

Global Monthly Surveillance Report

Making a Difference for Refugee Children in Europe

ISSUE #5 – DECEMBER 2016

1. Migration trends, facts and figures

In December 2016, IOM reported 75,948¹ people stranded in the Balkans: in Greece, Macedonia/FYROM, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Bulgaria. The total number is in reality higher since it only captures people registered (or staying) in official government facilities. The fact that the number of stranded people is reducing in one country does not mean that there is no movement or arrival anymore. It means that more people are exiting than entering. However since September, the overall number of people stranded in the region increased by 2,227. The increase was also visible in Greece, Serbia and Croatia while Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia and Slovenia saw a decrease in the number of people in their country.

Number of people stranded according to IOM ²	September	October	November	December	Evolution in the last 4 months
In the region ³	73,721	73,868	75,948	75,948	+2,227
Albania ⁴	No data	44	58	44	0
Bulgaria	7,070	7,071	6,454	5,534	-1,536
Croatia	577	613	639	613	+36
Greece	60,067	61,383	62,504	62,907	+2,840
Hungary (IOM) Hungarian Helsinki Committee	531 (576 ⁶)	170 (529)	460 (540)	Not available (467)	-71 ⁵ (-109)
Macedonia (IOM) Open Gate La Strada	183 Not available	198 (280)	157 (250)	130 (173)	-53 (-107)
Serbia	4,992	4,135	5,367	6,232	+1,240
Slovenia	301	298	367	295	-6

Evolution of the number of stranded people along the Balkan route according to IOM in between September and December 2016

1 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/> Stranded, January 5th 2017.

2 The numbers differs from what UNHCR reports and these only represent people officially registered in the country. The actual number should be higher and are also reported in this report for a number of country.

3 This number does not include Albania

4 This information was collected by Tdh

5 In between September and November

6 According to the HHC and UNHCR - <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/kategoria/refugees-and-migrants/news/>

In Tdh countries of intervention

The number of people being granted asylum in the region is very low in comparison to the number of asylum applications, which is raising concerns. The low recognition rate should however be balanced by the number of disappearances and/or discontinued applications due to disappearance as well as the backlog of asylum applications still being processed. However these numbers are often not available.

2016					
	Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary	Macedonia	Serbia
Number of Asylum applications	274 ⁷	19'418 ⁸	29'432 ⁹	762 ¹⁰	12'821 ¹¹
Refugee status	11 ¹²	764 ¹³	154 ¹⁴	1 ¹⁵	19 ¹⁶
Subsidiary protection	10 ¹⁷	587 ¹⁸	271 ¹⁹	6 ²⁰	23 ²¹
Push-backs reported	N/a	N/a	38,219 ²²	N/a for the year	N/a ²³
Negative decisions	3 ²⁴	1,732 ²⁵	3,735 ²⁶ (up to November only)	755 ²⁷	No data
Procedure terminated	250 ²⁸	8,932 ²⁹	48,229 ³⁰ (up to November only)	429 ³¹	No data
Incoming transfers under Dublin	N/a	624 ³²	513 ³³	N/a	N/a

7 TDH Monitoring Officer in Albania, phone interview with Alma Mele Director of the Directorate of Asylum (Albanian MoIA) January 19th 2017

8 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21> Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st January 2017

9 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>

10 Tdh interview, MYLA January 10th 2016

11 Expressed intention to seek asylum with most of it done in August 2016. <http://azil-podrska.com/>

12 TDH Monitoring Officer in Albania, phone interview with Alma Mele Director of the Directorate of Asylum (Albanian MoIA) January 19th 2017

13 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21> Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st January 2017

14 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>

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19 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>

20 Tdh interview, MYLA January 10th 2016

21 <http://azil-podrska.com/>

22 Includes "irregular migrants apprehended" and "blocked entries".

23 <http://azil-podrska.com/>

24 Additionally there 27 decisions for refugee status revocation in 2016. During 2016 there are 1975 total Humanitarian Residence Permit requested to the Ministry of Interiors. (Source: <http://www.punetebrendshme.gov.al/al/programi/buletini-i-mpb-se>)

