

Global Monthly Surveillance Report

Making a Difference for Refugee Children in Europe

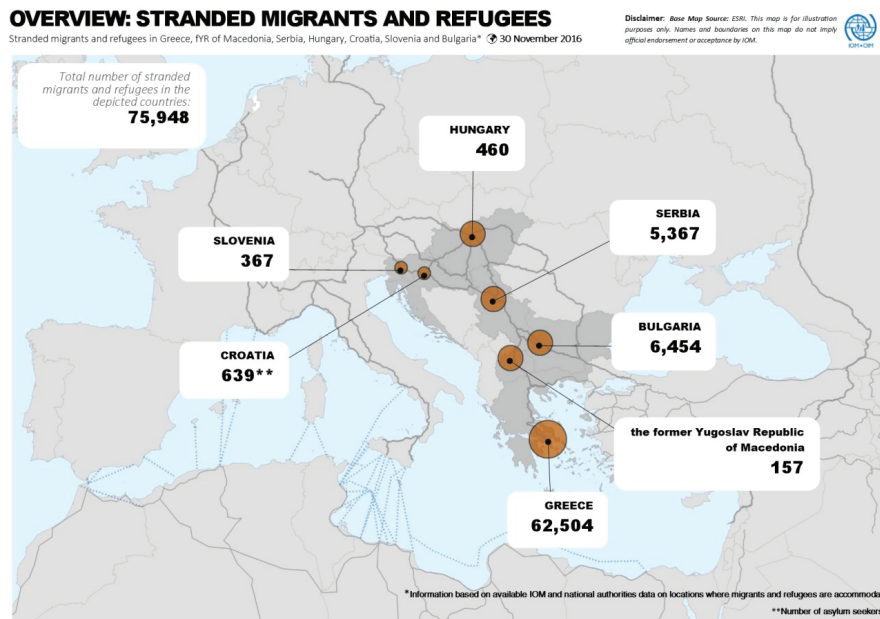
ISSUE #4 – NOVEMBER 2016

1. Migration trends, facts and figures

According to UNHCR¹, the total number of arrivals in Europe by sea registered since the start of 2016 reached **350'860²** (of which 173'799 arrived in Italy and 172'090 in Greece). As of December 1st 2016, the demographic composition remains unchanged compared to the previous month: 27% of children, 18% of women and 55% of men; main nationalities were Syrian 26%, Afghan 13%, Nigeria 9%, Iraq 8% and Eritrea 5%³. These numbers do not take into consideration those who were transiting without being registered.

During the same period⁴, IOM reports **374'037** arrivals in Europe in 2016. This number includes 350'573 arrivals by sea and **23'464 by land⁵** (that were not reported by UNHCR). IOM reports a daily average number of people arriving in Greece in November of 103⁶.

In November 2016, 75'948⁷ people were reported stranded in the region: in Greece⁸, Macedonia/FYROM, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Bulgaria. Numbers differ from country to country while the total number is likely to be higher since it only captures people registered (or staying) in official government facilities. IOM reported that since the EU Turkey deal agreement became operational, the number of stranded people in Greece increased by 60%⁹.



Stranded people along the Balkan route according to IOM as of December 1st 2016

- 1 In 2015 there were, 1'015'078 registered arrivals by sea in 2015.
- 2 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, December 5th 2016.
- 3 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, December 5th 2016
- 4 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.
- 5 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.
- 6 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.
- 7 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/> Stranded, December 1st 2016.
- 8 In Greece, at the same date (December 2nd, UNHCR is reporting 63'184 stranded people in the official facilities. <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2128>
- 9 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.

In Tdh countries of intervention

In **Albania**, 794 people crossed the Albanian border irregularly in 2016, of which 96 between November 3rd and November 30th, an increase of more than 45% since last month (65 in October, according to our last report). According to IOM, all people apprehended during the reporting period were returned to Greece¹⁰.

