Europe. More than 3,000 people have died or gone missing at sea. The most common countries of origin are Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Iraq. Vulnerable people on the move are in need of shelter, food and water, as well as first aid and medical care. The onset of winter is a great humanitarian concern.

Currently, the IFRC is scaling up its response to meet migrants' needs both through individual, **country-based Emergency Appeals** and **DREF operations** and a **regional coordination-type Emergency Appeal under preparation**.

Emergency Appeal operations are in progress in Italy, Greece, the FYR 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. As a result of this, the Emergency Appeal in Greece has been **revised**, the ones in Serbia and Italy **are being revised**, and an **operations update** is in the pipeline for the FYR of Macedonia.

At the beginning of October 2015, **DREF operations** were launched in Croatia and Slovenia to assist the National Societies' response.

The **Regional Coordination, Response and Preparedness appeal** is being launched this week so as to supplement the country level appeals and enable a flexible response framework in the current situation.

Highlights

- Despite **deteriorating weather conditions**, sea arrivals in Greece and onward movement through the Western Balkan have been continuing.
- **Transfers and registration** processes in several locations were **hampered** by a higher number of arrivals transits as well as bad weather, leading to **tensions** in several places, particularly in Greece, Croatia and Serbia.
- **Preparations for the winter** are ongoing in reception facilities and transit sites.
- The Hungarian authorities completed the construction of a **fence** at the border with Croatia, which has resulted in the increase of the number of arrivals in Croatia and Slovenia.
- A possible erection of a fence on the border between Croatia and Serbia can create **potential new migratory routes** towards Hungary via Romania and may result in new demands vis-à-vis the Red Cross Red Crescent.

¹ As the current update is the first of this kind, weekly or bi-weekly updates will be provided from this time onwards.

- Some areas (the border between Greece and Turkey, and Greece and Bulgaria) may turn into **alternative routes** for migrants, especially during the winter, when crossing the sea would be more challenging.
- On 23 September 2015, the **Commission of the European Union** launched an action called “*Managing the refugee crisis: Immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration*”, which sets the priority of actions to be taken within the next six months by the EU member states.² The action may have effects on the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement’s activities related to the current migration crisis, thus it needs to be analysed further.
- On 15 October 2015, **EU Heads of States and Governments** met as part of the European Council to discuss the migration situation, including cooperation with third countries, management of external borders and returns. The discussions resulted in issuing “*Conclusions*”, which are oriented towards intensified common border control, the prevention of movements and return.³
- In the context of the migration response plan, a **number of new positions have been opened and partially filled** with the valuable support from PNSs, which include: Disaster and Crisis Response Delegate, Emergency Communications Delegate and Water and Sanitation Delegate, deployed to the IFRC Regional Office for Europe. A significant number of additional positions are in the pipeline due to the further operational scale-up. A Relief Delegate has been selected to support the operations in Greece, his contract is underway.

Coordination, partnerships and funding

The 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 14 October 2015.

The ROE 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 22 October 2015. The overall coverage is 48%.

Name	Actual start date	Status	Target	Total pledges	Hard coverage %	Total commitments	Hard + soft Coverage %
Serbia - Population Movement	17/08/2015	Under revision	2,064,735	1,354,428	65.6	2,263,200	109.6
FYR of Macedonia - Population Movement	19/06/2015	In progress	3,258,043	1,674,705	51.4	2,434,950	74.7
Italy - Population Movement	24/04/2015	Under revision	2,710,576	1,717,985	63.4	2,767,145	102.1
Hungary - Population Movement	05/08/2015	In progress	3,582,099	837,866	23.4	1,009,980	28.2
Greece - Population Movement	22/05/2015	Revised	12,670,715	3,254,100	25.7	3,821,539	30.2
			25,455,261	8,839,083	35%	12,296,815	48%

²Source: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2015/20150923_1_en.htm

³<http://t.co/cHix1f1OCL>

Operational context

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% compared to September 2014 was observed. The open waters' instability in Libya and the longer sea travel has caused arrivals from Italy to decrease.
- *The Emergency Appeal is currently being revised so as to include contingency stocks for an additional 20,000 beneficiaries so as to upscale the operational activities in view of the upcoming changing weather conditions, as well as the potential changes in the duration and location of people staying in the territory of Italy.*

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 with 30 volunteers involved on a daily basis. 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.
- 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.*

Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) 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 FYR 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.
- Nine 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.