25 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21> Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st January 2017

26 Up to November 2016, http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en

27 Tdh interview, MYLA January 10th 2016

28 TDH Monitoring Officer in Albania, phone interview with Alma Mele Director of the Directorate of Asylum (Albanian MoIA) January 19th 2017

29 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21> Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st January 2017

30 Up to November 2016, http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en

31 <http://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/MYLA-Report-on-Immigration-Detention-in-Macedonia-FINAL.pdf> This number represent the former detainees that left after going out of detention.

32 Out of 10'377 inquiries. Sources SAR January 12th 2017

33 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>



In **Albania**, 886 people crossed the Albanian border irregularly between January 1st 2016 and January 11th 2017, of which 92 between December 1st and January 11th 2017, a decrease since the last reporting period (96 in November, according to our last report). According to IOM, all people apprehended during the reporting period were returned to Greece³⁴.

In Albania several cases show that people seeking asylum and wishing to reach Northern European countries are exiting through Kosovo or Montenegro. The Ministry of Interior reported that in 2016, approximately 250 people were reported exiting to Kosovo. On December 13th, 17 Afghan nationals were apprehended in Kosovo by the police near the border. 4 taxi drivers were arrested by the police and indicted for smuggling. The group of Afghans crossed the Albanian-Kosovo border irregularly. They were residing at the Center for Asylum-Seekers in Babrru. One of the minors in the group is a child with special needs.

In **Bulgaria**, in 2016 there was a total of 19,418 asylum applications out of which 815 were filed in December³⁵. In December, 107 people were granted refugee status, 117 subsidiary protection, **1,732 received a negative decision** and **8,932 procedures were terminated**³⁶. In 2016, the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior (Moi) apprehended 18,802 persons who were arrested for irregular entry (4,596), for attempt of irregular exit (4,957) or for irregular stay inside the country (9,247)³⁷. There was no relocation from either Greece or Italy this month. In total, 29 people were relocated from Greece in 2016³⁸.

In **Hungary**, in December 369 people applied for asylum while 3,279 people were stopped trying to enter Hungarian territory: 267 were apprehended while trying to enter Hungary irregularly from Serbia and 3,012 saw their entry blocked³⁹. In December, 27 people were granted protection from which 15 received refugee status and 12 subsidiary protection⁴⁰. Out of the 29,432 asylum seekers registered in Hungary in 2016, only 425 (154 refugee status and 271 subsidiary protection) people were granted protection. In 2016, 513 asylum seekers were returned to Hungary under the Dublin regulation. Most were returned from Germany and Switzerland. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee was able to successfully challenge two transfers under Dublin from Hungary to Greece who were therefore not sent back to Greece. Additionally the HHC also succeeded in suspending a transfer to Bulgaria⁴¹.

In **Macedonia** the total number of arrivals registered for 2016 is 89,771 people from which 35,408 (39%) were male, 19,666 (22%) female, 34,471 (38%) accompanied children and 226 (less than 1%) unaccompanied children⁴². During the year only 762 people submitted an asylum application (168 women and 594 men). Only 7 people received a positive decision (1 woman was granted refugee status and **6 UASC received subsidiary protection**⁴³) and 755 received a negative decision. In December there were no new arrivals registered by the authorities⁴⁴ and 34 new asylum applications were filed: 1 person received subsidiary protection⁴⁵.

34 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, Monthly Flows Compilation 12 January 2017.

35 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21> Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st January 2017

36 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21>, Applications and decisions taken January 1st 2017

37 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, MONTHLY Flows Compilation 12 January 2017

38 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, MONTHLY Flows Compilation 12 January 2017

39 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>

40 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>

41 For more information on Dublin transfers please look at <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-update-on-dublin-transfers/>

42 This number reported by the Macedonian authorities is likely to be largely underestimated because of several reasons. First because of the lack of capacities for registering and identifying USAC (In January 2016, there were up to 5 000 people per day transiting through Macedonia. Additionally UASC tended to travel with friends or other adults that they would say were their parents or simply say that they were not minors in order to avoid identification and not to be slowed down.

