



Regional
Housing
Programme

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Photo on the cover:
Completed building in Ovca complex, Belgrade, December 2017

Cover Story



235 FAMILIES RECEIVE KEYS TO NEW APARTMENTS IN OVCA, BELGRADE

On 5 March 2018 in Ovca, keys were handed over to 235 RHP beneficiary families, selected from among close to 1600 applicants to obtain a durable housing solution in Belgrade. In total, four buildings have been constructed at the Ovca site which today accommodate 235 RHP beneficiary families or 652 persons. The construction works started in August 2016 and were finalized in November 2017, with a total cost of EUR 6.9 million.

Constructed on an undeveloped green field site with a total area of 75 000 m², the RHP financed buildings are part of a larger social housing/urban development programme undertaken by the City of Belgrade. Belgrade's investments also include a 995-apartment complex as well as other amenities such as childcare facilities, a primary school and a waste water treatment plant.

"Since the beginning of works on these apartment buildings in September 2016, there have been between 100 and 110 workers on the construction site every day, which made the celebration of 235 refugee families moving in today possible. I would like to thank the donors and all the other partners in this process who have recognized the importance of the Regional Housing Programme", said Mr Ivica Dacic, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Commission for Coordination of the Process of Permanent Integration of Refugees.

The RHP Fund contribution of EUR 11 million to this sub-project is complemented by a considerable national contribution of over EUR 4 million. All in all, the sub-project SRB3 aims at providing 715 housing solutions for refugee families living in Belgrade. In addition to the apartments in Ovca, it includes the purchase of 69 village houses, the delivery of over 300 building material packages as well as the construction of 49 pre-fabricated houses.

"I would like to praise all those involved in the process, in the first place the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and the Project Implementation Unit, as well as the City of Belgrade, for their dedication and hard work. Last, but not least, I would like to thank all of you for not losing your patience", stated Ms Mateja Norcic Stamcar, Deputy Head of Mission and Charge d'Affaires a.i, EU Delegation to Serbia

After the handing-over of these 235 apartments, more than 1 000 eligible beneficiary families still remain in the waiting list to obtain a similar housing solution in the Belgrade area.



BENEFICIARY STORY - Aleksandra Stijelja

Aleksandra was born in Benkovac, Croatia and had to flee with her family in August 1995, together with 200 000 of their countrymen. Her father and grandfather were killed by the grenade during their journey to Serbia, and her mother died two weeks later, giving birth to her sister. She has been living in Serbia in rented apartments for the last 23 years.

"These keys mean a new, and hopefully, good beginning for me, and to all of us here today. Thank you all for allowing me and my new neighbours to enter into our homes. We thought that we would never see this day."

Partner Countries' Highlights



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BUILDING OF 20 HOUSING UNITS FOR SOCIALLY VULNERABLE AND DISPLACED PERSONS STARTS IN GORAZDE



On 9 April 2018, the laying of the foundation stone marked the start of the construction works on the new RHP funded building in the village of Rasadnik, which will provide 20 housing units for socially vulnerable and displaced families from the Gorazde area.

The City of Gorazde provided the construction plot, urban and construction permits as well as the necessary connections to the communal infrastructure - electricity, water supply and sewage.

"Today, we lay the foundation stone for a building with a total cost of over EUR 480 000. The City of Gorazde has timely met all the obligations stipulated in the Cooperation Agreement", said Mr Muhamed Ramovic, Mayor of Gorazde.



Mr Edin Ramic, Federal Minister of Displaced Persons and Refugees, pointed out: "We have reasons to be proud of the Regional Housing Programme. The project is funded by a donor group, led by the European Union and our partner countries. The Assembly of Donors has so far approved about EUR 48 million for BiH, and with our participation, the amount provided is about EUR 56 million. This is an impressive financial scope, but what makes the project even more impressive are the values of solidarity and humanity upon which it is founded. The figure of about 2 700 families which have already received a housing solution within the programme, speaks for itself. The mere fact that we are successfully implementing the programme is a proof of our commitment. Effective cooperation between all institutions demonstrates that, together, we can do good things."



