

## **HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION OF MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS WITHIN LARGE AND/OR MIXED MOVEMENTS – STATE OF PLAY IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

### **General:**

During the mass influx of migrants into the Republic of Slovenia, which started in the autumn of 2015, the competent authorities directed all their activities into efficient management of migration flows. They especially focused on providing efficient treatment of persons in need of protection and devoted particular care to the protection of vulnerable groups. They also put a lot of effort in ensuring that the accommodation provided to migrants/international protection seekers in Slovenia was as good as possible and that, without exception, they acted in accordance with the accepted international obligations in the field of international protection and the protection of fundamental rights.

From October 2015 to March 2016, almost half a million migrants (from 6000 to 9000 a day) entered Slovenia as part of large and mixed movements of people via the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan migration route. It needs to be pointed out that the Republic of Slovenia is a country with a population of two million. The national structure of migrants who entered Slovenian during that period was as follows: 46% were Syrians, 29% Afghans, 18% Iraqis and others. 47% were men, 21% women and 32% minors.

### **Organisation and activities:**

The activities in connection with the arrival and treatment of migrants were coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. The wider coordination group included other relevant ministries, local communities and other institutions that took part in providing care to migrants. The police set up a crisis management team, which operated round the clock and organised and coordinated transport of groups of migrants and the provision of police equipment. Competent authorities cooperated excellently with representatives of international and non-governmental organisations.

### **Cooperation within the EU, with neighbouring countries, regional cooperation**

At the ministerial and expert level Slovenia closely cooperated within the EU, in the Western Balkan region and with the neighbouring countries. An example of a good practice of effective regional cooperation was the initiative for a meeting of heads of state and government on the Western Balkan migration route to be convened on 25.10. 2015 in Brussels.

A result of good cooperation was also the deployment of police officers from Austria, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Germany, Slovakia and Romania to Slovenia. Starting in January 2016, Slovenia deployed its police officers to the Republic Macedonia to take part in joint patrols and joint state border control.

### **Informing the public:**

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia activated a special website devoted to the migration issue of the Ministry of the Interior, Police and Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief. Thus all interested parties could get daily reports on the arrival of migrants/international protection seekers in the Republic of Slovenia and the work and activities of the Police and other authorities as well as information on the relevant legislation (national and EU) and other useful information such as summaries of daily press

conferences, answers to journalists' and MPs' questions, interviews, etc. The website was also available in English.

### **Procedures on arrival in the Republic of Slovenia:**

We believe that Slovenia successfully coped with the situation in the field. The competent authorities, services and organisations tried very hard to make the procedures of reception, registration, health care and food distribution as dignified and humane as possible for the persons who passed through our country. Special attention was devoted to the most vulnerable groups. A big problem was the fact that in most cases migrants arrived without anything, with health problems and visible signs of stress.

On arrival, every migrant/international protection seeker was given an information pamphlet with basic information on Slovenia, registration procedure, available services and information on accommodation, care and health services as well as the names of organisations providing these services (Police, Caritas, Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, Red Cross, Slovenska filantropija), including the information of the Red Cross being responsible for tracing family members and reunification of families when family members get lost on route. The pamphlet was also available in Arabic.

The Ministry of the Interior and the Police addressed the problem of interpreting by means of ad hoc arrangements with international organisations active in Slovenia and on 11.1.2016 a public call for interpreters was published, for Kurdish, Dari, Farsi, Urdu and Pashtu into Slovenian or English.

### **Care for vulnerable groups:**

In order to manage the situation regarding health care of migrants, a coordination group was set up within the Ministry of Health, which coordinated activities with all health officers at accommodation centres. The group was responsible for making sure migrants were provided with adequate health care. The Ministry also coordinated the work of national and international volunteers in the area of health.

The following international organisations were present: Médecins Sans Frontières, Doctors of the World, military medical staff - ROLE1 from the Czech Republic, a team from Slovakia - St. Elizabeth University of Health Care and Social Work and Women And Health Alliance (WAHA). They supplemented the work of emergency medical assistance teams, health centres, hospital staff and medical volunteers. Health care for migrants was provided both at hospitals and health centres.

Different authorities/services at the local and national level were involved in the work at reception and accommodation centres to varying degrees in accordance with their responsibilities, as well as NGOs and humanitarian organisations and volunteers.

At Šentilj accommodation centre and Dobova reception centre, health care of pregnant women was available (a mobile medical team providing basic health care was there permanently, and pregnant women were referred to a local health centre if necessary), as well as a private area for women – breastfeeding area, children's corners, family corners, etc. (at Šentilj centre there was an area for family member reunification). Women had separate restrooms and showers and sanitary kits were available.

### **Cooperation with international organisations:**

Activities of international organisations in the Republic of Slovenia at the time of large and mixed movements of people represented an added value to the care provided by Slovenian authorities and other stakeholders (NGOs and humanitarian organisations).

UNICEF: cooperation was mostly focused on work with children (unaccompanied) who requested international protection; they also worked together with the competent authorities in the field of selection, training and supervision of guardians of unaccompanied children. UNICEF also provided humanitarian/technical assistance in accommodation and reception centres and at the Asylum Centre (so-called children's corners for counselling and providing psycho-social assistance to mothers and children as well as the provision of heaters and warm clothing and footwear). In the field of education, UNICEF trained teachers for working with migrant children and elaborated a school activities model at the Livada Primary School as a good practice. They provided teaching staff at schools with dictionaries to facilitate communication with children (Arabic, English, Slovenian).

UNHCR: regularly followed the migration situation along the Western Balkan route and in September reinforced its teams in the Western Balkan region. In Slovenia, a temporary office was opened in Ljubljana 2015, which hired a considerable number of staff and stepped up cooperation with the services responsible for the accommodation of and care for migrants (Ministry of the Interior, Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief) and with NGOs and humanitarian organisations. Coordination with all involved was very good.

Based on extensive preparations for the reception and care for migrants in the Republic of Slovenia, the needs were defined where UNHCR could provide assistance and humanitarian/technical support. UNHCR adapted to the needs as they arose. From September 2015 onwards there was a constant supply of essential articles such as blankets, footwear, warm clothing, water, portable beds, sleeping bags. With the approaching winter UNHCR re-evaluated the needs for humanitarian help and continued providing everything necessary for adequate accommodation and care for refugees/migrants in Slovenia in winter.

International Organisation for Migration: they launched a regional project to monitor migration flows along the routes in the region, which helped Slovenia to better prepare and plan for the influx. They also provided humanitarian/technical assistance (supply of non-food products) and helped vulnerable groups by providing psycho-social assistance and a medical team at the Dobova reception centre.

Cooperation with NGOs/humanitarian organisations: authorities cooperated with the Red Cross, Slovenska filantropija, Caritas, Adra and others.