

RAS

REFUGEE AID SERBIA

FIELD

Field Report

#2 / February 2018.

Activities overview

During February 2018, RAS Field Team has been in contact with 177 new arrivals. The most represented groups among new arrivals were citizens of Pakistan (28%), Iran (22%), Iraq (22%) and Afghanistan (17%).

During this period, 241 interviews were conducted and information was provided to 286 persons.

In coordination with Praxis and MSF, 34 targeted non-food items (NFI) distributions were carried out as a result of which 57 persons were provided with 65 items of clothing and blankets.

In February, 98 persons were referred to services provided by other NGOs and state institutions - in most cases Praxis, for assistance related to registration process, and MSF for medical assistance and mental health support.

Trends and developments

Snow and rapid temperature drop

Unfavorable weather conditions, followed by low temperatures and snow during the last week of February were the cause of a significant decrease in

the number of migrants gathering in the area around the Afghan park.

Due to such circumstances, SCRM allowed relocation to camps of all persons who were found in informal settlements in Sid, Subotica and Sombor, as well as those sleeping rough in Belgrade squats, regardless of their current legal status.

Despite this measure, a noticeable number of people stayed outside during the coldest nights. Based on visits to three places in Savamala area previously used as shelters, RAS Field Team discovered that at least 25 persons were residing in an abandoned facility across the platform of the main bus station ("Simpo building"). Furthermore, four men from Pakistan reported that they were spending nights in an old building located near Sava river in New Belgrade.



"Simpo building" - snow is covering most of the areas migrants are using for sleeping

Police raid

Early in the evening on Saturday, February 24, the police carried out a large raid on the streets, in hostels and bars around the Afghan Park. The cause for the raid was an incident that took place in Afghan park, as a result of which one migrant was seriously injured with a knife.

The results of this police action remain unknown.

2 Age Group Characteristics

Most of the migrants/refugees who arrived during the reporting period are adults between 18 and 34 years of age. Underage migrants tend to be slightly more represented than those who are older than 34.

All new arrivals who were under 14 were accompanied. However, out of 12 newly arrived migrants between 14 and 17 years old, only one is traveling accompanied by adult family members. Others can be considered unaccompanied minors as they are traveling alone, with friends and/or distant relatives who are also minors.

In the 18 to 24 age category, vast majority of newly arrived migrants travels with one or more friends (88%), while only 6% are traveling with immediate or distant relatives.

In the age groups older than 24, traveling with family member is significantly more represented.

