

OVERVIEW

EUROPE 2015-2016 / REFUGEE CRISIS

CRISIS Migrations flows to Europe, 2015-2016

TOTAL ARRIVALS BY LAND AND SEA TO EUROPE¹ **1,046,599** in 2015
387,739 in 2016

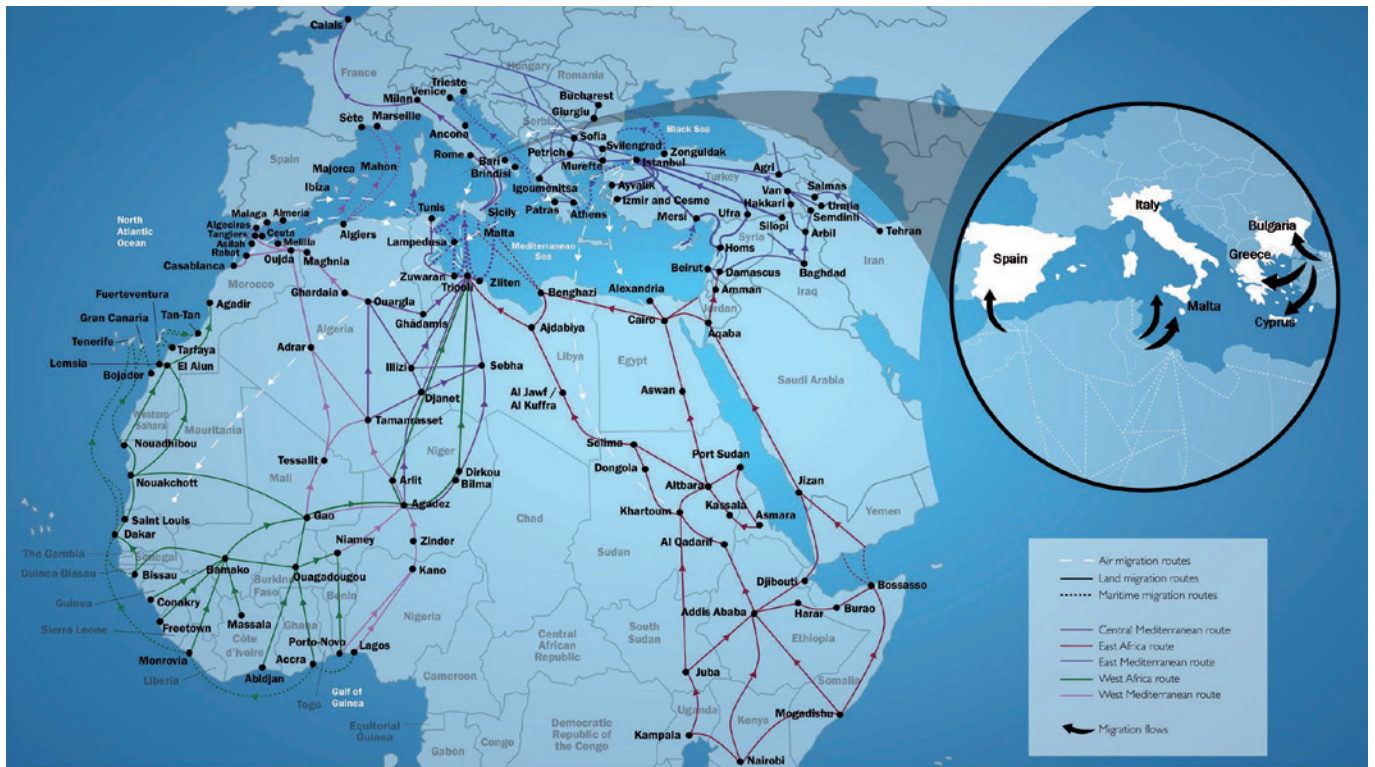
SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE

A massive influx of refugees and migrants through South-Eastern European countries resulted in an emergency in transit – as well as destination – countries between 2015 and 2016. However, migration towards Europe was not a new phenomenon. This overview focuses on the shelter coordination and response to this crisis in key locations, primarily Greece, the Balkans and Germany, where the majority of first arrivals to the EU, transit and final arrivals to destination were found.

