

REFUGEE/MIGRANT CRISIS IN EUROPE

SITUATION ANALYSIS - February 2016

SITUATION OVERVIEW

- + Sea arrivals to Greece reduced to an average of 13,500 per week in January, from 22,500 in December. Numbers fluctuate from 0-5,000 per day. Service provision becomes inadequate when high numbers of migrants arrive and when onward transport to the mainland is disrupted causing temporary build ups to occur. Similar issues occur at Idomeni, where there are recurrent border closures.
- + The conditions migrants find in Greece are still mostly inadequate, whilst conditions further along the route have improved.
- + Selective entry procedures continue to prevent some non-Syrian, Iraqi and Afghans (non-SIAs) and those not indicating Austria or Germany as their destination from transiting through the Balkan countries. Smuggling along the route appears to be increasing.
- + Winter weather, coupled with insufficient lifesaving equipment, has resulted in increased fatalities at sea.

KEY CONCERNS

Protection There are currently three key protection concerns:

- + **Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs)** Significant numbers of minors are believed to be travelling without a family member. Current protection measures are insufficient both to protect UAMs en route and to reduce the risk of their being trafficked. The child's desire to reach their destination as quickly as possible conflicts with protection procedures that require them to terminate or pause their journey, often in inadequate facilities (UNICEF, 02/02/2016). In Greece, children put under state jurisdiction often leave and continue their journey anyway, often without their original traveling companions who have moved on. They are then invisible to the humanitarian community. Referral systems along the route are being established to enable UAMs to travel with a measure of protection, although more effective identification, appropriate facilities and support are required as children are expected to continue to comprise a high proportion of the increased arrivals in spring. There is an onus on destination countries to ensure that arriving UAMs are

identified and protected from slavery and prostitution as it is possible that criminals are using the Balkan route as a cover for trafficking.

- + **Smuggling** Initial reports indicate an increase in the number of people smugglers operating along the Balkan route. This is possibly a result of increased restrictions on the movement of both non-SIAs and those disallowed transit because of their specified destination country (IOM, 03/02/2016). Smugglers are suspected of re-routing people to covert routes, where they have far less protection.

The main response concerns in the crisis are protection risks and the lack of preparedness for temporary surges of migrant numbers. Coordination and information sharing between governments and humanitarian actors continues to be an issue.

Lack of preparedness in Greece

Arrival numbers are expected to rise as the weather improves. More people will likely be stranded in Greece due to entry restrictions imposed unilaterally by destination countries as well as stricter border controls in the transit region. Greece cannot adequately respond to sudden surges in migrant numbers. Temporary border closures and ferry strikes have already demonstrated that transit camp conditions are inadequate for longer stays. Greek island Hotspots, the reception centres intended to facilitate eventual relocation to other EU Member States and/or referrals to the Greek asylum system, are still being finalised. There are plans to increase camp capacity but this will not be enough to handle potential surges. UNHCR and humanitarian actors have started working on a contingency plan for up to 200,000 people being stranded in the country in the coming months (IRIN, 02/02/2016). Supporting these numbers would require over 20 times the camp capacity built since the humanitarian response began scaling up in autumn 2015

- + **Accommodation** Border closures and/or increased arrival numbers will likely result in a significant need for emergency shelter and longer term accommodation. Mainland Greece currently has planned short-term accommodation for fewer than 10,000 people. Experience indicates that this accommodation will not be ready on schedule. Uncertainty over the political decisions affecting migrant flows, particularly the potential Turkish crackdown on sea crossings, keeps responders from mobilising further resources. The Greek government has limited resources and no desire to host more migrants, especially on the islands.

	Short term	Days to capacity
Greece Islands 	7,000 (3,000 planned)	3-4
Greece Mainland 	3,800 (8,000 planned)	2
FYROM 	2,500 (1,000 planned)	2
Serbia 	3,000 - 6,000	3
Croatia 	5,000	2-3
Slovenia 	7,000	3-4

Days to capacity based on January 2016 average daily arrivals by sea, existing accommodation, and assumption of halt in onward movement. Sources: EC, UNHCR, IOM, Local Interviews.