43 1 from Nigeria and 4 from Afghanistan and 1 from Pakistan. Open Gate La Strada/ MYLA January 17th 2017

44 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, MONTHLY Flows Compilation 12 January 2017

45 Open Gate La Strada, Tdh interview January 6th 2017

However, data provided by the authorities does not reflect the situation in the field. It is estimated that 100 to 150 people are still transiting the country every day.

Since November, Tdh local partner Open Gate-La Strada is reporting that people who have been in Serbia and Macedonia for weeks or months are deciding to return to Greece by themselves.. They are following the route back down to Greece. Some have reported that they are running out of money and cannot afford to support themselves anymore or pay the smugglers.

In **Serbia**, according to UNHCR, there were over 7,000⁴⁶ stranded people at the end of December. In December 1,117 people registered their intention to seek for asylum in Serbia. Out of these, 540 were children including 2 UASC from Afghanistan and Iraq⁴⁷.

2. Legal and political developments on asylum

2.1. At regional level

The last month of 2016 was relatively calm in relation to legal and political developments on asylum and migration issues. The EU-Turkey Agreement's operational implementation continued at a very slow pace: 63 persons were returned from Greece to Turkey in December bringing the total number returned under this scheme to 801 since the 4th of April 2016, date when the first return operation took place⁴⁸. The majority of returned migrants and refugees were Pakistani, Syrian, Afghan, Algerian and Bangladeshi nationals⁴⁹.

On the **relocations** front, as of January 18th 2017, 10,128 people were relocated to 25 countries (7,393 from Greece and 2,735 from Italy) out of respectively 63,302 and 34,953 formally foreseen in the EU Council Decisions). However, new plans were enacted to ensure the relocation of 160,000 persons in need of protection, though only 21,913 places were formally pledged by Member States of the European Economic Area. Hungary, Denmark and the UK did not make any formal pledge while the latter countries as well as Poland did not accept one single relocated person since the relocation mechanism became operational⁵⁰.

The **allocation of personnel** to support the efforts in South East Europe continued: Frontex has deployed officers between Greece and Macedonia⁵¹ (first time FRONTEX staff are deployed in Macedonia) while in Greece, the number of deployments of staff by FRONTEX and the European Asylum Support Office together almost reached 1'000 professionals by mid-January 2017.

2.2. In selected countries

In Bulgaria the number of voluntary returns from Bulgaria to Afghanistan increased in December. On the 8th 300 AVR applications were reported by the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior. The Afghan embassy explained that

46 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.

47 <http://azil-podrska.com/>

48 See Operational Implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, page 2, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_eu-turkey_en.pdf page 2.

49 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, MONTHLY Flows Compilation 12 January 2017

50 See: Member States' support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism, available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf

51 <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-to-assist-greece-with-registration-of-migrants-at-its-land-border-9Qg48q>



they can process up to 20 applications per day. Additionally, Bulgarian authorities announced in December that they would deport “irregular residents” on flights to Kabul. The flights are co-financed and coordinated by FRONTEX, the European Border and Coast Guard. Finally Bulgaria has called for a contingency plan from the EU in case of increasing migration from Turkey in spring⁵².

In Hungary, the government is expecting a new increase of arrivals in the spring and announced that they will train, hire and equip 3,000 “border hunters” - határvadász⁵³.

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 2nd 2016, the number of people in the Babrru asylum reception center oscillated between 67⁵⁴ and 44⁵⁵ people. A single person was present in Karrec detention center in December.

