

Global Monthly Surveillance Report

Making a Difference for Refugee Children in Europe

ISSUE #6 – JANUARY 2017

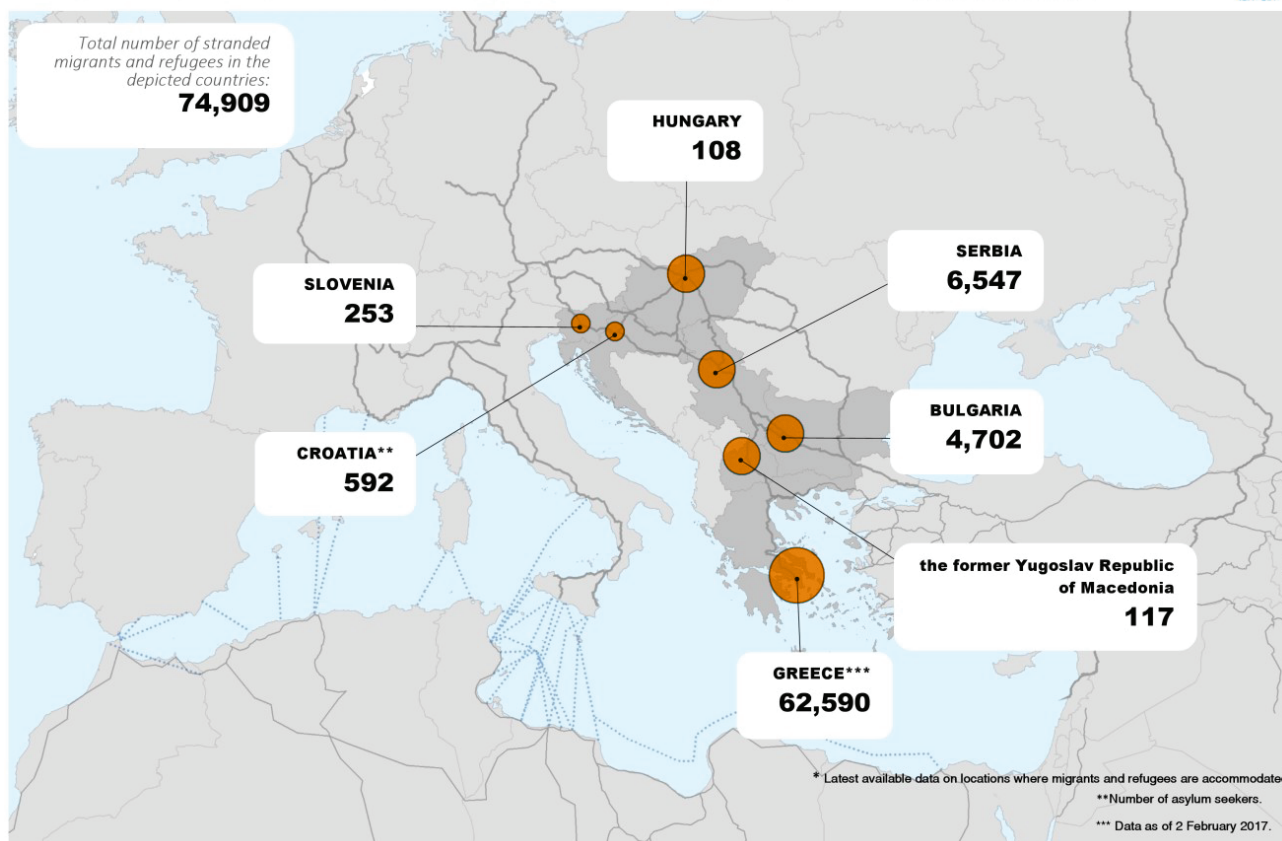
1. Migration trends, facts and figures

At the end of January 2017, IOM reported 74'909¹ people stranded in the Central and South Eastern Europe region, a slight decrease compared to the previous month (75'948). The real number is likely to be higher since IOM only captures people registered within national databases². The period was marked by a cold wave that put the most vulnerable people at risk especially those with no suitable accommodation in the region.