| COUNTRIES OF ARRIVAL IN EUROPE | NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARRIVING (1 Jan 2015 - 31 Dec 2016) ¹ | NUMBER OF PEOPLE STRANDED (As of 31 Dec 2016) ² |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Italy | 335,278 | Not available |
| Greece | 1,034,269 | 62,784 |
| Bulgaria | 47,136 | 5,560 |
| Spain | 17,091 | Not available |

| COUNTRIES OF TRANSIT IN EUROPE | NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARRIVING (1 Jan 2015 - 31 Dec 2016) ¹ | NUMBER OF PEOPLE STRANDED (As of 31 Dec 2016) ² |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| FYROM* | 478,004 | 137 |
| Serbia | 678,493 | 5,633 |
| Hungary | 430,690 | 460 |
| Croatia | 659,105 | 624 |
| Slovenia | 477,791 | 315 |

* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

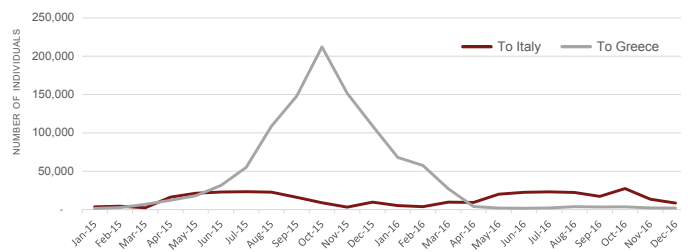


Migrant Routes: Mediterranean 2016 (Source: IOM - <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>)

TIMELINE

- 2011:** Arab Spring prompts start of increased migration from North and sub-Saharan Africa to Malta and Italy via the Central Mediterranean route. Start of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and first population movements into neighbouring countries (Turkey and Lebanon).
- 2012:** Escalating flight of Syrian refugees into neighbouring countries (including Jordan, Iraq and Egypt).
- Apr 2015:** Start of "Balkan route" migration.
- Jun 2015:** UNHCR declares internal Level 2 Emergency for Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.
- Aug 2015:** Start of open borders in Austria and Germany.
- Sep 2015:** Closure of Hungary's borders; arrivals to Croatia and Slovenia increase
- Oct 2015:** Peak monthly arrivals to Greece by sea.
- Mar 2016:** Closure of the migration routes through the Balkans due to re-activation of Schengen border regimes. EU-Turkey deal made to relocate new arrivals.
- Nov 2016:** 543% increase in stranded migrants in Bulgaria since March 2016³.

EASTERN AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN - MONTHLY ARRIVALS TO GREECE AND ITALY (2015 - 2016)



¹ IOM, as of 31 December 2016 (<http://migration.iom.int/europe/>). Data collated from national authorities, IOM and UNHCR.

² Stranded migrants are those who, for a reason beyond their control, have been unintentionally forced to stay in a country (European Migration Network).

³ IOM, Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond: Compilation of Available Data and Information – No. 30, 1 December 2016.



Many new arrivals to Europe in 2015-16 passed through the Balkans. Often, people were registered at border crossing points (Berkasovo Bapska, Serbia, Oct 2015).

MIGRATION IN 2015

Migration departing from North Africa towards Europe increased since 2011. However, since 2015, attention was focused on the emergency situation caused by large population movements into the Balkans⁴ and Northern / Western European countries (via Turkey and Greece). Compared to the 219,000 people who arrived in 2014⁵, a 500% increase in total arrivals to Europe was seen in 2015. Ongoing and escalating conflicts were likely to account for the dramatic increase in numbers arriving to Greece, with 47% of arrivals coming from the Syrian Arab Republic, 24% from Afghanistan and 15% from Iraq. During the second part of 2015, arrivals to Greece by sea reached their peak. By the end of the year, 857,363 people arrived in Greece (compared to 153,842 to Italy). Arrivals did not decrease significantly over winter, despite harsh conditions at sea.

MIGRATION IN 2016

Arrivals to Italy in 2016 (total: 181,436⁶) increased 18% from 2015, mostly via the Central Mediterranean route. Migrants and refugees originate from a number of different countries in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa⁷, with a small proportion from the Syrian Arab Republic (less than 1%)⁸.

