

Information bulletin

IFRC Regional Office for Europe

Migration response

Information bulletin n° 5

Brief situation update at 15 January 2016

The situation

As of today, more than 1,030,000 people are being reported to have crossed to Europe since the beginning of 2015. The main migratory entry point remains Greece, with almost 875,000 arrivals registered.

Demographically, we can still see a majority presence of adult males among the migrants on the move (49%), but we encounter more families, which is translated into an increasing number of children (31%) and women (19%).

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) continue to be implemented and have led to diversions 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 56%, Afghanistan 25%, Iraq 10%). Other countries of origin represented in Greece are Pakistan, Somalia, Morocco and Bangladesh, among others.

Many countries along the migratory route are typically exposed to severe weather conditions with temperatures below zero on the Celsius scale. The winter, so far, has not been as harsh as expected. However, in the coming weeks worsening weather conditions are predicted, which may expose people on the move to further challenges.

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, and the situation remains volatile.

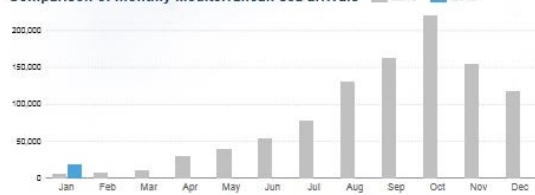
Increasing numbers of refugees and migrants take their chances aboard unseaworthy boats and dinghies in a desperate bid to reach Europe. The vast majority of those attempting this dangerous crossing are in need of international protection, fleeing war, violence and persecution in their country of origin. Every year these movements continue to exact a devastating toll on human life.

Top-10 nationalities of Mediterranean sea arrivals

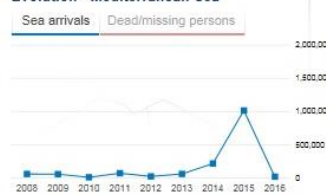
Top-10 nationalities represent 90% of the sea arrivals based on arrivals since 1 Jan 2015