OVERVIEW: STRANDED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Stranded migrants and refugees in Greece, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Bulgaria* 8 February 2017*

Disclaimer: Base Map Source: ESRI. This map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.



In Tdh countries of intervention

In **Albania**, 109 people irregularly crossing the Albanian border with Greece were apprehended in January and were consequently returned to Greece³. According to local organisations 45% to 50% of the movement remains undetected⁴.

1 <http://migration.iom.int> Mediterranean Flows Compilation Report No2 9 February 2017

2 see more details about Bulgaria, Macedonia and Hungary below

3 Ibid

4 Tdh/ Tdh Albania team weekly report, 12 January – 19 January 2017

In **Bulgaria**, in January, 421 asylum applications were lodged, 34 persons were granted refugee status, 39 subsidiary protection, 243 received a negative decision and 735 procedures were terminated⁵. The Bulgarian Ministry of Interior (Moi) apprehended 629 persons, the vast majority (529) for attempt of irregular exit⁶. There was no relocation from either Greece or Italy during this month.

In **Hungary**, 21 people were granted protection in January from which 8 received refugee status and 13 subsidiary protection⁷. In the same month, 3'240 people were refused entry to the territory (3'102 under the so-called "8 kilometres rule" and 138 in other parts of Hungary). Since the start of the year 36 asylum seekers were returned to Hungary under the Dublin regulation (mainly from Germany and Austria).

In **Macedonia** during January only 2 new arrivals were registered by the authorities⁸. However, data provided by the authorities does not reflect the situation in the field. According to Tdh/La Strada there remains movement in Macedonia and it is estimated that 100 to 150 people are still transiting through the country every day.

2. Legal and political developments on asylum

2.1. At regional level

In 2016, the European Union and its Member States faced unprecedented challenges in managing the flow of migrants and refugees in Europe, with legislative and policy responses that have not matched the realities of Member States of first arrival as well as the needs of migrants and refugees on the ground. The recommendation made by the EC to the Council in January 2017 to maintain temporary border controls within the Schengen area⁹ is symptomatic of the little progress made at regional level. This has been publicly acknowledged by the EC Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs: "While over the past months we have been continuously strengthening our measures to address the unprecedented migratory pressure that Europe is facing, we are not there yet unfortunately"¹⁰.

On January 25, 2017, the European Commission (EC) published a joint communication entitled "Migration on the Central Mediterranean Route: Managing flows, saving lives"¹¹ aiming at setting out new operational directions in relation to the management of the Central Mediterranean migration route, detailing renewed cooperation with EU's partner countries in North Africa, particularly Libya. These include inter alia stepping up its efforts to return migrants who were not granted a status allowing them to stay, operations to crack down on trafficking and smuggling networks supported by enhanced maritime operations (also mandated to save lives at sea).

The operationalisation of the new European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) stepped up in January, 3 months after its launch. The Rapid Reaction Pool (1'500 Border Guards immediately available)

5 <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=21>, applications and decisions taken 01.01.93 31.01.2017, February 14th 2017

6 <http://migration.iom.int> Mediterranean Flows Compilation Report No2 9 February 2017

7 <http://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Hungary-asylum-figures-1-February-2017.pdf>

8 <http://migration.iom.int> Mediterranean Flows Compilation Report No2 9 February 2017

9 EC, Proposal for a COUNCIL IMPLEMENTING DECISION setting out a Recommendation for prolonging temporary internal border control in exceptional circumstances putting the overall functioning of the Schengen area at risk, [COM\(2017\) 40 final](#)

10 EC, Press Release, 25 January 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-124_en.htm

11 EC, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: *Migration on the Central Mediterranean Route: Managing flows, saving lives*, [JOIN\(2017\) 4 final](#)



and the Rapid Equipment Pool (e.g. vessels and helicopters put at immediate disposal) are now functional alongside the traditional joint operations carried out by Frontex. Among the latter FRONTEX's return operations have significantly scaled up (Since October 2016, the Agency has organised 78 return operations to return 3,421

irregular migrants – more than in the whole of 2015 (total 2016: 232 operations). Specific developments relevant to the present report's region of focus also occurred. The EC has selected Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as priority third countries to enhance Frontex's "operational coordination with third countries" after having finalised a model status agreement that will provide a framework of cooperation between the EU Agency and third countries with regard to border control and migration management.

