

# Alert

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## Serbia

# Winterization support to refugees/migrants

Geneva, 17 January 2017

### 1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Exceptionally harsh winter conditions from the beginning of January 2017, with temperatures at time going down to -30 degrees Celsius, have already claimed lives across Europe - among them refugees from various countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. The cold wave started already beginning of January peaking end of last week and building up to a small – scale emergency. Meteorologist forecast new freezing waves in Serbia, with lots of snow and freezing rain. It is estimated that this winter will be one of the coldest in the last 50 years. Among cold snap affected people are already highly vulnerable refugees/migrants in Serbia, who are in need of winterization support.

As a reminder, in May 2015, an influx of refugees/migrants started to pass through Serbia. Very quickly, more than 5,000 persons were entering the territory of Serbia on a daily basis, transiting towards Western and North Europe. However, the closure of national borders along the Balkan route in early 2016 left refugees/migrants stranded in Serbia<sup>1</sup>.

At present, there are 7,400 refugees/migrants in Serbia with over 1,000 of them sleeping rough in Belgrade or near the Serbian - Hungarian border and at risk of hypothermia and frozen limbs. Hence, over 82% of refugees/migrants are accommodated in 16 government shelters, but still in need of winter support.

### 2. Why is an ACT response needed?

Although UNHCR and other agencies already assisted affected refugees/migrants by implementing additional winterization activities, coverage is still not sufficient and further support through more agencies is requested. Additional needs due to cold temperatures are high, ranging from sufficient and adequate food, warm clothing, personal hygiene and facilities hygiene and medical assistance, occupational activities and heating fuel, as new camps are being open constantly.

### 3. National and international response

Serbian government invited all those registered to move to government centres. In Belgrade, UNHCR and partners intensified support to refugees/migrants providing transport to designated centres. Additionally both UNHCR and Serbian Government provided stoves, additional blankets, and winter clothes to refugees/migrants staying in two informal sites.

Winterization response is discussed and coordinated within the already established coordination meeting within the so called European Refugee Crisis response at central and site-level. Currently, following

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<sup>1</sup> For more information please refer to the ACT EUR 161 appeal ,Refugees/Migrants Humanitarian Response: Follow on response - EUR161 [http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Appeals\\_08\\_2016\\_Refugees\\_Migrants\\_Humanitarian-Response\\_EUR161-3.pdf](http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Appeals_08_2016_Refugees_Migrants_Humanitarian-Response_EUR161-3.pdf)

agencies operate in Serbia: UNHCR, UNICEF, DRC, CRS, MDM, MSF, IRC, Oxfam, Save the Children, SOS Children's Village, ADRA, and several local ones, including Philanthropy, EHO, Caritas, etc.

#### 4. ACT Alliance response

Until end of August 2016, Philanthropy provided humanitarian assistance to refugees/migrants in Serbia through the ACT appeal EUR 151 'Refugees/Migrants Humanitarian Response'. Through the follow on appeal, which started in September 2016, Philanthropy has not received any funding. New ACT member EHO received funding through the current ACT Appeal. So far both Philanthropy and EHO provided different types of assistances to refugees/migrants in the sectors of food security, Shelter & NFI, WASH, and Cash. Philanthropy and EHO have close communication and coordinate their activities on a regular basis.

#### 5. Planned activities

Philanthropy and EHO propose six target locations throughout Serbia, namely sites in Presevo, Bujanovac, Belgrade, Sid, Subotica, Sombor and planning to reach approximately 5,000 refugees/migrants. Philanthropy and EHO have regular activities in these camps, and proposed activities have been mapped as needed in meeting current needs. Based on identified needs, proposed activities are: Distribution of additional, nutritive, high vitamin food, heating fuel, Bed clothes, and distribution of winter clothing for teenagers. As this is an additional support to address short-term immediate needs, Philanthropy and EHO would like to apply for the ACT Alliance Rapid Response fund.

#### 6. Constraints

None major

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