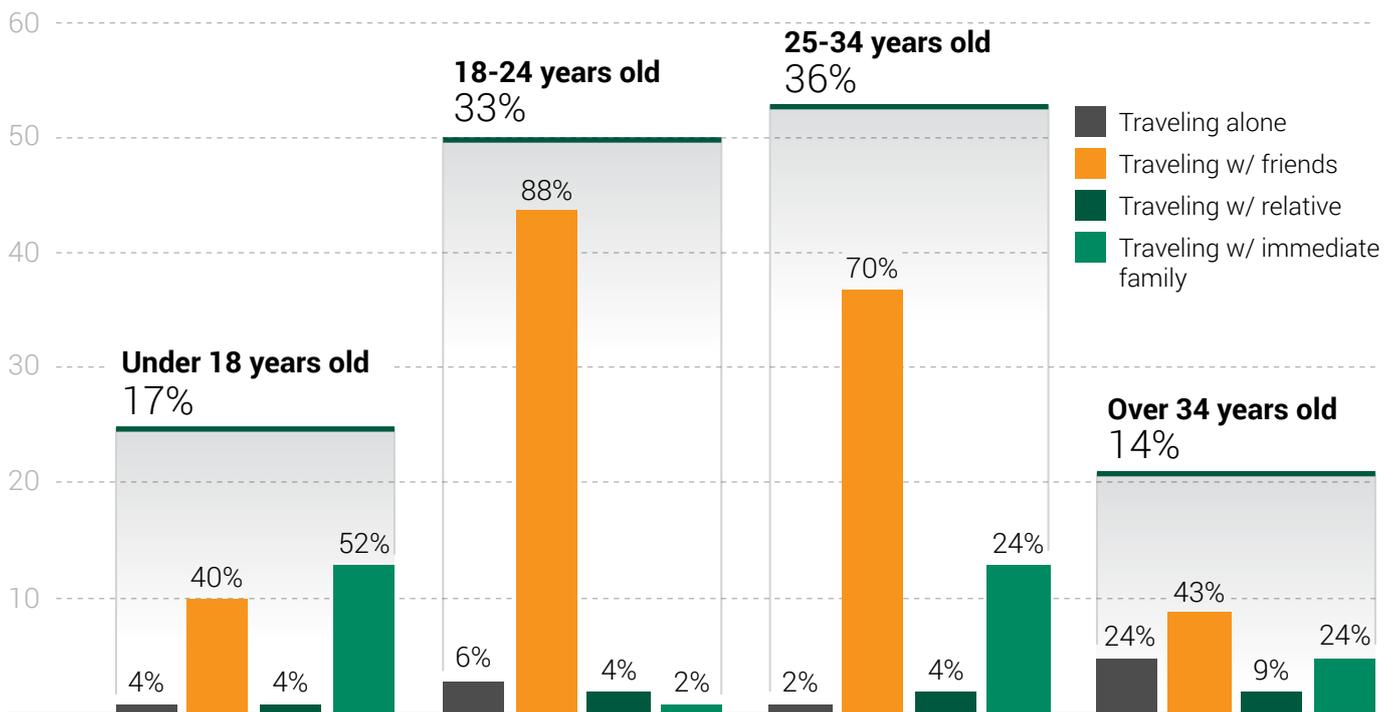
from their destination countries, either to the first EU member state of illegal entry or their country of origin. Almost immediately after deportation, these persons (re)joined the Balkan route in their second attempt to reach EU.

Two persons, both from Afghanistan, were deported to their country of origin, while four others (two from Afghanistan, one from Pakistan, and one from Iran) were deported to Bulgaria in accordance to the Dublin Regulation¹.

RC Presevo issue

Since the border closures along the Balkan route, RC Presevo has gained reputation of the least desirable facility in the Serbian asylum system. According to the information received from migrants, reluctance towards going to RC Presevo remains one of the main reasons for not going through the registration process.

Even in the current winter conditions and lack of improvised shelters on the territory of Belgrade, some migrants prefer sleeping rough than heading



Company structure by age group, February 2018.

Towards EU for the second time

During February, RAS Field Team has recorded six cases of persons who have been deported

towards southernmost reception facility in Serbia.

Those unwilling to go to Presevo stated the fear of illegal deportation to Macedonia and limited freedom of movement as the main reasons for preferring to reside illegally in Belgrade. Also, the dis-

¹ Dublin System establishes the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application based primarily on the first point of irregular entry - https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en

