

# The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

ECHO FACTSHEET

## Facts & Figures

The country is prone to devastating **floods and landslides**.

Official estimate of the total number of **refugees and migrants** crossing through the country:

**Over 815 000 in 2015**

So far in 2016, **89 197 as of 20/04/2016**

[EU humanitarian funding:](#)

**EU Humanitarian budget for Western Balkans 2015-2016 (both refugee crisis and natural disasters):**

**€21.74 million**

European Commission humanitarian funding for projects in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia since the start of the refugee crisis:

**over € 4.4 million**



Photo credit: EU/ECHO/Fabrice Martin

## Key messages

### Natural disasters

- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is prone to flooding. Two years in a row, it was severely affected by deadly floods and mudslides. EU expert teams were sent to help assess damages through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, which was activated in August 2015 and again in August 2016.

### Refugee crisis

- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other countries in the Western Balkans have been facing an unprecedented refugee crisis since May 2015. **In 2015 over 815 000 refugees and migrants primarily from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have passed through the country** en route to Serbia, Hungary and Croatia. The number decreased to 89 197 in the first four months of 2016, after the closure of the so called Western Balkans route.

- The EU has provided humanitarian **funding of over € 4.4 m to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** which contributes to the provision of emergency assistance (food, water, hygiene, non-food items, child friendly spaces, protection) at transit and reception points.

- After the entry into force of the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, around 1100 people that were transiting in the region became stranded in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, mostly at the site of Tabanovce, which is a transit centre unsuitable for longer stay, living for weeks in dire conditions. Humanitarian assistance is being provided, and operations have been adapted to the new needs of stranded population.



\*All the latest ECHO Factsheets:  
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## Humanitarian situation and needs

### *Natural disasters*

On 6 August 2016, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was struck by major flash floods. 93 mm of rain fell in capital city Skopje in the storm - more than the average for the whole month of August. The flash floods caused 21 casualties and 70 persons injured. Homes and key infrastructure are severely damaged and over one thousand people had to be evacuated. One year earlier, the north of the country was similarly affected by severe flooding (6 people killed, 169 households affected and more than 40 hectares of agricultural land flooded).

### *Refugee crisis*

Since May 2015, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, like other countries in the Western Balkans, has recently been confronted with a massive influx of refugees and migrants in transit from Greece to Serbia and then Hungary or Croatia. Displaced persons have mostly arrived from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. This is impacting the country in ways not anticipated by the Government or the international community. **In 2015, the estimated influx was of over 815 000 refugees passing through the country.** After the closure of the so called Western Balkans route and the entry into force of the EU-Turkey deal, arrivals dropped in 2016 to 89 197 (as of 20 April).

The Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been **allowing refugees and migrants to pass through registration points** at its borders which enabled UN agencies, the Red Cross and NGOs to provide basic assistance to the refugees before they continue their onward journey north. Many of the refugees were ill equipped for the arduous journey, with little funds and few winter clothes. Some were exhausted from the long trip, while others needed medical attention for chronic ailments.

**In March 2016, after the closure of the route,** people that were transiting became stranded and have been hosted in transit centres in the North and the South of the country (Tabanovce and Gevgelija), but mostly lived for weeks in dire conditions, sleeping in benches or in the floor of collective sites or outside in tents, with hygiene facilities far below the international standard. Advocacy towards the authorities to adapt the living conditions for longer term stays of the remaining stranded people is currently being conducted. The humanitarian caseload has been reducing ever since, as people are moving irregularly to Serbia, to enter Hungary and apply for asylum in this country instead of travelling further North.

## The European Union's Humanitarian Response

### *Natural disasters*

In both the 2015 and 2016 floods, the EU and its Member States sent expert teams through the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism to help the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia assess damages and prepare for early recovery and prevention.

In 2015, the European Commission also provided humanitarian assistance to the flooded communities (distribution of food, hygiene and non-food items) through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with an amount of over EUR 84 000. As



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regards the flash floods in 2016, humanitarian partners of the Commission are present to support the emergency response and to further assess humanitarian needs.

### *Refugee crisis*

*Since the beginning of the crisis **the European Commission has contributed €21.74 million** in humanitarian aid to assist refugees transiting through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia en route to Serbia and then Croatia or Hungary. **Over € 4.4 million were allocated to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** and are used to provide basic assistance at gathering and transit points with basic assistance, temporary shelter, warm clothing, food, water, child friendly spaces and protection.*



UNICEF

*The European Commission has been working closely with the authorities, UN agencies and other humanitarian actors to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of new arrivals as well as the most vulnerable among the refugees. **Major implementing partners include the UNHCR, UNICEF, the national Red Cross societies through the IFRC.***

*More than a third of all refugees that were crossing through the Western Balkans were children. Child friendly spaces have been set-up by UNICEF at the border and transit points where they can be issued with warm clothing, food but also a safe space to play under supervision of qualified staff.*



*At the main gathering points, the UNHCR has been supported by the EU in setting up temporary shelters and provide assistance. The structures allow refugees to be sheltered from the cold and the rain but current facilities were put in place to be merely transit points, unsuitable for longer stay.*



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