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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° 4

Brief situation update at 15 December 2015

## The situation

As of today, more than 950,000 people are being reported to have crossed to Europe in 2015. The main migratory entry point remains Greece, with almost 800,000 arrivals registered.

Demographically, we can still see a majority presence of males among the migrants on the move (57%), but we encounter more families, which is translated into an increasing number of children (27%) and women (16%). Recent changes on border policy controls developed by nations such as Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which are limiting the entry into their territories to nationalities (Syrians, Iraqis and Afghanis) are still in place and have led to changes in the previous patterns of the countries of origin.

On the Western Balkans migratory route, 91% of the migrants come from these three nationalities (Syria 59%, Afghanistan 24%, Iraq 8%).<sup>1</sup> Other countries of origin represented in Greece are Pakistan, Somalia, Morocco and Bangladesh, among others.

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

### European Border Situation Relating to Migrant Movement December 2015

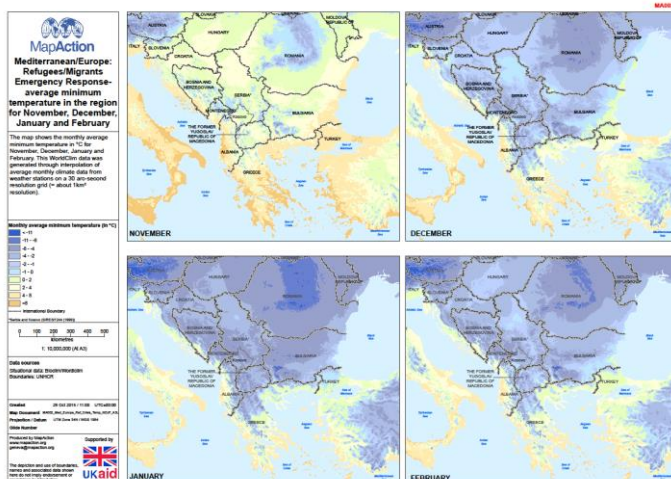


- Schengen Area Member State
- Schengen Area Candidate (legally obliged to follow Schengen rules)
- Border Controls in Place
- Fence along Border
- Planned Fence or Partial Barrier
- Natural Barrier (mountain ranges or rivers)

Pathways represent general trends based on available data at this time.

Data sources: UNHCR, IOM, IFRC, National Earth

The maps used do not imply the express or any approval on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.



With the approaching winter, many countries along the migratory route are typically exposed to severe weather conditions with temperatures below zero on the Celsius scale. Strong winds and worsening sea conditions are being reported in Greece, which explains a temporary decrease in arrivals during the last days.

Also, while the recent agreements between the EU Governments and Turkey focused on improving living conditions for refugees in Turkish territories while aiming at the control of the migratory flow, the flow of migrants, although reduced in numbers, stays steady.

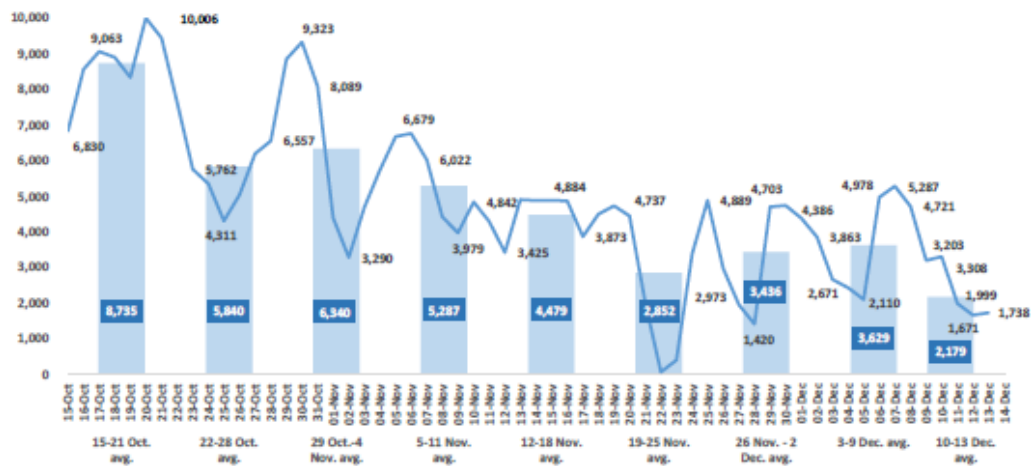
As projected by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors, even if in decreasing numbers, the migratory flow still continues in spite of worsening weather conditions or border restrictions.

<sup>1</sup> The sources of the maps are the following: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php> (upper right) and <http://mapaction.org/map-catalogue/mapdetail/4037.html> (down left).

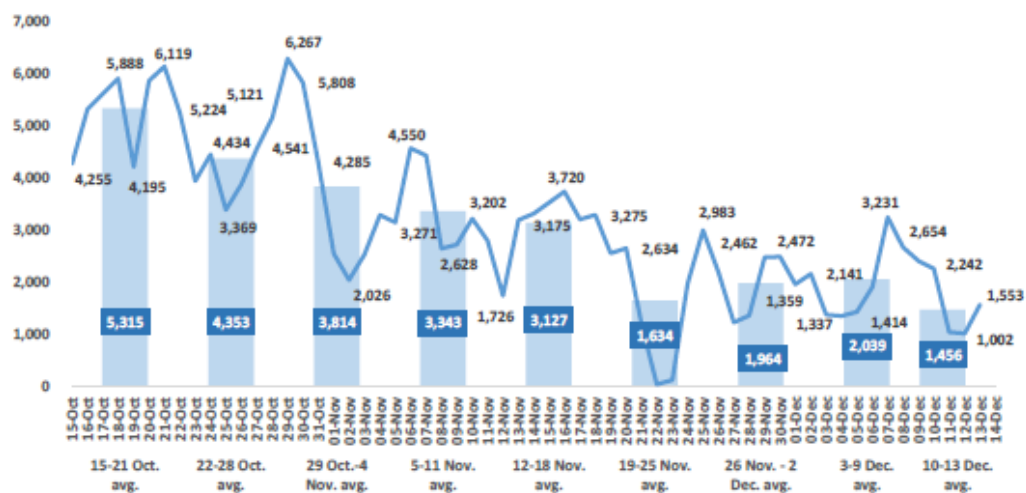
Currently, an average of 2,000 to 2,500 people are arriving in Greece on daily basis, especially in the Greek island of Lesbos. Arrivals in islands such as Kos, Chios, Samos or Leros have substantially decreased.