Partner Countries' Highlights



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

21 FAMILIES MOVE INTO NEW HOMES IN BENKOVAC, CROATIA



On 7 February 2018 in Benkovac, keys were handed over to 21 RHP beneficiary families (75 persons) who are either former occupancy/tenancy right holders or most vulnerable refugee families from Bosnia and Herzegovina, currently living in the vicinity of Benkovac in collective centres or rented apartments. With a total cost of EUR 1.3 million, the building in Benkovac is one of the six projects approved by the RHP Fund Assembly of Donors for Croatia, and the third one to be completed. Out of the 75 persons that received keys for their new homes on 7 February, 13 are children and 16 are ill or disabled.

The keys to 21 apartments were handed over by Nikola Mazar, State Secretary at the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care, the Mayor of Benkovac Mr Tomislav Bulic, Stephan Sellen, Deputy Director General of the Council of Europe Development Bank, the UNHCR representative in Croatia Giuseppe Di Caro as well as the Deputy Mayor of Zadar County Mr Sime Vickovic. Mayor of Benkovac Tomislav Bulic stated: "Today, we have even forgotten the prolonged construction works on this building. I would like to thank the new tenants for their patience and welcome them in our city!"



BENEFICIARY STORY - Slavica Zubonja

Slavica comes from Kakanj, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from where she was banished to Drvar in 1993, together with her family. Her husband died in a car accident, leaving Slavica alone with her sick mother and two young sons. They decided to come to Benkovac in 2013 and have lived in rented apartments since. Before moving to the new building in Benkovac, the family lived in an inadequate and humid accommodation in the basement of a family house. In 2008, Slavica was diagnosed multiple sclerosis; she moves with difficulty and receives small disability pension. Her two sons work occasionally in a local stone exploitation company. Her mother, who had a cancer and underwent several difficult operations, receives the pension from her late husband thanks to his job in a coal mine.

"When they informed me that the building was completed, and invited me to come to get the keys, I started crying of happiness. I still cannot believe that this is really my home. I will even be able to plant flowers in the garden which can be seen from my window, can you imagine?"

Partner Countries' Highlights



MONTENEGRO

INAUGURATION OF HOME FOR ELDERLY/DISABLED IN PLJEVLJA, MONTENEGRO



On 11 April 2018 in Pljevlja, RHP stakeholders celebrated the inauguration of a RHP-financed home for 68 elderly/disabled persons. The construction works started in May 2016, on a land plot provided by the municipality of Pljevlja. The facility is now completed; the usage permit was obtained in early April 2018.

Close to 20 beneficiaries have already been able to move in, and the rest are in the process of being selected. The total staffing need is 51 persons; the recruitment is on-going and the first employment contracts were signed in March 2018. The home for the elderly/handicapped is included in the social welfare system of Montenegro. It is managed by the municipality of Pljevlja, under the ownership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The salaries and the institution's operational costs are covered by the State budget.

The total estimated cost of the project is EUR 2.2 million, of which EUR 1.9 million, or 86%, is financed by the RHP Fund and the remainder, EUR 0.3 million, from national contribution. The design of the building and other project preparation activities were financed with a EUR 150 000 grant from the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), approved in 2009.

"Only societies that take care of their most vulnerable groups, such as children, elderly and people with disabilities, are countries with perspective. Elderly are the carriers of a tradition through wisdom in their thinking and tenderness in their actions. We have to support this culture of tolerance and understanding," said Milutin Simović, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy and Financial Systems and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.

"This is a big day for the most vulnerable displaced and internally displaced persons in Pljevlja. They finally received something that most of us take for granted – a roof above their head. Through the RHP, we are giving back the dignity to the elderly, as stated in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights", said Hermann Spitz, Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Montenegro.

UNHCR Regional Representative for South Eastern Europe Anne-Christine Eriksson said: "Today is a very special day, for two reasons. After so many years of waiting, from this day, the most vulnerable among the refugees in Montenegro – the elderly and persons with disabilities and special needs – have the chance to continue with their lives in more dignified, healthier and safe conditions."