As part of the relations between the EU and Turkey, the EC published a progress report on the facilities for refugees in Turkey. As of January 2017, and of the overall EUR 3 billion, half has been contracted (with 37 projects worth EUR 1.45 billion, out of which only €748 million has been disbursed).

The **resettlement scheme** adopted by the Council of the EU in July 2015 had foreseen the resettlement of 22,000 people in need of international protection from outside of the EU to the EU Member States. As of February 7, a total of 13'968 persons were resettled to 21 resettling states - out of which 3'098 were resettled from Turkey under the 1:1 mechanism (applicable to Syrian nationals only).

Finally, the increased pace of implementation of the **relocation mechanism** was confirmed in January, with 1'682 individuals relocated (551 from Italy and 1'131 from Greece) a relatively high figure in comparison to the 22'016 average (yet in slight decrease from December 2016 which saw 1'926 persons relocated). In total, 11'966 people were relocated since the beginning of the relocation initiative (8'766 from Greece and 3'200 from Italy) which still falls short of the target of 160'000 persons relocated¹².

2.2. In selected countries

In **Bulgaria**, the newly elected president Rumen Radev took office on January 22, 2017. His position on migration issues had not been explicitly detailed, yet, the new vice president Iliana Yotova already commented that she will push for stronger border control¹³. In Early 2017, Bulgaria received EUR 160 million from EU emergency funds to deal with the migration flow, of which a mere 5 % will be used to cater to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees (reception facilities, integration, etc.). The remainder is planned to be spent on border control – monitoring equipment, staff etc¹⁴.

In **Hungary**, the government announced¹⁵ that they will start detaining all asylum seekers. The idea is to restrict movement of people who have a pending asylum application. The authorities used hostile rhetoric to justify this decision saying that these people carry a security risk and cited the example of the recent Berlin attacks. Additionally, in a statement published on its website¹⁶, the Hungarian government accused NGOs of misinforming people seeking asylum and of encouraging them to come to Hungary. Finally, the authorities are preparing 'border hunters' to push back refugees at the border under the so called "8-kilometer rule". In total 3'000 of them are planned to be deployed to "protect" Hungarian borders.

12 EC, Ninth report on relocation and resettlement, 8 February 2017, [COM\(2017\) 74 final](#)

13 Tdh/ BRC team weekly report, 20 January – 26 January 2017

14 Ibid

15 <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-kormanyaszovivo/hirek/a-belugyi-tarca-feladata-az-idegenrendeszeti-orizet-felteteleinek-megteremtese>

16 <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/hirek/dezinformaciok-miatt-egyre-tobben-indulnak-a-magyar-hatarra>

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

In Macedonia, migrants and refugees report "constant use of abuse by smugglers including physical and mental abuse, black mailing and kidnapping for extortion of money"¹⁷. People also reported that "Lojane and Vaksince are still major dwelling places of smugglers where refugees and migrants are locked up and abused".¹⁸

Case of two men and one woman, including a husband and wife from Afghanistan met by the team: The group reported their experience in Macedonia. They explained that they were kept for 11 days in a room with only one meal per day and had to pay for it. They were told by the smugglers that they would be taken from Greece to Serbia, but stopped in a Macedonian village where the smugglers asked for additional money. They did not have enough and reported being mentally and physically abused for that reason. They declared having been forced to contact relatives to send money. The pregnant woman was also mistreated. Following this, and because they could not provide more money, they were brought near Tabanovce village and were pushed out of the car - the woman injured her leg. They were finally brought to Tabanovce Transit center¹⁹ after being referred by the mobile team.