Comparison of monthly Mediterranean sea arrivals



Evolution - Mediterranean Sea

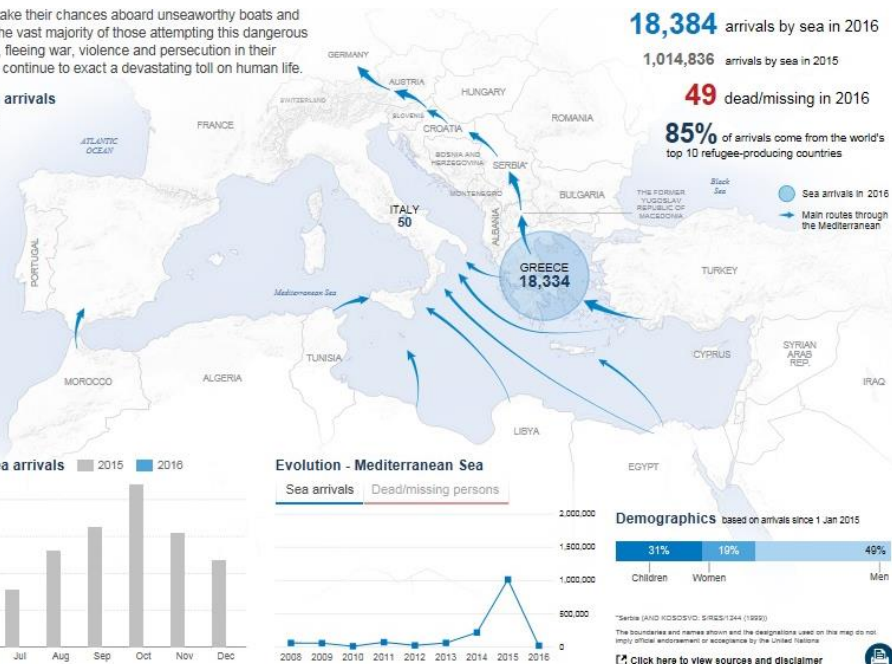


18,384 arrivals by sea in 2016

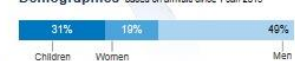
1,014,836 arrivals by sea in 2015

49 dead/missing in 2016

85% of arrivals come from the world's top 10 refugee-producing countries



Demographics based on arrivals since 1 Jan 2015



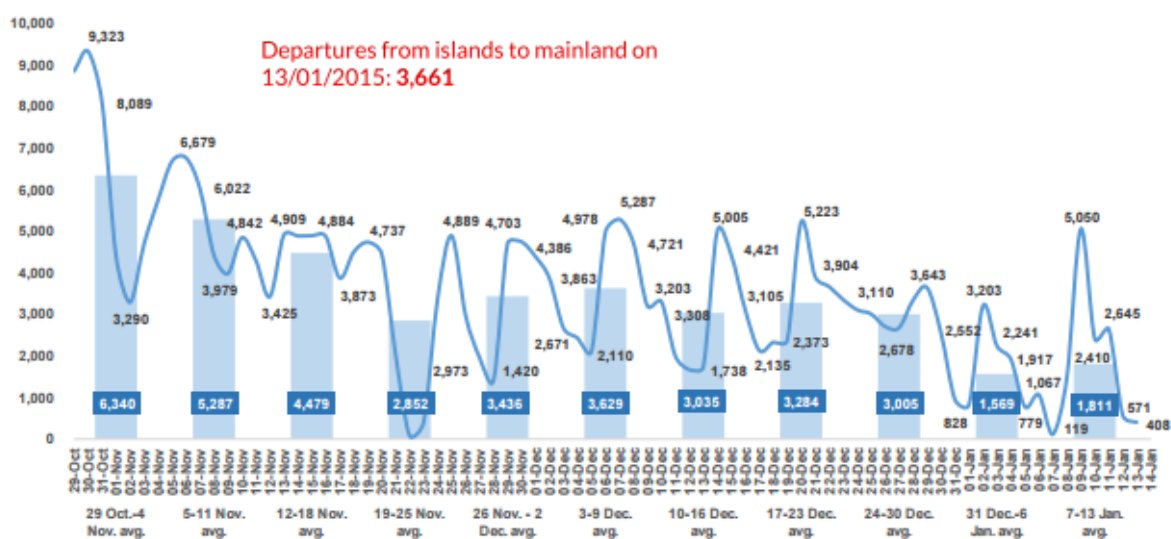
*Serbia (AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) (1999)
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

[Click here to view sources and disclaimer](#)

Source: UNHCR

¹ Source: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

Greece



Source: UNHCR - Daily estimates – arrivals per locations (29 Oct 2015 – 13 Jan 2016)

The situation in Greece remains a major concern for the IFRC. Due to deteriorating weather conditions, several rescue operations took place on the waters near Lesbos, Chios and Samos for boats in distress. Currently, an average of 1,500 to 2,000 people are arriving in Greece on a daily basis, especially in the Greek island of Lesbos. Arrivals in islands such as Kos, Chios, Samos or Leros have substantially decreased.

Like other humanitarian actors, the Hellenic Red Cross is providing assistance to the population in the reception and shelter facilities. However, tensions among the migrants remain vivid due to the uncertainty of their situation. The results of the 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 on 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.

As of 4 January 2016, Sweden introduced additional checks and restrictions at the borders. Everyone entering Sweden by bus, train or ferry from Denmark will be checked and those lacking valid ID documents will be sent back. This practice aims to reduce the number of migrants entering the country, which has already received more than 160,000 asylum seekers, and follows the re-introduction of border checks in Germany, Austria, France, Belgium and several other European countries. A number of further EU member states, being either transit or destination countries, have also introduced stricter asylum and/or immigration laws during the second half of 2015.

At their weekly meeting on 13 January 2016, the European Commission discussed the refugee crisis, looking at the measures taken in 2015 and the initiatives to be presented in spring 2016. One of the priorities of the European Commission in 2016 will be the return to the normal functioning of the Schengen system.