In **Bulgaria**, 1'755 people applied for asylum in November¹¹. This brings the total number of applications filed in Bulgaria to 18'603 in 2016¹². 97 people were granted refugee status, 59 subsidiary protections, 249 received a negative decision and 558 procedures were terminated¹³. During the reporting period¹⁴, the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior (Moi) apprehended 1'032 persons (half less than the previous month 2'029). 144 people were arrested for irregular entry, 343 for attempt of irregular exit and 545 inside the country¹⁵. Most of the people are entering by foot at the green border¹⁶. So far, a total of 29 people were relocated from Greece to Bulgaria, including 8 people in November (half less than in October)¹⁷.

In **Hungary**, in November there were 182¹⁸ registered arrivals through the transit zones and 2'365 people were stopped trying to enter Hungarian territory: 189 were apprehended while trying to enter Hungary irregularly from Serbia and 2'176 saw their entry blocked¹⁹. This month, 18 people were granted protection from which 4 received refugee status and 14 subsidiary protections²⁰.

In **Macedonia**, as mentioned in the previous issues, there is no systematic and reliable data collection about refugees and migrant movements in the country. In the period November 3-30 only 6 new arrivals were registered by the authorities²¹ and 12 new asylum applications were filed²². The estimates are that 100 to 150 people are entering into the country every day.

The local organisation Open Gate La Strada reported a new trend from their field work. Refugees and migrants are now transiting south back to Greece, doing the inverse route, after having tried without success to enter Hungary. These people, including families, explained that they had no money left to continue their attempts at border crossing and preferred to go back to Greece.

In **Serbia**, according to UNHCR, there were around 6'400²³ stranded people at the end of November and 1'503 filed an asylum application.

10 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.

11 <http://www.oref.government.bg/?cat=21>, Chart 01.12.2016

12 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.

13 <http://www.oref.government.bg/?cat=21>, Applications and decisions taken 1st.12.2016

14 Start of November until November 24th 2016

15 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016

16 The "green border" is the external land borders outside EU border-crossing points areas. Blue border is any external water border (maritime, river, or lake). See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/docs/pdf/customs_bgs_final_en.pdf

17 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, Relocated, December 1st 2016.

18 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.

19 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-december-2016/>

20 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-december-2016/>

21 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No29 and 30, November 2016

22 Open Gate La Strada

23 As mentioned earlier, the numbers of IOM and UNHCR differ. This number refers to the estimated number of people stranded in the country, while IOM only reports the number of people officially staying in governmental facilities.



2. Legal and political developments on asylum

2.1. At regional level

As part of the EU-Turkey Agreement, the month of November saw a total of 721 people readmitted from Greece to Turkey, with last readmission taking place on November 7th 2016. The majority of migrants and refugees were Pakistani, Syrian, Afghan, Algerian and Bangladeshi nationals²⁴.

Under the 1:1 mechanism foreseen in the EU-Turkey agreement, 2'761 people were resettled from Turkey in another EEA country, partly under the scheme agreed on 25 July 2015. The total number of persons resettled reached by the end of November is 13'887, still far from the extremely low target of 22'504 pledged by EEA countries during the July 2015 EU Council. It is important to note that not a single person in need of international protection, children and adult alike, was resettled to any of the Visegrad countries except the Czech Republic²⁵.

On the **relocation front**, and as of December 5th, 8'162 people were relocated to 23 countries: 6'212 from Greece and 1'950 from Italy (out of respectively 63'302 and 34'953 formally foreseen in the EU Council Decisions), with a total of 1'406 relocations implemented during the month of November.

The **transfers of asylum seekers**, including **children in families**, from another EU country to Greece under the Dublin regulation, which had been discontinued after two landmark judgements of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice, could be resumed in April 2017. Based on a series of recommendations, the European Commission claims that despite the extreme pressure Greece has been under and continues to be, Greece can process fairly and receive in a dignified way asylum cases that have first passed through its territory²⁶. This proposal, even if it temporarily prevents transfers of vulnerable asylum applicants including UASCs, is symptomatic of the gradual shift from the European Commission imposing itself as guardian of Treaties (and the Charter of Fundamental Rights), towards the EU Member States' governments showing different attitudes from one to another, including reluctance and slowing down the process.

