



European  
Commission

European Civil Protection  
and Humanitarian Aid Operations

## Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



### FACTS & FIGURES

Over **815 000** refugees and migrants crossed through the country in 2015

EU humanitarian funding: over **€ 4.7 million** since the start of the refugee crisis in 2015

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## Introduction

In 2015, over 815 000 refugees and migrants passed through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on their way to Serbia, Hungary and Croatia. Catering for these people in need was a challenge that put the response capacities of the country, with its two million inhabitants, to the test. The EU has provided humanitarian funding of over € 4.7 million to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to help with the provision of emergency assistance. The country is also prone to heavy flooding, and has benefitted from assistance from the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism in both 2015 and 2016.

## What are the needs?

In 2015 and 2016, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, like other countries in the Western Balkans, was confronted with a massive influx of refugees and migrants in transit from Greece to Serbia and then to Hungary or Croatia. Displaced persons mostly arrived from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2015, the estimated influx was of over 815 000 refugees. 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 around 90 000.

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 Western Balkans route, refugees and migrants who were in transit became stranded. Many lived for weeks in dire conditions, sleeping on benches, on the floor of collective sites or in tents. However, thanks to the national response and EU funding, and in part to people moving onwards on their journey into Europe, the humanitarian caseload has significantly reduced since 2016. For over a year, the number of refugees inside the country has been between 50 and 70, and the situation has stabilised.

## How are we helping?

The EU has provided humanitarian funding of over €4.7 million to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to help the country cope with the effects of the refugee crisis. This amount helped provide emergency assistance to the refugees such as food, water, hygiene, and protection, at transit and reception points.

Throughout the crisis the EU worked closely with the authorities, UN agencies, and other humanitarian actors to meet the needs of new arrivals, as well as of the most vulnerable refugees. The Commission's major humanitarian partners included the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and national Red Cross societies through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The only active EU partner in the country in 2018 is the Red Cross.

More than a third of all refugees who were crossing through the Western Balkans at the peak of the crisis were children. As a result, child-friendly spaces were set-up by UNICEF at border and transit points, where children could be provided with warm clothing, food, and a safe space to play.

At the main gathering points, UNHCR was supported by the EU in setting up temporary shelters and in providing assistance. Such structures allowed refugees to be sheltered from the cold and the rain.

Since 2017 this humanitarian caseload has drastically reduced, with only 50 to 70 refugees remaining in the country, hosted in camps. The Red Cross is still providing assistance to refugees and migrants outside of camps, who are trying to cross the border to Serbia irregularly.

In parallel, since the country is prone to floods and mudslides, it has benefitted from assistance under the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism two years in a row. In both 2015 and 2016, the EU and its Member States sent expert teams through the Mechanism to help the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia assess damage from flooding, and prepare for early recovery and prevention.

In 2015, the European Commission also provided humanitarian assistance amounting to €84 000 to the flooded communities. The assistance, delivered through the IFRC included the distribution of food and hygiene and non-food items.