As of 1 January 2016, the Netherlands took over the presidency of the Council of the EU. During the next six months, the Netherlands Presidency will focus on four key areas, including migration and international security.² The full programme is accessible here. One of the first meetings organised as part of the Netherlands Presidency was on “Promoting the multidisciplinary approach in addressing migrant smuggling” organised in Amsterdam on 12-13 January 2016. Representatives of the Netherlands RC, RCEU Office and Croatian RC participated at the Conference.

² The full programme is accessible [here](#).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies continue implementing their emergency response to meet the humanitarian needs of the migrants across the migratory route. Due to weather conditions and also border restrictions in place as the main factors, the current flow of migrants has decreased substantially (see graphic above) although the humanitarian needs remain for those migrants on the move. 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. Basic health care services have been provided to migrants by the Spanish RC Emergency Response Units (ERUs) in Samos and Chios since October, and the Norwegian/French/Canadian Red Cross ERU in Idomeni as of October 2015. Over the course of December and January, all ERUs have been or are in the process of handing-over their operations to the Hellenic RC, which will continue to ensure basic health care to migrants in these locations both through existing and newly recruited local staff.

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) by adding contingency stock provision for 20,000 (including mainly shelter and hygiene items) as a preparedness measure during the ongoing migration crisis that could partially be used for to meet the urgent needs in other affected countries around the region. Currently, the Italian RC is in the process of procuring these stocks. 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 revising the Emergency Appeal to extend the activities until September 2016. The lines of action will remain the same since they are adequate to respond to the main needs detected so far among the migrant population. According to UNHCR data, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has received a daily average of 2,899 people per day during December, whilst in the first two weeks of January the average is 1,900 people.

The Red Cross of **Serbia** is revising the Emergency Appeal in order to adapt the response to the current needs of the migrant population. In this line, and in the face of the winter season, the provision of hot meals is one of the new elements to introduce in the operation. Besides, as a result of the provisions from different humanitarian agencies stating that the migration flow will remain at least during this whole year, the National Society is considering the need to extend the operation until September 2016. The current average of people entering on a daily basis has decreased in the last weeks, but an increase it is expected as the weather conditions improve. The Regional Office for Europe deployed a Disaster and Crisis Response Delegate to support the Red Cross of Serbia in the revision of the Appeal and to meet key donors.

The **Croatian Red Cross** is working on with support of a DREF operation plus substantial support from corporates, public funding and other institutions. The Croatian RC is also planning to scale up its response and we envisage an emergency appeal to be published in the coming days after the reassessment of the main emergency needs. This Emergency Appeal will support Croatian Red Cross Society to respond to the needs of some 175,000 people over the period of six months. The operation will focus on the distribution of food and non-food items (NFIs); protection activities including, screening, referral and psychosocial support, restoring family links (RFL); distribution of hygiene items and National Society capacity building. The operation activities are concentrated at the Slavonski Brod Transit Winter Camp as the entry point in Croatia where the migrants are received, registered and sheltered.

The **Slovenian Red Cross** is also responding to main needs of migrants on the move through a DREF allocation. An RDRT (Regional Disaster Response Team) member was deployed for one month to support the National Society in planning, reporting, volunteer management and continuously monitoring the response. The National Society is focusing its efforts on strengthening the volunteer management system and monitoring the deployment procedures concurrently with this operation. In December 2015, the DREF operation's Plan of Action was revised, the main change in the operation is the increased number of the vulnerable people assisted from 10,000 to 15,000 people. The needs in the field have also changed due to the development of the situation, and the distributed hygiene and food kits have been adapted to those needs. The quantity of the procured items has been modified. The operational timeframe was extended by two months until March 2016. The Regional Office for Europe has deployed a Disaster and Crisis Response Delegate to support the NS in reassessing the needs and updating the response plan of action.

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.

A number of Logistics and Procurement support visits were carried out (Slovenian Red Cross, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Red Cross, Croatian Red Cross, Hellenic Red Cross) with the aim to improve coordination as well as to provide capacity building. The procurements of the required products for the operations are being done in compliance with the procedures for procurements of the National Societies and in line with IFRC logistics standards, processes and procedures ensuring full audit trail requirement.

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. Storage and transport arrangements are to be made in cooperation with Italian RC, and stocks made available through procurement activities of GLS. Regional contingency stock will be combined with Italian RC EA contingency stock to be made available for National Societies along the migration route.