The total number of people accommodated in **Bulgarian** facilities on January 5th 2017 was 5,534 according to IOM (4,275 people were hosted in open centres and 1,259 in detention centres)⁵⁶. In open centres there were 1,620 children, including 552 UASC (61 in Ovcha kupel, 174 in Voenna rampa, 23 in Vrazhdebna, 5 in Banya, 281 in Harmanli and 8 in Pastrogor)⁵⁷.

In Hungary⁵⁸, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee reported that 467 asylum seekers were accommodated in the Office of Immigration and Nationality's facilities from which 194 stayed in open centers and 273 in asylum detentions. The authorities closed the Bicske Reception Center on December 6th. The camp was the closest reception center to Budapest and offered the best conditions in the country. Asylum seekers and refugees were transferred to other facilities including in a tent camp in Kormend⁵⁹ that offers extremely poor conditions. The other facilities are made up of tents or containers not suitable for winter conditions (at the time the weather was -5°C at night). In the group present in Bicske there was one family. NGOs and volunteer groups condemned this decision and accused authorities of worsening the reception conditions for asylum seekers and refugees.

In Macedonia, according to IOM, there were 130⁶⁰ people accommodated in state run facilities (82 in Gevgelija⁶¹ and 42 in Tabanovce⁶²). However, according to Open Gate La Strada between 225 and 173 people were accommodated in 4 facilities during the month of December⁶³ (As of December 30, 74 were in Tabanovce,

52 <http://www.novinite.com/articles/177838/Bulgaria+Calls+on+EU+Commission+to+Prepare+for+Possible+Migrant+Inflow+from+Turkey#sthash.aVaVYxHm.dpuf>

53 http://www.mtva.hu/images/download/hungary_matters/2017/morning/hm0113am.pdf

54 Of which 20 are from Iraq, 1 from Ukraine, 1 from Bulgaria, 27 from Afghanistan, 1 from Turkey, 1 from Pakistan, and 15 from Kosovo.

55 Of which 20 are from Iraq, 1 from Ukraine, 1 from Pakistan, 1 from Bulgaria, 4 from Afghanistan, 2 from Turkey, and 15 from Kosovo.

56 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, MONTHLY Flows Compilation 12 January 2017

57 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21> Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees' Statistics 1st January 2017

58 <http://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-key-asylum-figures-as-of-1-january-2017/>

59 Only single men were placed in Kormend.

60 <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>, MONTHLY Flows Compilation 12 January 2017

61 54 Syrian, 39 Iraqi, and 6 Iranian nationals, 27 women, 21 men and 51 children

62 51 Syrian, 7 Iraqi, 12 female, 10 male and 36 children

63 (2 Transit centers, Vizbegovo asylum center and Skopje's safe house).

91 in Gevgelija, 14 in Vizbegovo and 19 in Skopje's safe house). Additionally around 200 people are presumed to stay in the villages of Lojane and Vaksince.

The number of people officially straying in the Transit centers continues to decrease as people are trying to move forward. The closed conditions are pushing people (including families) to take significant risks to go to the next country. In December a family (a single mother with 4 children) risked their lives trying to leave Tabanovce Transit Center on a cargo train at night, in an air-tight container whose doors can only be opened from the outside. They were found by the police and brought back to the transit center.

In December, two families were successfully reunited in Macedonia (out of 3 families in total).

The **number of push-backs from Serbia to Macedonia and from Macedonia to Greece** has increased over the last 3 months especially during November. This is of great concern especially when it comes to the protection of vulnerable groups including UASC. MYLA (Macedonian Young Lawyers Association) reported that push-backs from Macedonia to Greece led to family separation⁶⁴.

Month	Number of reported push-backs from Macedonia to Greece ⁶⁵ .	Number of reported push-backs from Serbia to Macedonia ⁶⁶ .
October	122 (including 37 children)	3
November	210	268
December	148	95

In **Serbia**, approximately 5,800 people out of the estimated 7,000 people stranded in Serbia were accommodated in the 16 government facilities in this country. There are still 1,000 people sleeping in appalling conditions in Belgrade⁶⁷ and the upcoming cold is worrying as most of the facilities are not suitable for winter conditions. When it comes to accommodation in official reception centers many are facing issues and delays with registration. Novi Sad Humanitarian Center is reporting that families with small children were forced to sleep outside in the cold because they could not be registered in due time. Miksaliste center is now providing emergency accommodation for such cases. Together with Tdh, Novi Sad Humanitarian Center provided recreational activities to 1,064 children and adolescents in Miksaliste.