Partner Countries' Highlights



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

RHP GRANT AGREEMENT SIGNED IN SERBIA FOR PROVISION OF 938 NEW HOMES



Serbia's Minister of European Integration Jadranka Joksimovic and CEB's Vice Governor Carlo Monticelli signed on 31 January 2018 the Grant Agreement for the RHP sub-project SRB8, aiming at providing durable housing solutions for altogether 938 most vulnerable refugee families, or an estimated 3 000 persons. The signing ceremony was organized in the context of a conference on "Investments, growth and job creation", in the presence of Serbia's Prime Minister Ana Brnabic and the President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani.

President Tajani said that the EU has provided over EUR 230 million to the Regional Housing Programme which, in Serbia alone, will allow over 6 000 most vulnerable refugee families access durable housing solutions. "This is what European solidarity is all about".

The same day also marked the 13th anniversary of the Sarajevo Declaration in which the four Partner Countries agreed to resolve – together – the issues of refugees in the region. In the context of the 18th RHP Technical Committee and the 22nd RHP Regional

Coordination Forum meetings which took place on 30 and 31 January in Belgrade, RHP stakeholders took stock of RHP's current status and implementation plans for 2018. With over 2 600 housing units delivered to date and over 3 000 more to be completed in 2018, it was concluded that RHP is indeed fulfilling the objective that was set 13 years ago.

As to the sub-project SRB8 for which the Grant Agreement was signed, the main component foresees the construction of 358 apartments in 11 municipalities. In addition, it envisions the purchase of 300 village houses in 116 municipalities, the provision of 250 building material packages as well as the design-built of 30 pre-fabricated houses, throughout the country.

Also on 31 January, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of Serbia organized an event to sign the agreements with 10 Serbian municipalities for the design of 358 RHP-financed apartments, to be constructed in 2018/2019.

"Thanks to its own accomplishments, Serbia is a front runner candidate for European Union membership and as such has particular responsibilities in leading the Western Balkans in the right direction, thus giving a key contribution to the stability of the region," stated Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament.

CONSTRUCTION OF 25 APARTMENTS STARTS IN KIKINDA, SERBIA

On 21 April 2018, the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration hosted an event to lay the foundation stone for the construction of 25 apartments for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, who are resident in the territory of Kikinda.

This project is part of the sub-project SRB2, which aims at providing housing solutions to 870 vulnerable RHP beneficiary families in Serbia. The entire sub-project is worth EUR 13 million. In addition to Kikinda, construction sites have been opened in seven cities across Serbia: in Sremska Mitrovica, Bajina Bašta, Paracin, Krusevac, Prokuplje, Vrsac and Sabac. In addition to the construction of 200 apartments, SRB2 covers the construction of 120 prefabricated houses, the provision of 300 packages of building materials and the purchase of 250 village houses throughout the country.

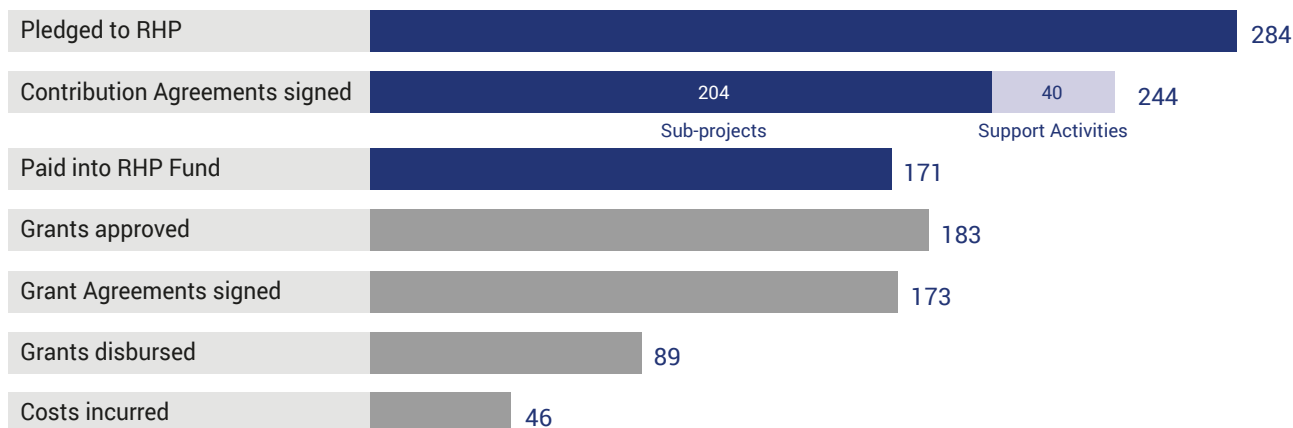
RHP Fund Status

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW OF THE RHP

At end-March 2018, the financial situation of the RHP can be summarised by the following figures:

