



Regional
Housing
Programme

NEWSLETTER No.9

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2016



Photo on the cover:
Start of works on 235 apartments in Ovca, Belgrade, September 2016

Cover Story



SERBIA LAUNCHES CONSTRUCTION OF 235 APARTMENTS FOR RHP BENEFICIARIES IN BELGRADE

On 9 September 2016, the first Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Ivica Dacic, together with the other RHP stakeholders, laid the foundations for the construction site in Ovca, near Belgrade, to mark the start of construction of 235 apartments.

This project, which is part of the sub-project SRB3, is currently the RHP's largest single construction project that is being implemented in the Partner Countries and will provide housing for refugee families from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia with permanent residence on the territory of the City of Belgrade. It is a part of a larger investment programme in social housing by the City of Belgrade, which includes a 995 apartment complex as well as other amenities such as childcare facilities, a primary school and a wastewater treatment system.

The construction works started at the end of August this year and should be finalised by October 2017, with a total cost of

EUR 9.8 million of which EUR 5.4 million is covered by the RHP Fund. In addition to Ovca, the sub-project SRB3 includes the provision of 80 pre-fabricated houses and 350 building material packages, as well as the purchase of 50 village houses in Belgrade. All in all, five sub-projects worth around EUR 94 million are currently being implemented in Serbia, with the objective to provide over 4 700 housing solutions to most vulnerable refugees.

In addition to Deputy Prime Minister Ivica Dacic and other Serbian RHP stakeholders, the event was attended by H.E. Michael Davenport, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia and H.E. Kyle Scott, Ambassador of the U.S.A. A large number of Ambassadors and other high level representatives of RHP Donor countries were also present, together with the representatives of the UNHCR, OSCE and the CEB.

"RHP is one of the biggest donor initiatives in the region, providing housing to refugees in the four Partner Countries, with Serbia being the biggest beneficiary. I would like to recall that this is a grant, not a loan", said Deputy Prime Minister Ivica Dacic, while thanking all the Donors for their support.



"Until recently, there were doubts that such a big project was possible, but the event today shows that with joint efforts and dedication, even the most ambitious initiatives can be implemented successfully", said H.E. Mr Davenport and confirmed further dedication of the EU to the Programme.

Interview

OVER 1 000 REFUGEE FAMILIES IN BELGRADE WILL HAVE A NEW HOME

Andreja Mladenovic, Deputy Mayor of the City of Belgrade

The City of Belgrade, in cooperation with the Commissariat for Refugees, launches today the implementation of the housing project in Ovca. Could you tell us what this project is about, to whom is it intended and where does the funding come from?

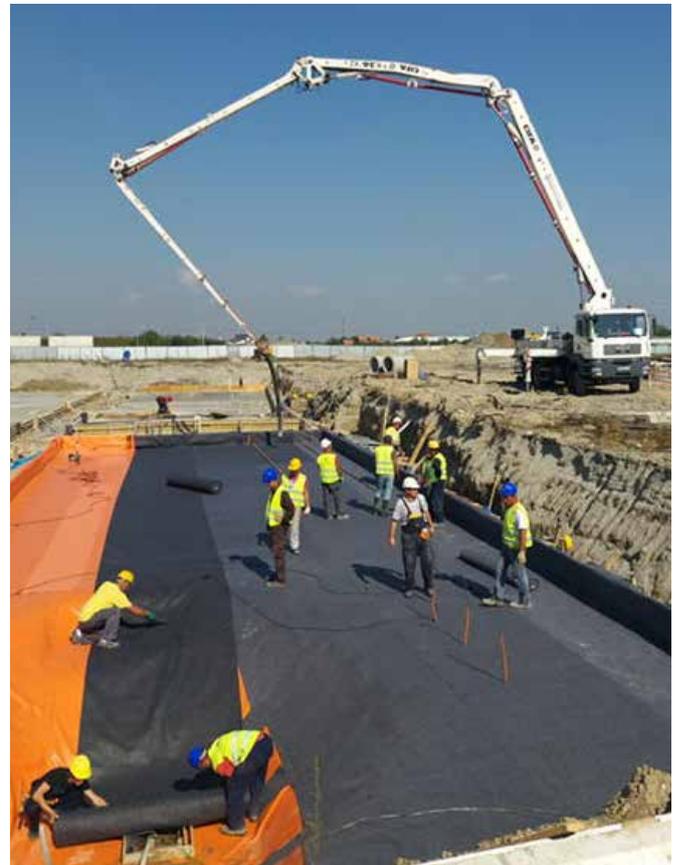
Today, here in Ovca, we inaugurated the construction works on 235 apartments, the investments in which the City of Belgrade participates with EUR 2.3 million, but also additionally contributes with the land, issuing of all necessary permits and infrastructure, preparatory works and, later on, monitoring. All this will enable us to finish the construction works in 14 months, and provide refugee families with new homes. The rest of the money comes from the RHP Fund.