- + **Basic Services** WASH facilities serve the short-term basic needs of a mobile population. Many camps, particularly on the mainland, do not provide sufficient access to healthcare and lack appropriate security, particularly at night. Separate WASH facilities and well-lit sleeping areas for women and children are often non-existent, exposing them to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) risks (AI, 17/01/0216, UNHCR, 20/01/2016). If camp populations expand, existing basic services will be overwhelmed, leading to a rapid deterioration in migrant health and safety.
- + **Overcrowding** When bottlenecks occur, the frequent overloading of transit facilities on the Greek islands and on the border with Macedonia causes many migrants to remain in facilities not designed for long-term stay. They may have to sleep outside, walk long distances or get split up from family or travel groups. As overcrowding is usually caused by delayed but also restricted onward travel, tensions rise and can lead to violence. Some transit facilities have only one entry/exit point, increasing the risk of casualties should emergency evacuation be required.

Information sharing and coordination Coordination within individual transit countries has improved, but issues remain for the humanitarian response on operational and strategy development levels. In Slovenia, the Government has announced the creation of an Office for Migration, but the responsibilities of this new entity are unclear. In Greece there is no official interface between the international humanitarian community and the national government. Key contacts at

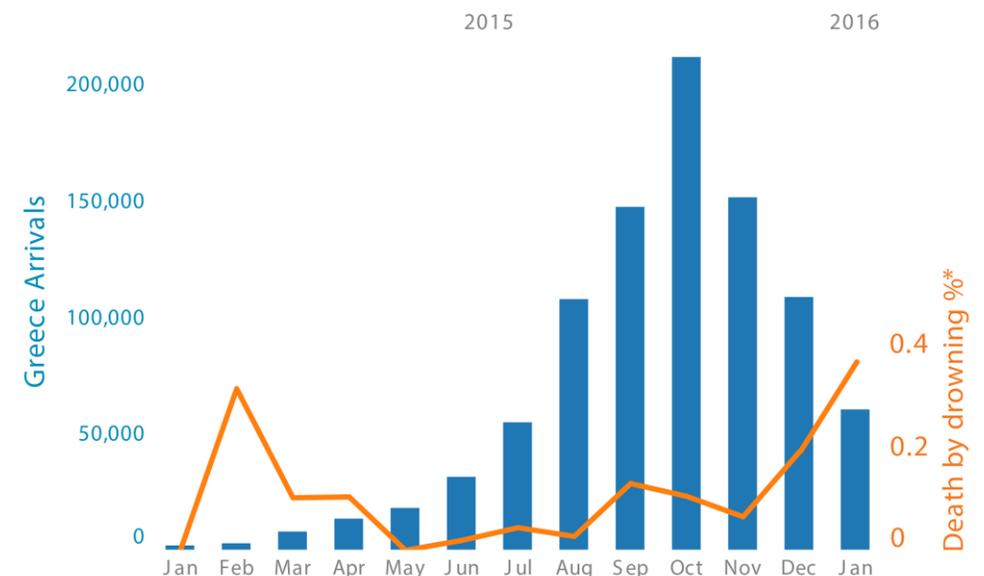
accommodation sites are not always available and protocols for providing medical assistance remain unclear.

Coordination issues can lead to misallocation funds and resources and uninformed planning. Supplies of certain basic items, such as socks and underwear, are sometimes low.

Across the region, standard operating procedures for protection issues, for instance for unaccompanied minors, have been slow to roll out, if at all. It has been difficult to identify and assist individuals in need of medical attention along the route as migrants spend little time in transit centres and health referral systems are not standardised. Language problems are also a barrier for referrals, for example if certificates are written in Greek).

In the Balkan countries the lack of cross-border communication about the arrival of migrant trains can affect preparedness in the transit camps. In all transit countries, humanitarian organisations are struggling to balance the need for information against the facilitation of illegal migration.

TRENDS

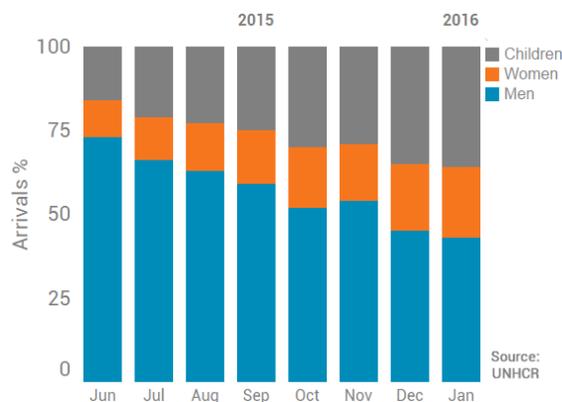


*Death by drowning from IOM includes total dead and missing. UNHCR Greece Arrivals.