Greece saw a 79% decrease in cumulative arrivals⁹, totalling 176,906 in 2016, inverting the trend from 2015. The reactivation of the standard Schengen border arrangements in March 2016 closed the borders of several transit countries, to stem the flow of people. Combined with an agreement between the European Union (EU) and Turkey in March 2016

Note: It is impossible to adequately provide detailed information on the wide-ranging and varied responses across the region, given the geographic scope of this overview, alongside the political complexities and administrative variances of each country involved. Therefore, the main focus of this overview is the Greece-Balkan-Germany route, as it is more relevant to the context of the publication and the case studies that relate to it – i.e. the set up and evolution of (emergency) humanitarian shelter response – than the more established and longer-term responses in Italy, Malta and Spain, for example.

to return migrants and asylum seekers to Turkey, this led to a significant decline in arrivals by sea to Greece.

As of December 2016, the total number of migrants and refugees stranded in Greece and the Balkans was 75,031. In Greece, all new arrivals were restricted to the islands, until asylum status (or safe relocation to Turkey) could be established.

COORDINATION AND RESPONSE

Initially, the authorities and humanitarian responders in Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia were **addressing a dynamic situation of populations in transit**. This required temporary accommodation and mobile and lightweight assistance at strategic points, as people continued their journey northwards. Assistance often comprised distribution of NFIs, emergency shelter, establishment of collective shelters in existing buildings or in tents and Rubb Halls, and adaptation of buildings and sites to allow basic services and facilities to be provided in areas of transit.

As border closures and restrictions on movement came into force in early 2016, **longer-term assistance was required to adapt to more static populations** in numerous locations across Greece and countries on the Balkan route. For example, reception centres were consolidated and expanded, to allow the closure of other ad-hoc transit areas, and services and facilities in these sites were improved, through upgrades and rehabilitations, such as the installation of heating, insulation, water networks and sanitation.



In Greece, many refugees were accommodated in tented camps. In summer, tents had to be shaded, also by building metal-framed structures (Elliniko, Athens).



Many refugee camps in Greece were either upgraded from tents or built from the start with containers (Left: Kara Tepe camp, Lesbos. Right: Eleonas, Athens).

GREECE

Emergency support needs in Greece remained high in 2016. Formal and informal settlements, including refugee camps, were negotiated and established, with other accommodation and shelter options being explored. There was a high level of technical capacity already present, as well as a desire from Greek civil society to be at the forefront of the response¹⁰. Pre-registration of arrivals occurs in Reception and Identification Centres (formerly called “hotspots”) on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos, rather than direct transferral to the mainland. Surveys indicate that people prefer to be transferred to alternative accommodation in urban centres, such as Athens or Thessaloniki. During the first-wave of arrivals, refugees and migrants with greater financial means attempted to leave Greece quickly, while more vulnerable populations had to remain, mainly in urban areas¹¹. Those with financial resources chose to improve their shelter situation by finding alternative private accommodation, for instance. **In 2016, occupancy far outstripped capacity on the islands**¹² and, towards the end of the year, capacity to absorb arrivals became **limited also on the mainland**. Approximately 51,000 places were available in various forms of accommodation in December 2016, leaving a shortfall of 11,000 places.

In 2016, Greece therefore evolved from a transit country into a longer-term hosting location. The majority of sites on the mainland were government-built, emergency, tented settlements, intended for temporary use. They soon went over capacity, with limited services that did not meet minimum standards and were located away from urban centres¹³, increasing dependency on multisector assistance. **While the government took on the primary duty of providing shelter and services to camps, gaps in service provision emerged** – particularly for persons with specific needs and vulnerabilities. At the time of writing, additional and expanded sites were being planned, with the evacuation of spontaneous settlements in public parks and squares foreseen.

By the end of 2016, **21,057 reception places were created in Greece for relocation candidates** to other EU countries, when the capacity in 2015 was about 1,200¹⁴. During 2016, this programme was expanded to other people seeking asylum in Greece, prioritizing the most vulnerable and embracing other forms of accommodation than formal camps, including

apartments, hotels and “matchmaking” refugees with host families. The provision of this type of accommodation included service delivery in compliance with applicable Greek laws and regulations. **Local NGOs and community-based organizations also engaged in alternative shelter support** to refugees and migrants. These organizations either rented a hotel, which provided the services, or a building and rehabilitated or adapted it, with services provided by the residents themselves, or the organization’s volunteers.