Finally, On November 28-30, the **10th EU Forum on the rights of the child** took place in Brussels, focusing on the rights of children in the migration context. On this occasion, the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union announced the publication of a guidance aimed at "reducing the risk of refoulement in external border management when working in or together with third countries"²⁷. The decision to draft a guidance anticipated the current shortfalls of the integrated border management practice of Member States which, as documented and presented in the sections below, clearly violates the cornerstone of the international legal framework on international protection through the systematic implementation of push backs.

2.2. In selected countries

In **Bulgaria** the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) called on authorities to investigate on the systematic human rights violations in relation to access to the territory and international protection. According to the

24 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 2nd 2016

25 COM(2016)791, [Annex 3](#)

26 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20161208/recommendation_on_the_resumption_of_transfers_to_greece_en.pdf

27 See <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/guidance-how-reduce-risk-refoulement-external-border-management-when-working-or>



organisation at least 600 asylum seekers were reported to have experienced violence, robbery and degrading treatments inflicted by Bulgarian police.²⁸ The Bulgarian Defence Minister expects to complete its fence with Turkey by the end of the year, which will further limit access to EU territory²⁹.

In **Hungary**, the practice at the transit zones changed since the start of November. Only up to 10 people per day in each of the 2 transit zones are now admitted instead of 15 as before. The transit zones do not let people in during weekends and bank holidays. This further limits the access to the Hungarian territory and, therefore, to international protection and results in a worsening of conditions in Serbia including as regards children. On November 8th 2016, the parliament rejected the constitutional amendment proposed by Hungarian PM Victor Orban which aimed at opposing EU resettlement policy.

3. Child Protection issues: vulnerability situations encountered during the period

3.1 Information on reception conditions for families with children

In **Albania**, as of December 2th 2016, there were 58 people in Babrru centre for asylum seekers in Tirana, including 22 children³⁰.

The total number of people accommodated in **Bulgarian** facilities at the end of November was 6'454 according to IOM (from which 5'126 people were hosted in open centres and 1'328 in detention centres)³¹ and 5'948 according to the SAR (from which 4'535 in open (reception and registration) centers and 1'413 in detention centers). In the open centres there were 1'579 children, including 640 UASC (47 in Ovcha kupel, 134 in Voenna rampa, 39 in Vrazhdebna, 7 in Banya, 400 in Harmanli and 13 in Pastrogor)³².

During the reporting period a protest started in Harmanli reception centre when the asylum seekers were put in quarantine for suspicion of infectious disease. The protest escalated and police answered with water cannons and blank and rubber bullets as well as physical force, which was reportedly a disproportionate answer, considering the presence of 831 children in the centre. One teenager was injured and hospitalised after the clashes³³. Following the protest, approximately 300 people were arrested while no severe disease was found as reported by the authorities³⁴. A return procedure was launched for 50 Afghan nationals to be deported back to Afghanistan. Finally, the authorities reported that Pastrogor reception centre is to become a closed facility and that some people from Elhovo are to be transferred there. Additionally, the capacity of Lyubimets camp should be increased³⁵. According to the online newspaper Novinite "50 caravans and 400 blankets have already been dispatched there".

28 <http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/news/press/single/bhc-calls-authorities-investigate-reports-systemic-human-rights-violations-regarding-refugee-access-territory-and-international-protection/> November 18th 2016

29 <http://europe.newsweek.com/bulgaria-complete-turkey-border-fence-end-year-523324?rm=eu> November 21th 2016.

30 Tdh Albania weekly report December 2nd 2016, after a meeting with the Coordinator of Babrru center

31 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.