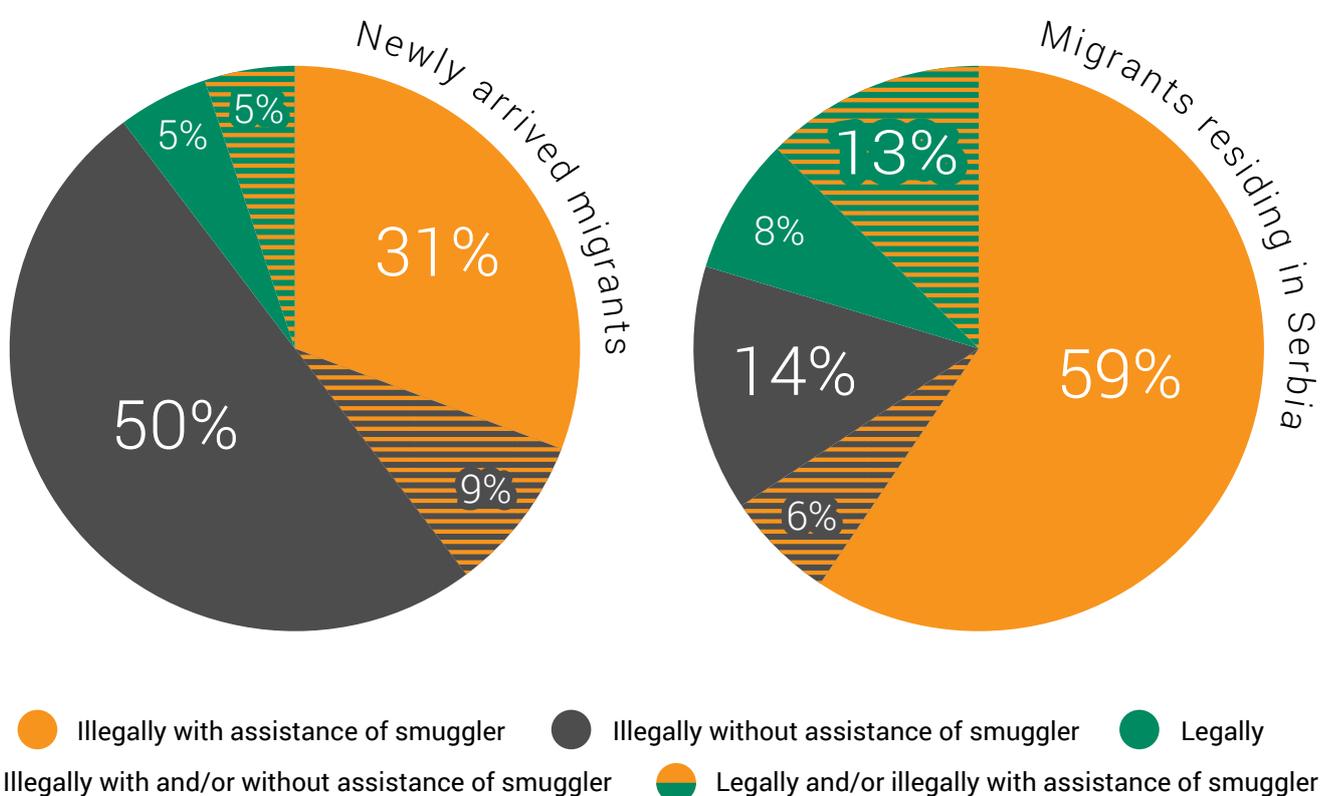
tance of this reception facility from the borders in the north and the west was also noted as one of the negative aspects of residence there.

Influence of prolonged stay on the intended way of reaching destination country

Comparison of the newly arrived respondents and those who have been residing in Serbia for at least a month - either in one of the asylum facilities or outside the camp system - show significant differences in the intended way of reaching their country of destination.

plan to exit Serbia without smugglers' support. 3

An overall trend noted among these two populations is that the intentions of illegal border crossing without smugglers' support become less frequent with time, possibly due to the exhaustion caused by numerous unsuccessful attempts to enter one of the neighboring countries. Our analysis also shows that with time more people begin to consider legal means of leaving (or staying permanently in Serbia) among the population of migrants residing in Serbia.



Intended way of reaching the country of destination

Majority of the newly arrived migrants plan to leave Serbia illegally (70 out of 78, or 90%). The number of those who intend to do so exclusively without smugglers' support (39/78 or 50%) is higher than the number of those who plan to pay a smuggler (28/78 or 36%).

However, when compared with those migrants who have spent longer periods of time in Serbia already (at least one month), the willingness to reach the destination without a smuggler noticeably decreases. Among this population, only (9/64) 14%

Regional developments

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

According to Office for Foreigners' Affairs, some 1.500 migrants are currently in Bosnia, among whom only 70² are accommodated in a center near the capital of Sarajevo.

Bosnia's current capacities consist of only two

4 centers - one asylum center in Delijaš (capacity 154), and another center for illegal migrants in Lukavica, functioning as a *de facto* detention center, with constant supervision and no freedom of movement³.

While most of the migrants are arriving in Bosnia via Montenegro (Nikšić-Trebinje), **majority of arrivals from Serbia is concentrated around the Zvornik-Bratunac line**, over the Drina river, with the use of boats and rafts. **Smaller number of persons is also arriving through Priboj-Rudo line**, probably the ones who resided in one of the three centers in the area (two in Sjenica and one in Tutin).