Aggregate figures on RHP

(in EUR million, at end-March 2018)



CONTRIBUTIONS BY DONORS

The Donors have pledged a total of EUR 244 million to the RHP Fund, of which they have committed EUR 204 million. In December 2017, the European Union committed an additional EUR 32 million and confirmed that it would complete its initial pledge by contributing a further EUR 40 million to the Fund in 2018. Taking into account the EUR 40 million contributed by the European Union outside the RHP Fund, for support activities, these additional funds will bring its total contribution to the RHP to EUR 232 million, thus confirming its status as the largest donor to the Programme. Moreover, in the 2nd half of 2017, the U.S. contributed a further EUR 8 million to the RHP Fund, and Germany and Norway increased their contributions by EUR 1.5 million respectively.

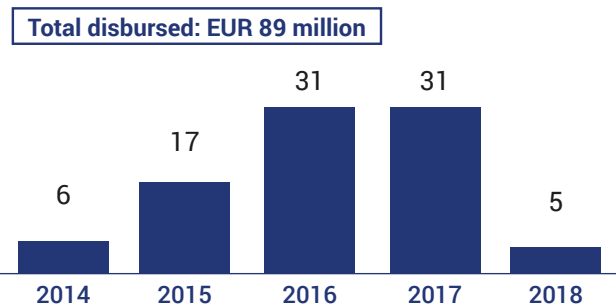
DISBURSEMENTS TO PARTNER COUNTRIES

At end-March 2018, the total volume of disbursements since the start of the Programme amounted to EUR 89 million. Of this total amount, EUR 46 million, or 52%, were disbursed to Serbia, a figure that is in line with its share of the Programme. In effect, Serbia accounts for the majority of RHP grants approved so far, i.e. EUR 105 million out of EUR 183 million, or 57%.

The following annual figures demonstrate, after an initial increase, a steady pace of disbursements to Partner Countries:

Disbursements to Partner Countries

(per year, in EUR million, at end-March 2018)

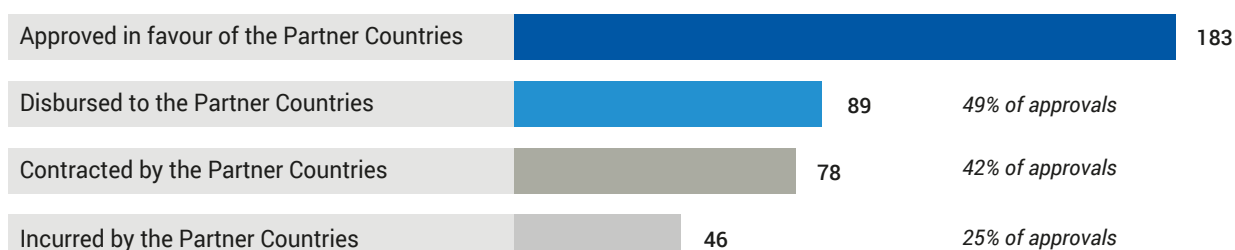


USE OF FUNDS BY PARTNER COUNTRIES

The Partner Countries made use of the grant funds approved in their favour to the following extent:

Use of Grant funds by Partner Countries

(in EUR million, at end-March 2018)



Regional Activities

MEETING BETWEEN EPTISA/GIZ/DRC AND CEB TO KICK-START RHP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PHASE II

On 7 March 2018, a meeting took place at the CEB's premises in Paris between the representatives of the EPTISA Consortium and the CEB, to launch the second phase of technical assistance to the RHP. The technical assistance is financed by the European Union and managed by the CEB. In addition to EPTISA itself, the Consortium that won the open tender in 2017 includes the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and the DRC (Danish Refugee Council).