The sector also started identifying **opportunities for mid- to long-term shelter solutions within the existing building stock**, including the use of public-private and market-based initiatives. For example, the use of holiday homes and apartments (approx. 30% of buildings in Athens are vacant), or renovations to older buildings. Another idea was the conversion of public and commercial buildings to residential accommodation, with expedited procedures to obtain permission for a change of use and negotiations over rent.

A Shelter-NFI Sector Working Group was established in March 2016 in Greece, to facilitate inter-agency coordination of response activities for refugees and migrants. The main activities were:

- 1) Coordinating with relevant government bodies and all other sectors.
- 2) Validating, promoting and monitoring of the use of technical guidance and minimum standards, across all shelter and NFI interventions.
- 3) Building local and national capacity to understand humanitarian needs with regard to shelter and NFIs.
- 4) Exploring appropriate shelter and site planning designs for longer-term solutions within sites.
- 5) Pursuing an integrated urban shelter strategy to promote alternatives to camps, by capitalizing on existing building stock.

At the regional field level, there were two hubs: Attica / Central Greece and Thessaloniki. Each of the five main reception islands had their own working group hub. **The Working Group developed a number of technical guidance documents**, including minimum standards and procedures on shelter shading structures, NFIs and distributions, heating solutions, site planning standards, shelter upgrading and communal kitchens.

By the end of 2016, at national level, the coordination structure was modified, to better reflect the operational needs of the refugees and migrants and to facilitate stronger communication with relevant governmental counterparts. Thus, Shelter merged with WASH, while NFI split to standalone as one working group. The intention for 2017 was for NFI, cash and food to merge as

¹⁰ Greece Mainland Needs Assessment Report, NRC, March 2016.

¹¹ CRS, Refugee and Migrant Emergency in Europe: City of Athens Shelter Analysis, June 2016.

¹² NRC Rapid Assessment for out-of-camp housing and education, July 2016.

¹³ CRS, Refugee and Migrant Emergency in Europe: City of Athens Shelter Analysis, June 2016.

¹⁴ UNHCR Greece: Weekly Accommodation and Relocation Update 3 January 2017.

a “Basic Assistance” Working Group, while shelter and WASH would remain combined at all coordination levels¹⁵.

THE BALKAN ROUTE

With the sealing of Hungary’s borders in September 2015, increasing numbers of migrants arrived in Croatia and Slovenia from Serbia. **Transit and reception centres started to be established at the multiple entry, transit and exit points.** Available facilities at these crossing points were put to temporary use as registration points and accommodation, but conditions were very basic, providing only protection against the elements, NFIs, food distribution and emergency medical services. As these camp-like sites were mostly not suitable for winter conditions, **alternative transit areas had to be developed** to provide registration and other services, such as medical assistance, psychosocial support, family reunification, food, separate showers, mother-baby centres and child friendly areas, alongside meeting other minimum standards, such as covered space and WASH. **Changing transport arrangements for incoming populations** (from train to buses) succeeded in reducing the need for such numerous and dispersed facilities. In urban centres, some of the migrant population were living in unofficial sites, such as abandoned buildings, or sleeping rough.

However, the number of people transiting through the Balkans was under-estimated, as many did not register. The majority aimed to travel through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, onwards to Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia. Shelter needs in 2015 were for safe, temporary shelter along transit routes, particularly at border crossings, boat crossings and registration sites, where bottlenecks would form and people would remain stranded for significant periods of time. A major challenge in 2016 remained ensuring protection from the severe winter weather in the region, as well as the provision of more suitable overall conditions for longer-term accommodation and integration.

GERMANY

At the end of August 2015, Germany opened its doors to Syrian asylum seekers, no matter in which EU country they had set foot before. There were up to 60,000 new arrivals per week in September 2015 (figures decreased to 21,000 in January 2016 and plummeted to 700 in August 2016¹⁶), most of whom travelled through Austria and entered Germany in the state of Bavaria.

Once in Germany¹⁷, populations on the move were received at reception centres at border towns, typically for only a few days before being relocated to mid-term accommodation. Before the opening of reception centres, first accommodation for newly arriving refugees and migrants was ad hoc, ranging from sports halls and unused buildings, but also including people sleeping in train stations, or even in the open.