Is Belgrade implementing other RHP projects than this one?

In addition to this project, in the last two years, the City of Belgrade has invested a lot in the RHP sub-project SRB3, providing housing for the refugees on the territory of Belgrade, including provision of village houses and building material, as well as a number of pre-fabricated houses. With these projects, together with one component of the sub-project SRB5 aiming at building 270 apartments in Kamendin, we will provide accommodation for more than 1 000 refugee families in the upcoming period.



Andreja Mladenovic,
Deputy Mayor of the City of Belgrade



Partner Countries' Highlights



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

COMMENCEMENT OF WORKS ON CONSTRUCTION OF APARTMENTS IN DERVENTA

On 22 August 2016, the Minister of Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Republika Srpska, Davor Cordas, officially marked the commencement of works on (re)construction of 26 housing units in the municipality of Derventa. The total investments in projects carried out in Derventa this and next year will amount to approximately EUR 4 million, out of which RHP's share is some 50%.

After the ceremony, which was also attended by Vice President of the Republika Srpska Josip Jerkovic, a RHP beneficiary house in Zivinice was visited, to witness the start of reconstruction works.



"Today, we mark the beginning of construction works which should be completed before the New Year, allowing our beneficiaries to move in. A total of 30 apartments for social housing will be built along with 80 houses to be reconstructed, making this local community a large construction site. We owe our gratitude to the RHP Donors and the Municipality Mayor who has accepted to make Derventa an active RHP stakeholder", said Mr Cordas.



MONTENEGRO

CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL 51 APARTMENTS IN KONIK

In March this year, the construction site in Konik, Montenegro, was inaugurated and construction works started to provide 120 apartments for the most vulnerable Roma families living in Konik camp. Six months later, important progress has been made: the works on 120 flats are progressing ahead of schedule and should be completed by August 2017.

Furthermore, thanks to budget savings, additional 51 apartments will be constructed for residents of Konik camp and the surroundings, thereby increasing the number of beneficiary families from 120 to 171. As regards the supplementary 51 flats, the apartment buildings have already been designed and building permits obtained under the IPA-financed project, thanks to which 48 vulnerable families from Konik camp received new homes in December 2015. These 51 flats are scheduled to be completed in April 2018.



Partner Countries' Highlights



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA



WORKS IN KNIN AND BENKOVAC ADVANCING WELL

On 19 August 2016, representatives of the State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care visited the construction sites of residential buildings in Knin and Benkovac (sub-projects HR2 and HR5). The works are progressing in line with set schedules and deadlines, in conformity with the previously established dynamics agreed between the contractors and the State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care as the Contracting Authority.

Works on the construction of two multi-apartment buildings in Knin progress in line with plans: final works on the building and the surrounding area, as well as on the supporting infrastructure, are being realized.

Works on the multi-apartment building in Benkovac, which started in April 2016, progress on schedule.



CROSS-BORDER VERIFICATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Cross-border data verification is a crucial part of beneficiary selection under the RHP. It ensures that a beneficiary applying for RHP housing assistance in one Partner Country does not already possess a permanent housing solution in another Partner Country. In practice, the Partner Countries exchange information about beneficiary families registered in their countries and cross-check that they are eligible for RHP assistance.

Within the RHP, the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have set an example of good practice and extensive collaboration in relation to cross-border field verifications. In December 2015, the State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care of the Republic of Croatia (SORHC) and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MHRR) co-signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Based on this Memorandum, as of end September 2016, a total of 3 267 (out of a total scope of 3 559 i.e. 91%) cross-border field verifications of beneficiaries had been conducted.