- + The number of refugees crossing into Greece is still high, at around 1,930 per day on average in January, despite an almost threefold decrease of arrival numbers

since October (UNHCR, 02/02/2016). The crossing has become significantly more dangerous in winter, due to the weather and a reduction in the quality of boats and lifesaving equipment provided by smugglers. Almost four in every thousand people drowns. Nevertheless, more than 50,000 people crossed in January, driven by smuggling prices as low as €500 per person (half the summer rate) (Spiegel 29/01/2016), and fear that time is running out. This number is expected to increase in the spring.

+ The proportion of women and children among total arrivals has increased since the summer and is now higher than the proportion of men. From early to mid-2015, one in ten of those arriving were children. In early February, it was one in three.



The influx of women and children is likely an indicator that families follow the relatively easy, managed route to destination countries to join relatives already there (IOM 20/02/2016). Reduced prices for boat crossings may also enable poorer migrants to make the journey with their entire family (REACH 12/2015).

POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

In early November 2015, ACAPS/MapAction developed four scenarios, covering possible developments in transit countries over the next 6-9 months. Scenarios help to understand the range of possible futures. Comparing them with the actual situation can inform decision-making. The four scenarios are briefly described in the table on the right.

Three months after developing the scenarios, the situation has evolved according to Scenario 1, a continued manageable flow with a decrease of arrival numbers in the winter. The actual average number of arrivals in January 2016 was around 1,930 people a day. The flow is considered 'manageable' because the authorities and humanitarian organisations within the transit countries are able to receive, register and facilitate onward movement in a controlled manner.

The possible impact of political decisions dealing with the migrant issues could increase the likelihood of Scenario 2 or Scenario 4. Scenario 2 foresees a significant

reduction of migrants entering Europe, due to tightening border restrictions in Turkey. Greece's declaration that Turkey is a 'safe country' could allow them to return non-SIA migrants. This would reduce numbers in transit through other Balkan countries, but could be offset by an increased flow, should Turkey permit entry to the increasing numbers of IDPs currently on its border, just inside Syria. Neither of these two factors is expected to result in the movement of more than a few thousand migrants either way. Since the scenarios were developed, Turkey has been anticipating funds of €3.2 billion under the 'Refugee Facility for Turkey', agreed in talks with the EU in November 2015. Measures to be financed under that agreement aim to reduce the numbers of migrants crossing from Turkey, but this might lead to the emergence of new routes.

Scenario	Likelihood in the next	
	3 weeks	3 months
1. Baseline: continued manageable flow A significant flow of asylum-seekers continues through the transit countries. The daily average decreases over winter and increases again from April 2016.	High	Medium
2. Significant reduction in arrivals The number of people entering Greece reduces significantly, due to a tightening of border controls by Turkey.	Low	High
3. Significant increase in arrivals The overall number of people in transit countries at any one time increases, leading to the creation of bottlenecks and longer journey times.	Very Low	Very Low
4. Stranded Large concentrations of people and longer average length of stay result in severe humanitarian needs.	High	High

Scenario 4 predicts that more people get stranded in transit countries due to measures limiting entry to the EU and destination countries. If this causes an increase in smuggling activities, migrants would become less visible and their humanitarian needs would be more difficult to assess. The scenario also predicted that more migrants would ask for asylum in transit countries, which has not happened so far. Migrants want to move to destination countries as quickly as possible and at all costs.

INFORMATION NEEDS

- + Information about protection risks along the transit route, including where, how many, and which groups of migrants are at risk.
- + The location and capacity of accommodation centres and potential contingency measures in Greece are still under discussion. They require mapping to inform planning and preparedness.
- + Major information gaps occur in Greece regarding who is responsible for making decisions on returns of migrants and which roles and responsibilities various actors have regarding asylum decisions.
- + Information is required on the legal systems with respect to asylum procedures and their practical implementation. More knowledge is needed on the legal position of people who seek asylum, get stranded in, return, or are relocated to any of the transit countries so they can receive adequate support.
- + Standardised information collection along the route is needed to enable comparison of the same population at different locations and times.

About this report: This report is the third situation analysis on the refugee/migrant crisis in Europe published by ACAPS and MapAction and funded by the Start Network. Provision of regular comparative analysis of the situation in these countries will inform both strategic and immediate operational decision-making. The analysis is based on a review of secondary data and discussions with key informants from (I)NGOs, UN agencies and Governments. The next situation analysis will be available in early March.

ACAPS and MapAction would like to thank all organisations that support the project. For additional information, requests for support, or questions, please e-mail: analysis@acaps.org