-In Macedonia one case of **ill-treatment** of a pregnant woman (in Tabanovce) was reported. She was hospitalised for two days and explained that she gave birth alone in the toilet without medical assistance. The case was reported to the MLSP, UNHCR and the Macedonian Helsinki Committee²⁰.

One family (one mother and two children) is in the process of **family reunification**²¹ in Macedonia and 4 families in Bulgaria²².

Two families, (15 people including 8 children) left Gevgelija Transit centre and returned to Greece on January 15th. This voluntary return is a trend that appeared in the last months. People detained in the transit centres decide to go back to Greece where they think that conditions are better.

Push-backs from Serbia to Macedonia and from Macedonia to Greece continue to raise great concerns especially in relation to the protection of vulnerable groups including UASC.

Month	Number of reported push-backs from Macedonia to Greece ²³ .	Number of reported push-backs from Serbia to Macedonia ²⁴ .
October	122 (including 37 children)	3
November	210	268
December	148	95
January	111 (including 10 children)	58

17 Tdh/ La Strada Mobile team weekly report, 30 December 2016 – 5 January 2017

18 Tdh/ La Strada Mobile team weekly report, 30 December 2016 – 5 January 2017

19 Tdh/ La Strada Mobile team weekly report, 30 December 2016 – 5 January 2017

20 Tdh/ La Strada Mobile team weekly report, 13 January – 18 January 2017

21 In February the family was deported to Greece during the night as part of the Readmission agreement with Greece. More details will be provided in the February issue.

22 Tdh/ BRC team weekly report, 20 January – 26 January 2017

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

24 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 Vaksince and Lojane instead of coming to Tabanovce transit center. Some attempt to cross the border again.



3.1 Information on reception conditions for families with children

In **Albania**, at the end of January, two persons were present in the Karrec detention centre²⁵ while 65 persons were hosted in the Babrru asylum reception centre²⁶ including 31 children and 3 pregnant women²⁷. On average, people stay in the Babrru centre for approximately 2 weeks before moving on. However, in the course of January, a change in the centre's procedure does not allow all members of a family to leave the centre all together²⁸. If the children of the family leave the centre, the parents are obliged to stay inside the centre and vice versa²⁹.

Accommodation was provided to 5'019 people in **Bulgarian** facilities at the end of January - 3'986 people were hosted in open centres and 1'033 in detention centres³⁰. There is no systematic detailed information provided about all the centres. The 3 centres in Sofia where Tdh set up its intervention hosted 1'681 asylum seekers. In **Voenna rampa** a total of 680 people were staying at the centre out of which 262 were children. 688 people including 302 children were accommodated in **Ovcha kupel** while the centre in **Vrazhdebna** received 313 people out of which 96 were children.

Despite earlier reports, deplorable health and hygiene conditions in open centers remain unaddressed: mattresses are infected by bedbugs, cases of scabies and other skin-related diseases are reported as are respiratory diseases. More and more people need to be accompanied to hospitals for medical checks. A rising number of people with chronic diseases (such as diabetes) and mental disorders have been identified. Additionally, there are needs for – baby food, hygienic materials, more medicines, etc.

Harmanli reception center remained closed after the riots that took place in December and the public health assessment. Since January 24th and 25th, 68 new container homes in the yard are functioning and in use by the asylum seekers (mostly families). There are heaters available in each of them³¹.

In **Hungary**³², the Hungarian Helsinki Committee reported that 377 asylum seekers were accommodated in the Immigration and Asylum Office's facilities from which 113 stayed in open centres and 264 in asylum detentions.

In **Macedonia**, according to IOM, there were 117³³ people accommodated in state run facilities (68 in Gevgelija and 49 in Tabanovce). However, according to La Strada between 199 and 213 people were accommodated in 4 facilities during the month³⁴ (at the end of January, there were 94 people in Tabanovce, 69 in Gevgelija, 11 in Vizbegovo and 10 in Skopje's safe house). People including children in families and UASCs transiting outside of the centre during the month faced extreme conditions because of the cold weather and the lack of access to any kind of service and support.