32 Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st Dec. 2016 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21>

33 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/afghan-minor-is-in-coma-after-riots-in-bulgarian-refugee-camp-11-28-2016>

34 <http://www.novinite.com/articles/177667/%27No+Dangerous+Diseases%27+Found+So+Far+in+Bulgaria%27s+Harmanli>

35 <http://www.novinite.com/articles/177677/Procedure+for+Repatriation+of+50+Afghanis+Launched>



In Macedonia, according to IOM, there were 157³⁶ people accommodated in state run facilities (99 in Gevgelija³⁷ - and 58 in Tabanovce³⁸). However, IOM only reports people officially staying in the two Transit centres (Gevgelija and Tabanovce transit centers). Open Gate La Strada is however reporting higher numbers with varying figures from one day to another. In November there were in between 306 and 250 people in 4 facilities (2 Transit centers, Vizbegovo asylum center and Skopje's safe house). As of December 1st, 250 people were reported to be in Macedonia - 95 in Tabanovce, 99 in Gevgelija, 36 in Vizbegovo and 20 in Skopje's safe house. There were an additional 20 people in Gazi Baba detention center. In both Transit centres the conditions are still detention-like. Finally, there are 150 to 200 people presumed to be present in the villages of Lojane and Vaksince. In November, two new families started the family reunification process in Macedonia (there are 3 in total).

Open Gate La Strada's field workers reported systematic push-backs/expulsions of people who irregularly cross the Greek-Macedonian border and the Macedonian-Serbian border by the Macedonian police. The push-back of highly vulnerable categories of migrants especially UASCs' is of great concern. In November :

- 210 people were pushed back to Greece from Macedonia. These numbers only represent what the project team in Gevgelija was able to observe; real numbers are likely to be higher.
- 268 people were reported to be pushed back from Serbia to Macedonia including 3 families with children. This number only captures the number of people who came back to Tabanovce and shows a sharp increase when compared to October figures. Real numbers are likely to be higher and many people go back to Vakince and Lojane instead of coming to Tabanovce transit center. Some attempt to cross the border again.
- As a direct result of push-backs from Serbia and the refusal of authorities to accept new arrivals in Tabanovce transit center, a group of 35 persons are staying outside the camp. Members of the group were not allowed to access the Transit Centre despite referrals made by Open Gate La Strada to the police in relation to potential UASC cases requiring immediate protection.

In Serbia, approximately 5'290 people out of the estimated 6'400 people stranded in Serbia were accommodated in the 13 government facilities in this country. A new reception centre was open on November 25th in Dimitrovgrad, next to the Bulgarian border with a capacity of 120 people. According to health authorities, the condition of refugees and migrants affected by lice/scabies has improved but the epidemic is not yet fully eradicated.

There are still 1'000 people sleeping in appalling conditions in Belgrade³⁹. On November 4th the Serbian authorities forbade the work of NGOs outside of government facilities. A government letter claimed that this action aimed at encouraging people to move to official facilities but the lack of adequate support services further deteriorates the conditions in which people stay in Serbia. According to the Novi Sad Humanitarian Center and other local NGOs, delays in registration led 2 families with small children to sleep outside in the cold (as officially only registered people can access the reception centres). Miksaliste center, which is providing support to women, children and UASC is to be open 24/H from this month.

36 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, WEEKLY Flows Compilation No30, December 1st 2016.

37 54 Syrian, 39 Iraqi, and 6 Iranian nationals, 27 women, 21 men and 51 children

38 51 Syrian, 7 Iraqi, 12 female, 10 male and 36 children

39 http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/uploads/uploadsmediterranean/images/documents/dt_mediterranean_2225.jpg UNHCR
[Serbia Update 28-30](#) November 2016



3.2 Focus on UASC in Bulgaria and Macedonia

In Macedonia, there were 20 UASC identified by Open Gate La Strada in November (16 were in Tabanovce, 1 in Gevgelija and 3 were staying in the safe house). From these only 2 were appointed a guardian. However, at the end of November, one of the minors that had a guardian left the Macedonian territory to Serbia. Only 8 out of the 20 UASC were still in Macedonia at the end of the month.