In order to provide adequate shelter for almost one million refugees and migrants who arrived during 2015, a number of interventions were mobilized:

- Winterizing existing accommodation;
- Re-purposing of existing buildings as collective centres;
- Construction of Rubb Halls / large tents as collective centres;
- Erection of family-sized tents;
- Installation of infrastructure and communal facilities;

¹⁵ 2017 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP)

¹⁶ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, <http://www.bamf.de/EN>

¹⁷ This overview focuses on Germany, as it was the main destination country and because the following case study A.42 deals with the set-up and operation of a reception centre near the Austrian border. Other destination countries include Sweden, Austria, the Netherlands and Norway.



Along the Balkans route, migrants and refugees were assisted with transport to and between transit or registration centres (Croatia, October 2015).

These evolved into mid-term accommodation sites run by a number of organizations, in order to provide support during the asylum application process. Long-term accommodation for accepted asylum seekers was ideally seen as a general social housing scheme. The government emphasized integrating the refugees as soon as possible, instead of risking the creation of “refugee ghettos”. Therefore, long-neglected social housing programmes were reactivated, funded by the communes and the federal government. Since there had been a shortage of affordable housing in most of major German cities for years, the aim was to benefit both the refugees and the hosting communes.

LOOKING FORWARD / CHALLENGES

In early 2017, short-, mid- and long-term accommodation options in Greece, countries along the Balkan route and in destination countries were being explored, through a scaling-up of construction, upgrading and expansion of facilities and sites. However, the attainment of suitable, durable, solutions for those already in Europe and those that continued to arrive – both in terms of legal status and more immediate basic needs – remained a higher-level political issue, which usually takes time to resolve in each hosting country and within the EU.

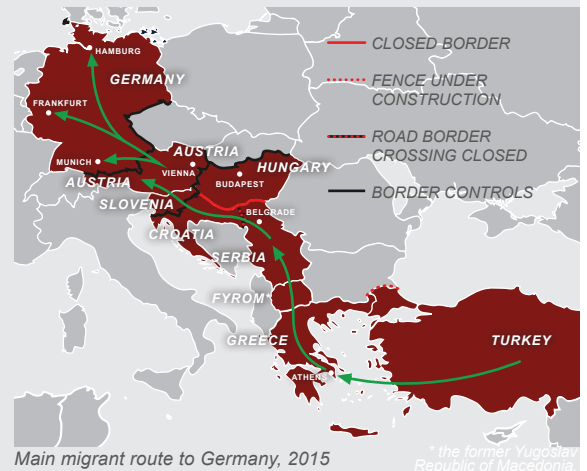
Advocacy for clear, coordinated and consistent long-term strategies to address the needs of migrants, refugees and host populations continued. However, the challenges faced across Europe were rising, as **intended temporary shelters became a longer-term** norm for many people. **Tensions** between some host communities and migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, **escalated in many countries** in Europe, occasionally resulting in violence and destruction of shelters and settlements. Frustration was also felt for the long registration waiting times and the deterioration of living conditions. While camp-like solutions often seemed to be preferred, sites varied greatly in service-provision, standards and conditions. Some governments were slow in assigning sites and expanding capacity in alternative locations, to enable a transition to mid-term accommodation, while asylum or relocation procedures are underway. In addition, **lack of coordination and resources** led to gaps in service provision, such as winterized accommodation and safe cooking provision.

CASE STUDY

GERMANY 2015-2016 / REFUGEE CRISIS

KEYWORDS: Emergency shelter, NFI distribution, Site planning, Infrastructure, Short-term reception centre

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| CRISIS | European migrant and refugee crisis (multiple countries of origin) |
| TOTAL PEOPLE AFFECTED | 1,047,162 total arrivals to Europe in 2015. 382,687 total arrivals to Europe in 2016. 476,649 Asylum Requests in Germany in 2015. |
| PROJECT LOCATIONS | Feldkirchen and Erding, Bavaria, Germany. |
| BENEFICIARIES | 170,000+ individuals (across both sites). |
| OUTPUTS | Feldkirchen: accommodation for up to 3,200 individuals. Erding: accommodation for up to 5,000 individuals. |
| SHELTER SIZE | Varies from single-family tents (18m ²). to pre-fabricated shared structures (2,500m ²). |
| SHELTER DENSITY | Varies from 3m² per person (family tent) to 8m² per person in larger halls. Note: more than 90% of the people spent less than 24 hours in the facilities. |