In **Tabanovce**, due to the cold weather, authorities accepted to accommodate some of the new comers that

25 Tdh/ Tdh Albania team weekly report, 27 January – 2 February 2017

26 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.

27 Tdh/ Tdh Albania team weekly report, 27 January – 2 February 2017

28 Tdh/ Tdh Albania team weekly report, 27 January – 2 February 2017

29 Tdh/ Tdh Albania team weekly report, 20 January – 26 January 2017

30 Tdh/ BRC team weekly report, 20 January – 26 January 2017

31 Ibid

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

33 <http://migration.iom.int> Mediterranean Flows Compilation Report No2 9 February 2017

34 (2 Transit centers, Vizbegovo asylum center and Skopje's safe house).

arrived to the centre³⁵. They were placed either in containers or in tents (when there was no more available space). All the new arrivals were hungry, exhausted and suffering from the cold according to La Strada's social workers. In the centre, refugees are complaining about the poor **medical assistance** provided and the lack of appropriate drugs. The hospital of Kumanovo said that they would be present in the centre from 8.00 to 15.00³⁶. In January, a new wire fence was built around the camp to further **limit the freedom** of movement of residents which hampered their access to goods that were exchanged with the local community. People staying in the camp expressed disagreement especially as they need additional food and items that are not provided in the camps³⁷. Finally, low **hygiene** standards continue to be reported in the camps which are further exacerbated by the absence of running water (the cold weather increase risks of unhealthy environment developing including bacteria and virus spreading) and malfunctioning electricity.

In **Gevgelija**, poor hygiene conditions were reported at the beginning of the month because of the local company not collecting the trash from the centre. Refugees complained about restrictions of their freedom of movement. Macedonian legislation provides that asylum seekers should be placed in an open asylum centre, but most of the people in the camp did not file an asylum claim for fear of being returned to Greece³⁸. Furthermore, many hope that the border will open again. Finally during the last week of January there was no warm food available anymore.

3.2 Focus on UASC in Bulgaria and Macedonia

In Bulgaria, a very limited amount of information was available regarding UASCs during this period. In Voenna rampa in January there were 174 UASCs (25% of the centre's population), in Ovcha kupel there were 54 UASCs (7.8% of the centre's population) and in Vrazhdebna there were 19 UASCs (6% of the centre's population). The BRC supported 46 UASCs through its Child Friendly spaces in January.

In Macedonia, there were 23 UASCs identified by Open Gate La Strada in January, 19 were referred to the Center of Social Work and 13 were appointed guardians. However, only 8 UASCs were still in Macedonia at the end of the month. Upon arrival to the camps they are provided with psychological support, information and referrals.

Macedonia	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	Number of UASC referred to the CSW	Number of Guardians appointed
October	9	1	8	No data	0
November	20	8	12	No data	2
December	13	7	10	1	11
January	23	8	8	19	13

35 In practice almost no new comes were accepted in the center in the past months.

36 Tdh/ La Strada Mobile team weekly report, 30 December 2016 – 5 January 2017

37 Ibid

38 A change in the Macedonian asylum legislation in April 2016 declared all bordering countries with Macedonia as "safe third countries" allowing discontinuing procedures and the lawful return all migrants and refugees.



The local organisations continue to report challenges when referring UASCs to the Center for Social Work (CSW) in Macedonia. Local organisations are reporting cooperation and communication issues with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and lack of information sharing on actions taken by the CSW. In the previous week 4 UASCs were returned to Greece. La Strada together with UNICEF and UNHCR asked the responsible institution to provide detailed information on the cases and to increase control and supervision of UASCs and vulnerable people in Macedonia³⁹.

39 Tdh/ La Strada Mobile team weekly report, 19 January – 26 January 2017