



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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European assistance to help Bulgaria face the refugee crisis

Support is being delivered to Bulgaria to help the national authorities cope with the influx of Syrian refugees. The assistance is provided by Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Austria, and is coordinated by the European Commission. It includes more than 2000 folding beds and mattresses, more than 4200 blankets and other items, such as bedding, towels, kitchen sets and cutlery.

This support reaches Bulgaria through the Civil Protection Mechanism of the European Union, which was activated by Bulgaria on October 16. Since then, the European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre has been working with the Mechanism's participants in order to give to Bulgaria the assistance it needs at a time when its national capacities are stretched to an unprecedented scale.

"I'd like to thank the countries which offered assistance in such a short time. Bulgaria has done all in its power to manage the migration flow. The assistance provided by the European Commission and the Member States demonstrates Bulgaria is not alone in this crisis," said Kristalina Georgieva, Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response.

The Emergency Response Coordination Centre provided real-time exchange of information between the Member States. Slovakia's and Hungary's aid has reached Bulgaria already, while the assistance from Slovenia and Austria is expected to arrive in the coming days. The Commission will remain in contact with the Bulgarian authorities and the other Member States to facilitate the provision of further support that may be available.

The assistance comes in addition to the technical support already provided to Bulgaria by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

Background

Currently there are over 6,400 refugees registered in Bulgaria, which is six times more than this time last year. According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, this is the biggest refugee crisis in the country in the past 90 years.

The crisis in Syria has triggered a massive refugee outflow, which affects mainly Syria's neighbours. There are currently over 2.18 million Syrian refugees (registered and awaiting registration) in neighbouring countries, Egypt and northern Africa. Health, shelter and protection are just some of the needs that the refugees have.

The European Union (the Commission and the Member States) is the largest donor in the Syria crisis with around € 2 billion in total support since the end of 2011. In addition to € 1.023 billion of humanitarian assistance provided by Member States, the EU budget has, since the beginning of the crisis, mobilised approximately € 943 million (humanitarian aid: € 515 million; economic, development and stabilisation assistance: € 428 million) of total assistance inside and outside Syria.

About the EU Civil Protection Mechanism

The European Civil Protection Mechanism facilitates cooperation in disaster response among 32 European states (EU-28 plus the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). The participating countries pool the resources that can be made available to disaster-stricken countries all over the world. When activated, the Mechanism coordinates the provision of assistance inside and outside the European Union. The European Commission manages the Mechanism through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre.

Since its creation in 2001, the Mechanism has been activated over 180 times for disasters in Member States and worldwide.

For more information

DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection website:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

Follow Commissioner Georgieva on Twitter and Facebook: @KGeorgievaEU,

<https://www.facebook.com/KristalinaGeorgieva>

Press release by the European Asylum Support Office:

<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO-Bulgaria-Support-Plan-Press-Release.pdf>

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