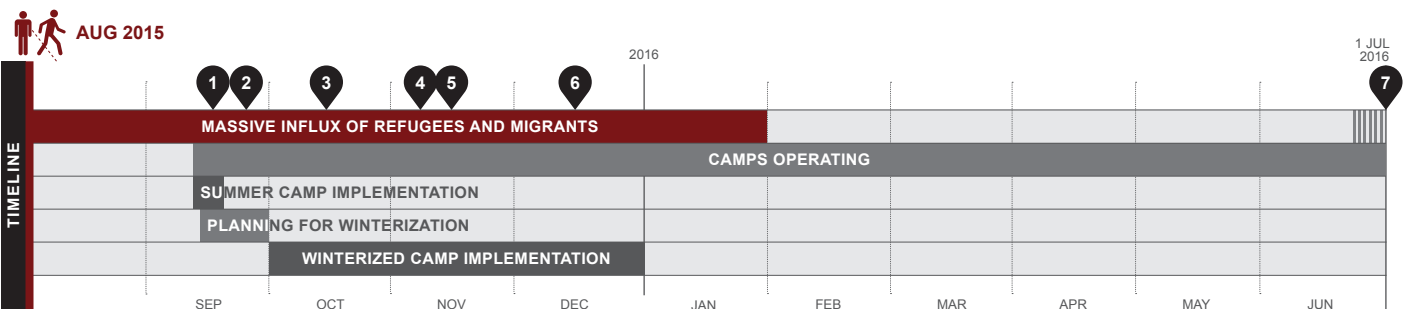


PROJECT SUMMARY

Two short-term reception centres were set up in the state of Bavaria to provide temporary accommodation for thousands of migrants and refugees entering Germany at the peak of the migration crisis in 2015. One site was set up in the summer and then winterized in phases, while the other opened as a winterized camp after a longer construction period.

Main migrant route to Germany, 2015

* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia



- 18 Sep 2015: Non-winterized accommodation for up to 3,000 people
- 25 Sept. 2015: Ground preparation for collective structures
- 15 Oct 2015: Start of set-up of four large, pre-fab, light-weight, collective hall structures
- Nov 2015: Start of works for dismantling summer tents and ground preparation for semi-permanent winter tents. Installation of drainage and sanitation
- 15 Nov 2015: Replacement of administration tents with modular winterized containers
- Dec 2015: Start of works for dismantling collective halls and replacement with wooden structures, with higher snow-bearing capacity
- 1 Jul 2016: Stand-by mode for both sites (arrivals have ended)

STRENGTHS

- + Rapid involvement of local volunteers at scale.
- + Support and engagement of the armed forces.
- + Positive partnership with civil protection and armed forces.
- + Very fast, flexible and coordinated approach to set up the camp.
- + Quick availability of essential items thanks to the organization's network.

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of available space and stricter regulations, due to poor site location.
- Complex coordination structures, which diverted resources and energy
- Lack of experienced staff at field and HQ levels.



Two short-term accommodation sites for new arrivals were set up and upgraded in phases before the winter. Here, Feldkirchen in October (left) and December (right).

CONTEXT

See overview A.41 for more information on the migration/refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-2016.

ACCOMMODATION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

All asylum seekers in Germany were first received in the closest reception facilities of the Federal Land in question. Such a facility could be responsible for temporary, as well as longer-term, accommodation. Depending on the country of origin, asylum seekers could be accommodated in reception facilities for up to six months, or until their application was decided on. They could also be allocated to another facility during this period, under certain circumstances, for instance for family reunification¹.

New arrivals had to be distributed evenly across the different states and communes in Germany, based upon the size and capacity of each individual community. The government granted waivers to town- and country-planning codes, in order to accelerate the set-up of accommodation facilities for asylum seekers.

