



European
Commission



SUPPORTING BULGARIA'S ASYLUM AND MIGRATION CAPACITY

Project name:

Strengthening the national capacity of the Republic of Bulgaria in the fields of asylum and migration

Purpose:

Purpose: Helping Bulgaria deal with the influx of migrants and asylum-seekers

AT A GLANCE

Geographical coverage:

Bulgaria
7 locations: Pastrogor, Sofia, Lyubimets, Banya, Elhovo, Malko Tarnovo and Harmanli

Project coordinator:

Bulgarian Ministry of Interior

Estimated budget:

€ 18 882 860

EU contribution:

90% co-funded by the European Union

Type of funding:

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) / Emergency Assistance (EMAS)

Start date:

October 2016

End date:

September 2019

Overview

The refugee crisis generated by the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, particularly the war in Syria and the instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, has been at the forefront of public attention in recent years. A number of countries in Europe has been disproportionately affected by this problem, in particular Bulgaria. Since 2013, this country, located on the main refugee path from the Middle East to Europe, has seen its capacity for processing and supporting migrants and asylum seekers stretched to the limits as a result of the ongoing instability.

According to Bulgarian statistics, the number of applications for international protection increased to around 12 000 at the end of August 2016, compared to around 7 000 at the end of the same period in 2015. Most of these applications (about 87 %) were submitted by migrants entering Bulgaria from the three countries mentioned above.

Problem addressed

The registration and reception centres run by the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees were at 89% capacity in September 2016, which is a sharp increase in comparison to the average percentages in July (25 %) and August (52 %). The number of people accommodated at the centres is growing rapidly as a result of the increasing flow of migrants into Bulgaria, together with the increased effectiveness of the controls along the borders with Serbia and the North Macedonia, which have prevented migrants from moving on through these countries.

The capacity of closed centres accommodating migrants who have been detained on various grounds, such as entering the country illegally or overstaying their legal permission to be in the country, is also insufficient. Official Bulgarian figures put the occupancy rate of these centres at 180%.



Migration and
Home Affairs

Project goals

To deal with these issues and with the increasing flow of migrants to Bulgaria, the national migration and asylum system urgently needs to be equipped with spare reception capacity, as well as improved living conditions and services for third-country nationals.

With this goal in mind, the project is working to achieve an overall accommodation capacity of 10 000 places. This includes 1 000 places at Migration Directorate Centres for those awaiting initial processing or to return to their home country; 6 000 places at the State Agency for Refugees for people waiting to have their asylum application processed; and 3 000 places at temporary crisis centres for those awaiting initial processing or for their asylum application to go through.

This project is supported by a second, related project (entitled Further strengthening the national capacity of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of asylum, migration and return), which is working to increase public awareness of the EU's emergency assistance, its objectives and the impact it has on asylum and migration policies.

Intended impact

By targeting the main weaknesses identified in the fields of asylum and migration, the project will increase Bulgaria's capacity to accommodate people seeking international protection. The project is also providing the main necessities of life, such as food, water, medical assistance, heating, etc. for the people accommodated at all the relevant state centres. In addition, work is being carried out to improve the provision of related services, such as psychological and social assistance, translation services for migrants, and so on.

Another aspect of the project is to encourage the voluntary return of migrants to their countries of origin, by providing sustainable solutions to people wishing to take advantage of these opportunities.

The work carried out so far has already helped improve reception conditions for asylum seekers and has provided specialised assistance to migrants, especially vulnerable migrants. Furthermore, the number of undocumented migrants receiving effective counselling regarding the option to voluntarily return home has increased.

KEY ACTIONS

- Create emergency accommodation with capacity for 3 000 people;
- Modernise transit centre in Pastrogor;
- Cover operating costs for centres of the State Agency for Refugees, Ministry of the Interior and other centres;
- Improve reception, particularly psychosocial assistance;
- Counter-trafficking support to vulnerable migrants and unaccompanied minors;
- Counselling on voluntary return possibilities;
- Implementation of individual voluntary return plans.

MORE INFORMATION

Website: [HOME/2016/AMIF/AG/EMAS/0044](#)

Title: Strengthening the national capacity of the Republic of Bulgaria in the fields of asylum and migration

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Websites: [Министерство на вътрешните работи](#)
www.redcross.bg
www.iom.bg

Report: [World Migration Report](#)

Related project: Further strengthening the national capacity of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of asylum, migration and return - [HOME/2016/AMIF/AG/EMAS/0046](#)