3.2 Focus on UASC in Bulgaria and Macedonia

In **Bulgaria**, a very limited amount of information was available regarding UASC during this period. However thanks to the information that Tdh has been collecting from the SAR collected we can see that there is an increase of the percentage of UASC within the asylum seekers' population in the centers.

64 <http://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/MYLA-Report-on-Immigration-Detention-in-Macedonia-FINAL.pdf>

65 These numbers only represent what the project team in Gevgelija was able to observe; real numbers are likely to be higher.

66 This number only captures the number of people who came back to Tabanovce. 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.

67 <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2322>, UNHCR Serbia UPDATE 26 Dec 2016 – 1 Jan 2017, 5 January 2017



Month	September	October	November	December	Change
Number of children in Bulgarian Reception centers	No data	2'043	1'579	1'620	-423
Number of UASC in Bulgarian Reception centers	595	625	640	552	-43
Percentage of UASC within asylum seekers	8.4%	8.8%	9.9%	10%	+1.6

Evolution of the number of children and UASC children in Bulgarian Registration and Reception Centers.

On 13 December Tdh and the Bulgarian Red Cross organised a roundtable gathering the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees (SAR), UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, the Bulgarian Ombudsperson, the Bulgarian agency for child protection as well as representatives of foreign embassies to raise awareness about the protection risks faced by UASC and to foster system-wide coordination. Attendees achieved consensus around the need to further develop and harmonize state policies as regards child protection and especially protection of UASCs.

In Macedonia, there were 17 UASCs identified by Open Gate La Strada in December (1 in Tabanovce, 5 in Gevgelija and 11 were staying in the safe house). Only 7 out of the 17 UASC were still in Macedonia at the end of the month.

	New UASC identified at the end of the month	UASC present in the centres at the end of month	UASC who left during the month	Total number of UASC	Number of UASC referred to the CSW	Number of Guardian appointed
October	9	1	8	9	No data	0
November	20	8	12	20	No data	2
December	13	7	10	17	1	11

Local organisation is reporting challenges when referring UASCs to the Center for Social Work (CSW) in Macedonia. UASC-specific SOPs foresee that UASCs should be referred to the border police and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) through the CSW social workers placed in transit centers. They would be then in charge of finding a guardian and conducting best interest determination (BID). However, there are regular reports that this procedure is not respected. In December, OG La Strada mobile team referred one UASC to the MLSP which did not intervene claiming that the child was out of official centers, in contravention with official procedures.

In its report on detention in reception center for foreign nationals in 2016, MYLA (Macedonian Young Lawyers Association) reported that out of the 438 detainees 45 were women (10.2%). Out of the **total 25 were children including one UASC were detained**⁶⁸. According to the organisation, the legal ground for detention was forced removal because of irregular entry in the country **Family separation** also occurred as a result of detention. In several case one man of the family has been placed in detention when the rest of the family was placed in placed in other centers.

In December Tdh through its local partners OG La Strada and the Bulgarian Red Cross started their intervention to support children and UASC in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. In Macedonia two mobile teams were deployed in the areas near the border with Serbia and Greece. The mobile teams provided reach out services to 146 people (including 27 children out of which 3 UASC) not allowed to stay in the transit centers. In Bulgaria, 2 teams started working in the Child Friendly Space located in 3 reception centers: Vrazhdebna, Ovcha Kupel and Voenna Rampa at the end of December, and supported 105 children⁶⁹.

68 <http://myla.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/MYLA-Report-on-Immigration-Detention-in-Macedonia-FINAL.pdf>

69 No breack down provided