There were three accommodation types: 1) short-term, first reception centres, intended for registration and very short stay (up to three days); 2) mid-term, secondary reception centres (up to three months); and 3) long-term, collective centres (though individual apartments were the preferred option in the long run). Given the emergency situation, most short-term accommodations, such as schools and gymnasiums, were used for longer periods of time. While at first short-term centres received people both at day and night, once transport by trains and buses was established at border towns, the migrants were taken directly to mid-term reception centres all over the country, where they stayed until a decision was taken about their asylum application. Most people arrived at the short-term reception centres at night, when transport to other parts of the country was not operating.

¹ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees: Stages of the German Asylum Procedure, <http://bit.ly/2jrU58D>.

PROJECT GOALS

The organization was asked to provide mass accommodation for short-term use close to the Austrian border, where the majority of migrants and refugees entered. Two sites (Feldkirchen and Erding) were set up for this purpose. These first reception centres needed to cover basic needs, whilst at the same time the official government registration process was starting. The project used a holistic approach, aimed at providing warm and safe shelter, food, essential NFIs, family-member tracking and medical services to the newly arrived refugees and migrants, with priority to unaccompanied minors, sick and traumatized people. An official registration centre on site allowed the start of the legal process to apply for asylum, as well as providing information and counselling about the asylum processes in Germany and the EU.

PROJECT LOCATIONS

Different sites, belonging to the German army and municipalities in lower Bavaria, were assessed for a possible location to set up a camp for up to 5,000 people in a very short time frame. Feldkirchen, one of the two chosen sites, is located about 100km away from Passau (the main border-crossing point from Austria) and is outside the boundaries of a military base. The proximity to the base ensured access to infrastructure (electricity, water and sewerage grids), ready-to-use facilities such as gyms (in Feldkirchen) and hangars (in Erding), manpower provided by the federal army, as well as equipment and machinery for a quick set-up. Although the organization worked on both sites, this case study focuses primarily on Feldkirchen.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The camp in Feldkirchen had to be opened just after one week of construction, in order to release the pressure from the immediate border towns and to prevent big numbers of refugees heading to Munich, where the Oktoberfest was ongoing. It started as a summer-camp, using gymnasiums and family tents as accommodation facilities. Step by step, it was scaled up to a winterized camp, with works carried out during



The reception centres were upgraded/winterized, while in operation, through several steps between October and December (e.g., by adding a layer of gravel).

normal camp operations by temporarily reducing the capacity. The site in Erding opened already as a winterized camp, after a longer construction period.

The project was implemented in a joint effort of multiple partners, including the implementing organization at the national and local levels, the civil protection, the armed forces and relevant local authorities. Three gymnasiums could be used for collective centres immediately, with enough space around to set up hundreds of family tents.

Besides active support in the set-up, the armed forces (the *Helfende Hände* / helping-hands sector) were also used for the registration process. The civil protection's huge network of highly skilled volunteers was well equipped with heavy machinery and tools to be used in case of emergencies. Within one week, a camp to accommodate up to 3,000 people was set up.

In a second step, a better planned camp, with proper infrastructure and sufficient winterized accommodations, was to be built on the former airfield of the base. However, due to environmental protection issues, the preferred location was finally not available. The winterized accommodation facilities (3,200 in Feldkirchen, 5,000 in Erding) were set up on the same site, using a variety of different shelter interventions: re-purposing of existing buildings and construction of large tents as collective centres; deployment of family tents; installation of infrastructure and structures for communal facilities. At peak, Feldkirchen was accepting up to 25 buses (with approximately 1,400 new arrivals) per night.

All those who passed through the reception centres of Feldkirchen and Erding, moved to longer-term accommodation elsewhere in Germany through a series of steps, or tried to reach another European country to apply for asylum.

After June 2016, due the decrease in arrivals, the two sites were put in stand-by mode. Within 72 hours, Feldkirchen could accommodate up to 1,000 people, and after 14 days it could reach full capacity. Erding could be back to full capacity within a notice of 30 days.

COORDINATION

New arrivals to the state of Bavaria who could not be distributed to other states, or were caught by the border police, were sent by buses to Feldkirchen. The capacity of the camp was communicated on a daily basis to the refugee coordination centres in Passau and Munich, in order to decide how many refugees would be distributed between the different reception centres.

Within the camp, there were two complex layers of coordination for the project. Both daily camp management and longer term modifications of the camp had to be coordinated with a

wide range of actors. Bi-weekly coordination meetings aimed to solve all issues as they arose, which was normal for a project under such extreme time pressure.

