

Introduction

Despite the implementation of the EU-Turkey Plan on 20 March migrants* have continued to arrive in Serbia, mainly through illegal means. As of 14 April, approximately 1,100 migrants have been recorded in Serbia¹, hosted in transit sites. This is a significant decrease from the 2,000 reported on 20 March, indicating migrants are continuing their journey despite border closures.² Many travel onwards to Hungary.

Traditionally, Hungary has been a transit and destination country for irregular and regular migration.³ More than 350,000 migrants transited through Hungary between January and September 2015⁴, when a razor wire fence was installed between Hungary and Serbia and borders were closed with Croatia. Following implementation of the EU-Turkey Plan in March 2016, Hungary has again become a transit point for migrants trying to reach Europe from Serbia.

While the majority of migrants are seeking illegal routes some are trying to legally enter

Hungary, waiting in Serbian border crossing of Horgos and Kelebija. With Hungarian authorities only allowing only allowing passage to a daily quota of 30 migrants per border crossing, the number of migrants reported in Horgos and Kelebija has been increasing since early April.

This report summarizes data collected by REACH through interviews in Horgos and Kelebija with migrants, NGOs and border authorities from 11-13 April 2016. Interview findings are triangulated with a review of secondary data and media.

Migrants at border points

Migrants were first reported to be waiting in high numbers (around 100 individuals) in the border zones of Horgos and Kelebija on 6 April (Figure 1).⁵ By 12 April, numbers had increased to around 144 persons. The majority of migrants are from Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In Horgos, on the evening of 11 April, REACH teams observed that 24 migrants, 2 families from Syria and Iraq (including 2 children) and single men from Afghanistan and Iraq were stranded in the border zone.

In Kelebija, on both the 11 and 13 April, REACH teams noted that around 30 to 50

5 UNHCR Serbia Daily updates 6-7 April 2016

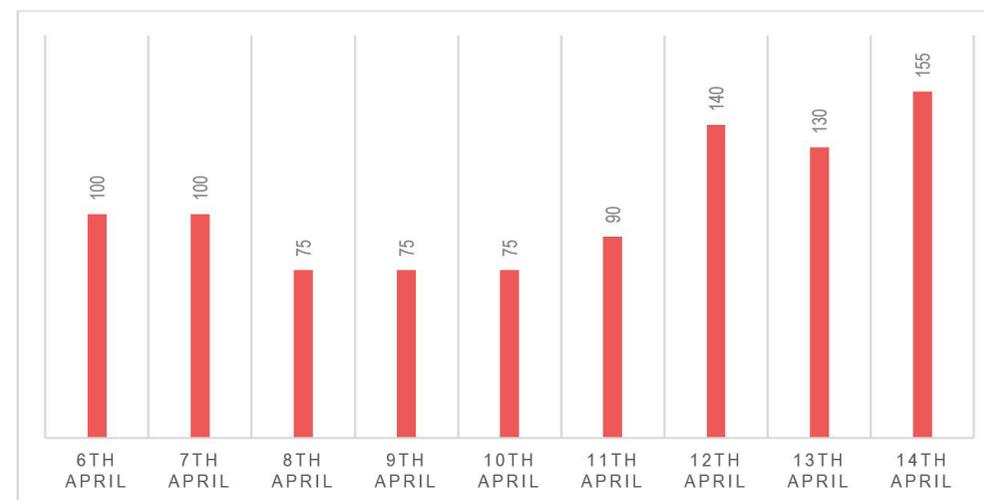


Figure 1: Reported caseloads at the transit zones of Horgos and Kelebija by the UNHCR, these figures are consistent with field visits conducted by REACH teams on 11 and 13 April 2016

migrants were still waiting to cross the border at the end of the day.

In both locations the number of daily arrivals outnumbers the number of migrants allowed to enter Hungary. This has resulted in a large proportion of migrants spending an average of one to two days and upwards of 8 days, in these border zones.

Current process

In Horgos, a list of names are collected every morning from the migrants waiting in front of the border by the Hungarian authorities. This is done as a means of speeding up the administrative process of filtering migrants by level of priority as a quota prohibits more

than 30 crossings per day. No such system was reported in Kelebija. In both places border authorities reported giving priority to Syrian and Iraqi families with children.

Migrants who are refused entry to cross the border are mostly single men. Upon refusal they reported their intentions to seek an alternative route to cross the Hungarian border.

Migrants who are allowed through the border are hosted in containers before being transferred to Budapest to proceed with their asylum application. However, the majority of migrants interviewed still indicate they will try to carry on with their journey through Europe to reach their final destination. For

1 UNHCR Operations Cell, Daily Report, 14 April 2016

2 UNHCR Serbia Daily Updates 18-20 March 2016

3 IOM, Migration Issues in Hungary, <http://www.iom.hu/migration-issues-hungary>

4 New York Times, "Hungary Seals Border With Croatia in Migrant Crackdown", 16 October 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/17/world/europe/hungary-croatia-refugees-migrants.html?_r=0

*This report uses the word migrant to refer to all those travelling to Europe, including people who intend to seek asylum and may later gain refugee status.