GREECE

In February, **1.191 persons arrived to Greek islands** (495 to Lesbos). At the same time, 1.152 persons were transferred to the mainland, bringing total number of migrants residing in the reception facilities in the islands to 12.869.

EUROPEAN UNION

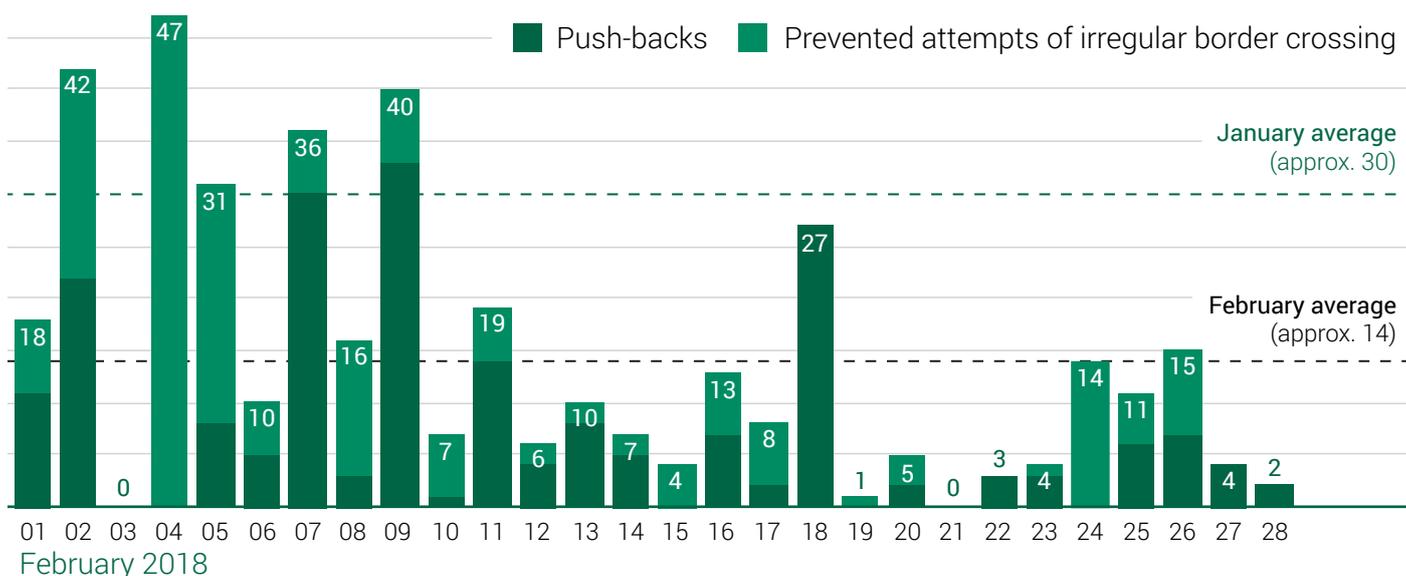
According to German Agency for Migration and Refugees, a total of **2.735 migrants currently residing in Germany should be returned to Greece**, according to the Dublin Regulation. Based on the same reasoning, **3.304 migrants have been requested to return to Hungary**.

While Hungarian authorities are known for taking a strong position in refusing to take any migrants back, Greece has also rejected relocation of almost 95% of the persons residing in Germany⁴.

In comparison, Greece has requested the transfer of about 5.800 migrants to Germany, to which German authorities responded positively in 90% of the cases. During the last year, Germany received 3.189 persons from Greece within the framework of family reunification procedure.

Attached to this report is a **Map of migration routes through the Balkans** which you are free to use, redistribute and share.

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Prevented attempts of irregular crossing of Serbian-Hungarian border and push-backs to Serbia from Hungarian territory (aggregated data)

3 <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/can-bosnia-handle-newest-migrants-flow-02-16-2018>

4 <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2018/03/01/german-press-greece-refuses-to-take-back-refugees-from-germany/>

MIGRATION ROUTES THROUGH THE BALKANS

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