### Daily estimates – arrivals per location

#### Greece



#### Lesbos



Daily arrivals are estimates based on the most reliable information available provided by the authorities. Daily estimates cannot be considered final and might change based on consolidated figures provided by authorities on a regular basis.

Source: UNHCR

The situation in Greece remains a major concern for us. Last week, the Greek authorities evacuated the transit camps in Idomeni which held a serious backlog of migrants that had not been allowed to continue into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia due to their countries of origin as mentioned above. Over 3,000 people have been sheltered in Athens, where the Greek Government is leading on this response to accommodate migrants in the Taekwondo Stadium. The Hellenic Red Cross, like other humanitarian actors, is providing assistance to the

population in those facilities. However, tensions remain vivid due to the uncertainty of the situation for the migrants. The results of these border restriction policies are making migrants look for alternative routes, which include Bulgaria and Albania (the latter leading towards Italy).

Meanwhile, the migrants coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are keeping on the move through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and continue the so called Western Balkans route towards Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria to reach the main countries of destination such as Germany, Finland or Sweden.

### Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies keep up scaling their emergency response to meet the humanitarian needs of the migrants across the migratory route, whether is entry countries, transit countries or those of destination. While most of the National Societies supported by multilateral funding, especially in the entry and transit countries, focus their activities on health (basic health care, first aid provision and psychosocial support), relief distributions (food and non-food items), restoring family links (RFL) and community engagement, others focus also on integration programmes and/or shelter.

In **Greece**, the response to the main needs of people on the move remains critical but we are also looking into Red Cross support in transit centres opened by the Greek Government. Hellenic RC is providing support at both levels, now increasing its support in Athens with the provision of relief items, health services, RFL and community engagement.



Hellenic Red Cross volunteers are distributing food at a TaeKwonDo hall in Athens where 2,500 migrants arrived on 9 December 2015. Photo: IFRC

In **Italy**, the emergency appeal was revised in November 2015, allowing the IFRC to support the Italian Red Cross to assist up to 105,000 people (increased from 85,000 in the original version) including contingency stock for 20,000 as a preparedness measure during the ongoing migration crisis. The Italian Red Cross has been focusing its support on the provision of basic food and non-food items; health care; including First Aid and Psychosocial Support; hygiene promotion; Restoring Family Links (RFL) services, as well as building the response capacities of the National Society.

In **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the National Society is currently scaling up Red Cross response and revising the emergency appeal to cover more needs to more people, with a special focus on winter-related activities but also incorporating contingency planning coordinated with the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the light of our auxiliary role.

The Red Cross of **Serbia** keeps providing support to more than 2,000 people every day and ensuring also the support to migrants on the move but also coordinating with the Government of Serbia for potential medium and long term support to migrants that might remain longer in its territory. Contingency stock building is also included in the Red Cross of Serbia Plan of action.

**Croatian** RC is working on with support of a DREF operation plus substantial support from corporates, public funding and other institutions. Croatian RC is also planning to scale up its response and we envisage an emergency appeal to be published in the coming weeks after the reassessment of the main emergency needs.

**Slovenian** RC is also responding to main needs of migrants on the move through DREF funding. An RDRT (rapid disaster response team) member is currently supporting the National Society in planning and continuously monitoring the response.

As part of IFRC role in the coordination of these humanitarian efforts, the **Regional Emergency Appeal** keeps focusing on providing surge capacity to National Societies requiring additional resources either remotely or in-country. The building of a regional contingency stock is taking place in discussions with Italian RC to enhance our capacities for a contingency stock for some 25,000 people.

An important element that IFRC is developing is the Information Management (IM) platform, where IFRC, with the support of all NSs involved in this response and the IM team from British Red Cross, is offering very useful IM

products to have a wide picture of the whole response. These products, accessible through the IM portal<sup>2</sup> of the British Red Cross provide clear data and it is regularly sourced by all National Societies involved in this response.

## Pending issues that require special attention

- After several months from the beginning of the response, there is a need for psychological and emotional support to RCRC staff and volunteers. The stress, long working hours, witnessing life-threatening situations, etc. have undoubtedly an effect at physical, emotional and psychological level.
- We call on the EU and its Member States to enhance reception capacities so as to avoid threatening the rights, dignity and well-being of all asylum seekers.<sup>3</sup>
- In the spirit of the Florence Call for Action adopted by the Regional Conference in June 2014, we are trying to think ahead and plan for the future how to integrate migrants and how to create a culture of peace between the receiving communities and the migrants.

The main outstanding needs include: winterization support across the region, including food items, non-food items such as blankets and winter clothing, and increased health and water and sanitation support (approx. CHF 5 million outstanding, including the CHF 4 million gap in Greece), and operations staff in Greece and in the Regional Office in Europe (approx. CHF 1 million outstanding), including beneficiary communication staff.

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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.

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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.**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://brcmapsteam.github.io/europe-15-migrant-crisis/>

<sup>3</sup> Statement issued by the IFRC EU Office after the PNSs conference on the reception of asylum seekers.