Map 1: Routes taken by migrants to reach the Serbian border with Hungary

interviewed migrants this included: Germany, Italy or Sweden. This practice mirrors the one currently used by migrants entering Serbia and by migrants who transited through Hungary in 2015.⁶

Among the interviewed migrants, Syrians reported arriving from Presevo registration centre in the South and the migrant transit centres in the West of Serbia. Some of the groups reported initially being refused entry to Croatia, after which they travelled to Presevo, before travelling to the Kelebija border zone. Groups from Afghanistan and Pakistan reported arriving straight from FYROM and Bulgaria illegally, stopping in neither reception nor transit centres in Serbia. Despite a preference for Syrian and Iraqi families, those travelling from other countries are currently being allowed through.

Humanitarian situation

Both of these border zones, Kelebija and Horgos, are characterized by a long strip of grass in front of the border materialized by a fence and an alignment of containers. Humanitarian access has only been granted to UNHCR and its partner Humanitarni Centar za Integraciju i toleranciju (HCIT) to provide food, water, blankets, some clothing and hygiene packs; and to MSF to provide some primary

6 REACH: Rapid Assessment: Asylum in Serbia, 12 April 2016; Wall Street Journal, "Hungary Grapples With Wave of Migrants Passing Through" 18 August 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/hungary-grapples-with-wave-of-migrants-passing-through-1439935139>

medical assistance, hygiene products and water.

WASH AND SHELTER

While waiting to cross the border, migrants spend the night outdoors with no access to shelter or toilets. The border zones are not equipped with toilets or wash facilities, except for a technical water point. Organisations working in the border zones are providing bottled water, but limit consumption to one bottle per person, per day, making it difficult for those waiting in the heat and sun. To compensate, migrants were reported drinking from a fire hydrant 100 meters from where they have set up camp despite concerns that it is not potable. Interviews with women confirmed hygiene issues related to menstruations with no privacy to change sanitary napkins or proper receptacles for disposal. There is no shelter or covered area to provide privacy in order to wash, which has been reported as a key concern for the women.

Plastic bags have been provided by MSF for garbage collection and disposal. However, in Kelebija, garbage containers have not been emptied and are overflowing. This has led to open disposal of dirty diapers around the site. UNHCR's requested to be allowed to place portable toilets in these waiting areas to address the most urgent hygiene needs of asylum seekers, yet this is still pending approval by authorities. UNHCR is also waiting for clearance from authorities to also provide

7 UNHCR Daily Updates 11 April 2016

Site snapshot: Horgo border zone

Shelter	Migrants are staying in makeshift shelters with blankets and broken tents. No tents have been distributed.	
Non-Food Items	Some items of clothing have been distributed as well as blankets and lamps.	
Food	Food distributions are organized daily by the UNHCR. No hot meals have been distributed yet. Specific food items such as infant formula have been reported as needed.	
WASH	No toilets or showers have been installed in these zones.	

Site snapshot: Kelebija border zone

Shelter	Migrants are staying in makeshift shelters with blankets. No tents have been distributed.	
Non-Food Items	Some items of clothing have been distributed as well as blankets and lamps.	
Food	Food distributions are organized daily by the UNHCR. No hot meals have been distributed yet. Specific food items such as infant formula have been reported as needed.	
WASH	No toilets or showers have been installed in these zones.	

emergency rain shelters.

PROTECTION CONCERNS

Migrants waiting at the border zones unable to enter Hungary include vulnerable groups such as: women, children and new-born babies. On 11 April, UNHCR reported up to 22 children waiting in these border zones⁷.

One case of family separation was reported in Kelebija. An Iranian family was separated after two young adults were denied access to Hungary while the rest of the family was able to enter. According to the migrants this

happened because of the daily quotas and the fact that Iranians are considered less of a priority to cross the border.

Despite sleeping outdoors without shelter, women reported that they felt relatively safe in the border zone with no reports of theft or assault. Women reported their main concern to be related to lack of privacy.

Conclusion

Within the first weeks of April, the number of migrants waiting at the border between Serbia



Migrants wait at the Kelebija border crossing between Serbia and Hungary

and Hungary has increased. This has included vulnerable groups such as women, children and newborns.

Challenges to providing humanitarian assistance have been encountered due to the nature of the border zones. These areas are considered to be “buffer” zones between borders and are highly regulated by under a specific legal regime by border authorities. At the time of reporting, only three organisations, UNHCR, HCIT and MSF, have been granted daily access to the border zones.

Lack of proper shelter, toilets and bathing facilities is putting migrants at risk for the spread of communicable diseases. The lack

of garbage disposable is also a critical health issue in both of these zones.

The number of migrants reported in these locations is likely to increase in the coming days. However, if the number of migrants allowed to seek asylum in Hungary remain stable, a critical humanitarian situation could develop in these transit zones with the number of migrants arriving outnumbering the number of migrants allowed to cross the Hungarian border on a given day. REACH will closely monitor the situation in the coming days in order to better inform the humanitarian community.

About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts.

Further information is available at:
www.reach-initiative.org.