MAIN CHALLENGES

The major challenge was turning the summer camp into a winterized camp, because the works had to be conducted on the same site, while it was operating. Scaling-up was done by sectors, causing a temporary reduction of accommodation capacities. The sector that was to be scaled up had to be separated by fences from the main camp, the summer tents were removed and the ground was prepared, before the winterized structures could be installed in each sector. There was a significant drop in numbers of refugees in November and December 2015, which made this process easier.

Without the waivers to normal planning codes, granted by the government for the emergency situation, this project would not have been possible in the given time frame. Still, **it was challenging to implement such a project with authorities who were used to very clear laws and responsibilities**, which were not always applicable for the camp construction. Administrative levels and requirements changed during the set-up period, causing some inconsistencies. For example, several rows of winterized tents (that had already been installed) had to be moved to provide wider escape alleys in case of fire or panic, although the set-up had previously been agreed. Fire prevention was the most difficult and controversial part, due to different interpretations of safety. In Feldkirchen, for instance, bunk beds were not allowed in collective halls (due to fire risk), whilst there were no problems in Erding. Although at the national level there was consent to prioritize action over bureaucracy, at field level it was not always clear how flexible rules were. As a result, the project would sometimes make a brave step forward followed by two steps back.

WIDER IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

There was **great interest in this project within the hosting community** and many volunteers supported the camp operations in different ways: with in-kind donations, during the welcome of new arrivals, or playing with the children. A local night club organized charity concerts to support the camp. The entrance fee was a pair of warm socks, shoes or other winter clothes, which were all urgently needed for the camp residents.

The camp also attracted local businesses. Soon, private taxis were waiting in front of the camp to take customers from the camp to the next train station, though this was not encouraged. Local suppliers also provided other services to run the camp, such as heating fuel, catering and laundry.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

+ **Involvement of local volunteers** through the local branch was rapid and at scale. Volunteers were interviewed and deployed within a few weeks, according to their capacities and interests. Several people from the organization and its local branch were deployed just to coordinate the volunteers.

+ **The armed forces were supportive and engaged** throughout the process.

+ **Positive partnership with civil protection and armed forces**, due to the ad-hoc availability of skilled manpower and professional technical equipment.

+ **Very fast and coordinated approach to set up the camp.** All partners were strongly committed to provide the best support possible to the refugees. There was flexibility to start with a quick-and-dirty solution to provide urgently needed relief, and then to scale up, step by step.

+ **Quick availability of huge numbers of essential items**, like tents, field beds and blankets, was possible through combined donations of the organization's partner societies.

WEAKNESSES

- **Lack of available space and strict regulations, due to poor site location.** The site was situated between military barracks, a water protection area and the breeding ground of a protected bird, so there was no space for expansion or relocation during the winterization phase. Additionally, strict regulations were applied on handling fuel for heating and power generators, because of the direct proximity to the environmental protection area.

- **Complex coordination structures** to plan the winterized camp, with changes in levels of authorities, diverted resources and energy from daily activities.

- **Lack of experienced staff at field, as well as Headquarters, levels** caused stress and misunderstandings. Rapid deployment of experienced people, who could run such a camp 24/7, turned out to be very challenging. International partner societies stepped in, but staff still needed to work very long hours, and there was high turnover.

- **Insufficient strategic approach to the recruitment of national staff** in all positions, but in particular those with translation capacities.

- **No real link to mid- or long-term accommodation**, since no one knew where people would be hosted next.



The site in Erding between October (left) and December 2015 (right).



Accommodation options varied greatly in the two sites. From individual family tents, to large collective tents or field beds in gymnasiums.

LEARNINGS

- **Include an expert on environmental issues** in the assessment team tasked with choosing the site.
- **Have all relevant authorities on board from the beginning.** In this case, such a project was new to the authorities and the legal implications not always clear. The local fire brigade seemed to be one of the most important partners.
- **Include a shelter expert in the planning process** from the very beginning.
- **The multi sectoral approach was essential to the success of this project.** Shelter, food, medical screening and treatment (also important to protect others in mass accommodation), NFIs and restoring family links were all key components, which would not have worked if done independently.