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 portal³ of the British Red Cross provide clear data and it is regularly sourced by all National Societies involved in this response.

Other issues that require special attention

- As per previous concerns raised in terms of psychosocial support for volunteers and staff, the IFRC Health Coordinator has produced a document on measures and recommendations for National Societies.
- In cooperation with the Bulgarian Red Cross, the IFRC Europe Regional Office is organizing the second Balkan Youth Meeting which will take place on 28-29 January 2016 in Lozen, Bulgaria. The focus of the meeting will be on understanding the challenges linked to the growing number of volunteers involved in the migration emergency operations with a special focus on the role of youth in these activities. This meeting, as requested by National Societies in South East Europe currently involved in the migration operations, will be an operational and youth/volunteer-oriented meeting. Topics covered during the meeting will include: rapid induction trainings for newly hired staff/volunteers; PSS for staff/volunteers; public sensitization, public awareness-raising to fight xenophobia and anti-immigrant discourse.
- 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.⁴
- 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.
- IFRC is coordinating with UNHCR and other actors at regional level as well as country level. The IFRC Regional Office for Europe is interacting with diplomatic missions and feeding them with information about the situation so they can advocate with their Governments on behalf of vulnerable migrants. A diplomatic briefing is planned in Budapest in the coming weeks.

The response to IFRC emergency appeals has been very strong with several operations fully covered. However, as the crisis is likely to intensify again in spring and continue throughout the year, all country appeals are being revised and timeframes extended (with the exception of Hungary which is no longer part of the migratory route).

A new appeal will be launched to support the Croatian Red Cross to provide basic humanitarian assistance to vulnerable migrants. The biggest funding gap is currently in the Greece population movement appeal, with over CHF 3m still needed to fully implement the operation, and more support is also needed for the Regional Appeal to help coordinate, support and prepare for shifting needs.

³ <http://brcmappsteam.github.io/europe-15-migrant-crisis/>

⁴ Statement issued by the IFRC EU Office after the PNSs conference on the reception of asylum seekers.

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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.

Red Cross Red Crescent

Humanitarian response along the Balkans migratory route to Northern Europe

as of 12 January 2016



12,573
STAFF
mobilized

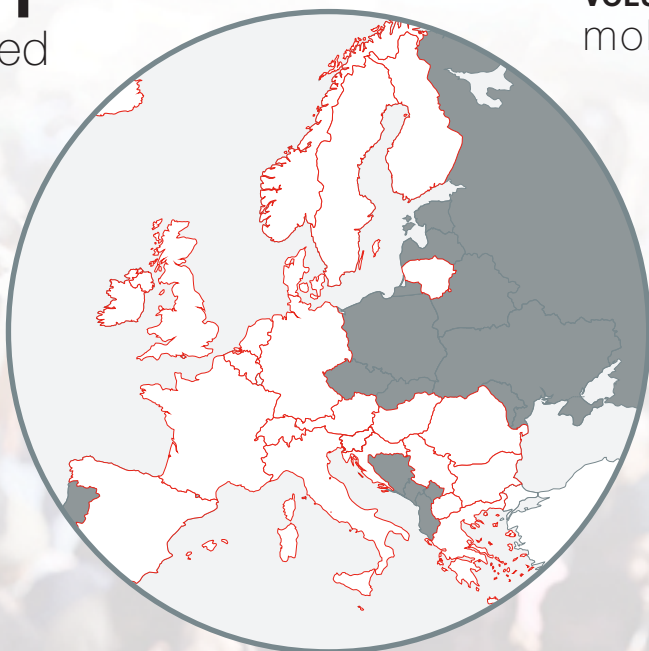
EVERY
LIFE
matters



at least
581,000
PEOPLE
reached



71,599
VOLUNTEERS
mobilized



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

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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.



662,668

HEALTH INTERVENTIONS
including medical care, first aid
and psychosocial support



6,163,832

FOOD PARCELS & MEALS
distributed



1,626,879

**CLOTHES, BLANKETS
& SLEEPING BAGS**
distributed



at least
325,000

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



563,959

HYGIENE ITEMS
distributed