Phase II of technical assistance to the RHP will allow the RHP Partner Countries to continue to receive technical support for RHP implementation between 2018 and 2020. This is particularly important this year when over 3 000 housing units are planned to be delivered to vulnerable RHP beneficiary families.

23rd REGIONAL COORDINATION FORUM (RCF) HELD IN PLJEVLJA, MONTENEGRO

The 23rd RCF meeting was held in Pljevlja, Montenegro, on 11 April 2018. This time, focus was placed on the two milestone dates in RHP implementation: December 2019 and June 2021. By December 2019, a large part of the EU funds will expire, while by June 2021, all RHP activities must be concluded on the ground so that the entire Programme can be wrapped up by end-2022. In light of these two important milestone dates, the Partner Countries presented progress as well as all activities that are on the critical path and may potentially cause delays in implementation. Thanks to the very good presentations, RCF participants now have a clear picture of potential risks and challenges. Importantly, the Partner Countries placed due emphasis on the mitigation measures to avoid delays.

During the Alpha Working Group that took place before the RCF meeting, the IGMAN Initiative presented to the Partner Countries, UNHCR, OSCE and the CEB their activities. In December 2018, the IGMAN Initiative was contracted by the European Commission in order to manage a set of sustainability related actions that will complement the RHP. Activities range from mapping of RHP beneficiaries in need of complementary measures, to cooperation with civil society actors for social entrepreneurship projects.

The highlight of the meeting was the inauguration event of the Pljevlja home for 68 elderly/disabled persons, which took place on 11 April 2018 (see page 6).

RHP Visibility

RHP ON PRIZMA PROGRAMME (CROATIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER HRT)

On 2 February 2018, Mr Nikola Mazar, State Secretary, Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care and Mr Mario Pavlovic from UNHCR Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe were guests in the PRIZMA tv show, presenting the latest RHP achievements and future objectives.

PRIZMA is a programme on the Croatian public broadcaster HRT, dedicated to ethnic minorities, which has followed the Regional Housing Programme implementation since the beginning.



RHP FUND ANNUAL REPORT 2017 PUBLISHED

2017 was a record year in terms of RHP deliveries: altogether, some 5 000 vulnerable persons were provided with access to decent housing. In all, since 2014, the RHP has enabled 8 100 persons who had been displaced since the armed conflicts in the 1990s to gain access to dignified housing conditions.

In recognition of the Programme's progress and its tangible impact on regional reconciliation, Donors made sizeable new contributions to the RHP in 2017. The United States of America provided a new contribution of USD 10 million, while Germany and Norway contributed an additional EUR 1.5 million each. The European Union, represented by the European Commission, committed an additional EUR 45 million, which will finance both housing solutions and implementation support measures.

In 2018, implementation is expected to further accelerate: the Programme should deliver housing to 9 000 persons, almost twice as many as in 2017. Moreover, the delivery of homes will continue in subsequent years: by the time they are completed in 2020, the projects approved to date (24 in total) should make it possible to reach some 28 000 persons.

Upcoming Activities (May - August 2018)

RHP Visibility Events

7 May 2018

Inauguration of the Home for 75 elderly and disabled persons (HR3),
Glina, Croatia

Mid May 2018

Delivery of keys for apartments (BiH3); Delivery of constructed houses (BiH2),
Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina

End May 2018

Completion of works on apartment buildings/beneficiaries moving in (SRB2),
Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia

6-7 June 2018

12th RHP Steering Committee and 16th RHP Fund Assembly of Donors meetings,
Zagreb, Croatia

Mid June 2018

Completion of works on residential building (SRB2), Paracin, Serbia



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Republic of Croatia



Montenegro



Republic of Serbia

The Regional Housing Programme is financed and supported by the international community



The Regional Housing Programme (RHP) was set up to provide durable housing solutions to vulnerable refugees and displaced persons following the 1991-1995 conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The RHP is implemented by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia and mostly financed by the international donor community. The main donor is the European Union.

The other donors are the United States of America, Germany, Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Turkey, Luxembourg, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and the Slovak Republic.

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