- Around 206 staff and volunteers have been mobilized throughout the response.
- *An Operations Update is underway to provide an overview of the implementation and progress of the operation so far. No major changes are expected.*

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. People are forced to wait on the border for hours and days, and the Red Cross has been providing humanitarian assistance.
- 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.
- *The Emergency Appeal is currently being revised so as to upscale the operational activities in view of the upcoming changing weather conditions as well as the potential changes in the duration and location of people staying in the territory of Serbia.*

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.
- *It might be considered to revise the Emergency Appeal as the situation in other countries unfolds.*

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 150-200 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.

- Several reception centres that have been active at the onset are now on stand-by. The Croatian Red Cross is ready to adapt their response as needed and to respond to the changing needs.

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.
- Up until recently, Slovenia has received fewer migrants than the surrounding countries, but the country has been extensively preparing for an expected higher influx. Following a border closing between Croatia and Hungary on 17 September, thousands of people changed their route to cross into Slovenia from Croatia. During the period from 18 September to 20 October, the Slovenian Red Cross assisted more than 5,000 migrants.
- 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 200-300 people involved in the response on a daily basis.

In addition to the above mentioned countries, several National Societies provide 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 is aiming at introducing an Information Management function. In addition to improved reporting and positioning, it aims at strengthening the effectiveness of the operation by supporting each National Society along the migration trail through **improved Information Management System**. A number of National Societies requested IFRC coordination and technical support in ensuring timely (and possibly effortless) information sharing between RC / RC NS within the migratory route to be better prepared to respond to the needs of incoming migrants and to establish efficient referral systems for migrants with special needs.

General challenges and concerns

At this point of time, the following general challenges have been identified:

- **Unpredictability of the situation.** It is expected that the onset of winter will change the number of arrivals as well as the migratory routes. Arrivals are also dependent on the border regulations of the respective governments. It is also unclear how recent developments in the countries of origin will effect migration. National Societies are awaiting government decisions in order to plan their response
- **Diverse needs among migrants.** A particular challenge in the context of recent increase of irregular arrivals is the arrivals of persons with different needs and rights. Although asylum-seekers, refugees and economic migrants often travel alongside migrants in so-called “mixed flows”, they have specific needs and are protected by a specific legal frame- work. NSs might come across migrants with further specific needs and specific vulnerabilities such as migrants who have experienced violent situation or trauma, including victims of trafficking, exploitation and degrading treatment. Unaccompanied minors and children are of special concern. At the level of the EU there is a strengthening political will to send migrants back to their countries of origin who are not eligible for international protection and the EU is planning to consolidate a list of safe countries. The number of return decisions and rejected asylum seekers from EU countries will increase in the future. Migrants have a wide range of very specific needs and vulnerabilities, which are caused by a unique combination of challenges and root causes. Protecting people on the move is a collective responsibility and to address the challenges there is a need for enhanced cooperation between different actors, including both governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- **Winterization.** The vulnerability of migrants will increase as the weather gets colder, as needs will arise to have adequate clothing and shelter. The National Societies are in the process of stockpiling winterization items (raincoats, blankets, clothes, etc.)

- **Mobilizing and training of volunteers.** National Societies need to train more volunteers, especially volunteers with language skills in Arabic and Farsi. The risk of exhaustion for National Societies and volunteers needs to be addressed as we see no end to the crisis in the near or medium term future.
- **Limited stock for sheltering equipment.** Limited stock for sheltering equipment is available in the market, so the IFRC is working to have alternative suppliers from outside Europe to ensure that adequate quantity of stocks are available even in case of urgent additional demand.

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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