The conduct of cross-border field verifications was preceded by various workshops for 11 teams (22 members), to guide them in carrying out field verifications throughout the country on behalf of the MHRR. SORHC pays particular attention to ensuring close links between all players active in the beneficiary selection procedure, including field workers and NGO local coordinators, which all contributed to strengthening the processes of cross-border field verifications, selection of beneficiaries and provision of durable housing solutions.

Partner Countries' Highlights



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

CONTRACTS ON DELIVERY OF PRE-FABRICATED HOUSES SIGNED WITH BENEFICIARIES

In July 2016, the beneficiaries of 120 pre-fabricated houses signed the contracts with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration on donation of prefabricated houses under the SRB2 sub-project. The Contract for Design-Build of prefabricated houses was signed in May 2016 and the design stage is well under way.

The construction works of the houses will start in October 2016 and are scheduled to be completed in August 2017, when all the selected beneficiaries should be able to move into their new homes.



AGREEMENT SIGNED ON CONSTRUCTION OF 235 APARTMENTS IN OVCA

On 20 July 2016, the Assembly of the City of Belgrade hosted a ceremony for signing the agreement for construction of 235 apartments for social housing in the Belgrade municipality of Ovca. The Agreement was signed by the Director of the PIU "Research and Development" Goran Kvrjic, the Director of the Agency for Investments and Housing Luka Petrovic, and Jelenko Jeremic, the Director of the company in charge of construction "Zlatibor gradnja". The ceremony was also attended by the Mayor of Belgrade Sinisa Mali, as well as by the Commissioner for Refugees Vladimir Cucic.

The works started in September 2016 and are scheduled to be completed in October 2017. This is currently the largest construction project implemented within the Regional Housing Programme.

The total estimated cost of the project is EUR 9.8 million.

"This is a very important day since we signed an agreement with contractors for construction of 235 apartments intended for refugee families from the territory of former Yugoslavia. This is a problem that displaced families have been facing for many decades, but they will finally get a roof over their heads and have a normal life once the works have been completed by the end of next year", said Mr Sinisa Mali, Mayor of Belgrade.



Beneficiary Story

ZORKA MARTIC, KNIN, CROATIA

Ms Martic fled with her husband from Knin, their place of origin, in 1995 during “the Storm”. They left the apartment, which late Mr Martic had received from the State, leaving all their belongings behind, and took only one bag with their main documents and clothing.

Before the war, Ms Martic had been working for the national railways and her husband in a local factory.

From Knin, Family Martic went to Novi Sad, where they stayed for a while with Ms Martic’ sister and then with their son and his family in his apartment. They then decided to return to Knin in 1997.

As their apartment was occupied, they settled in an old house in a village near Knin, which belonged to Ms Martic’ family, and which was at the time abandoned and in a very bad condition. Mr and Ms Martic were trying for years to return to their apartment or get another one as a substitution; they applied for dozens of governmental and international housing projects and wrote pleas to public attorneys, all without results. Ms Martic continued to struggle even after her husband died. When she heard about the Regional Housing Programme, she decided to try one more time. This time she succeeded. In the summer of 2016, she received a one-bedroom apartment in Knin, under the RHP sub-project HR4, and moved in at the beginning of September.



“There were times when I thought to simply give up and wait for my life to end in that old, mouldy house. Most of the time my clothes smelled of moist and I was ashamed to meet people. I like it here and this apartment is, finally, a place that I can call home”.

RHP People

In September 2016, Ms Liselotte Isaksson, Head of Sector for Civil Society and Social Inclusion in the Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes Unit in DG NEAR, took over the RHP at the European Commission.

Ms Isaksson has 20 years of experience within the European Commission. Most recently she was in charge of regional cooperation with the Southern Neighbourhood countries, in the areas of energy, environment and transport among other things.

We would like to warmly welcome Ms Isaksson to the RHP team.



Mr Nicola Bertolini, who was in charge of the RHP at the European Commission as the Head of Sector for Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes Unit in DG NEAR, has taken on new professional challenges in FYR of Macedonia. We would like to thank Mr Bertolini for his strong engagement to the RHP and efforts invested to speed up its implementation.



RHP Fund Status

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW OF THE RHP

At end-September 2016, the financial situation of the RHP can be summarized by the following figures:

Aggregate figures on RHP

(in EUR million, at end-September 2016)

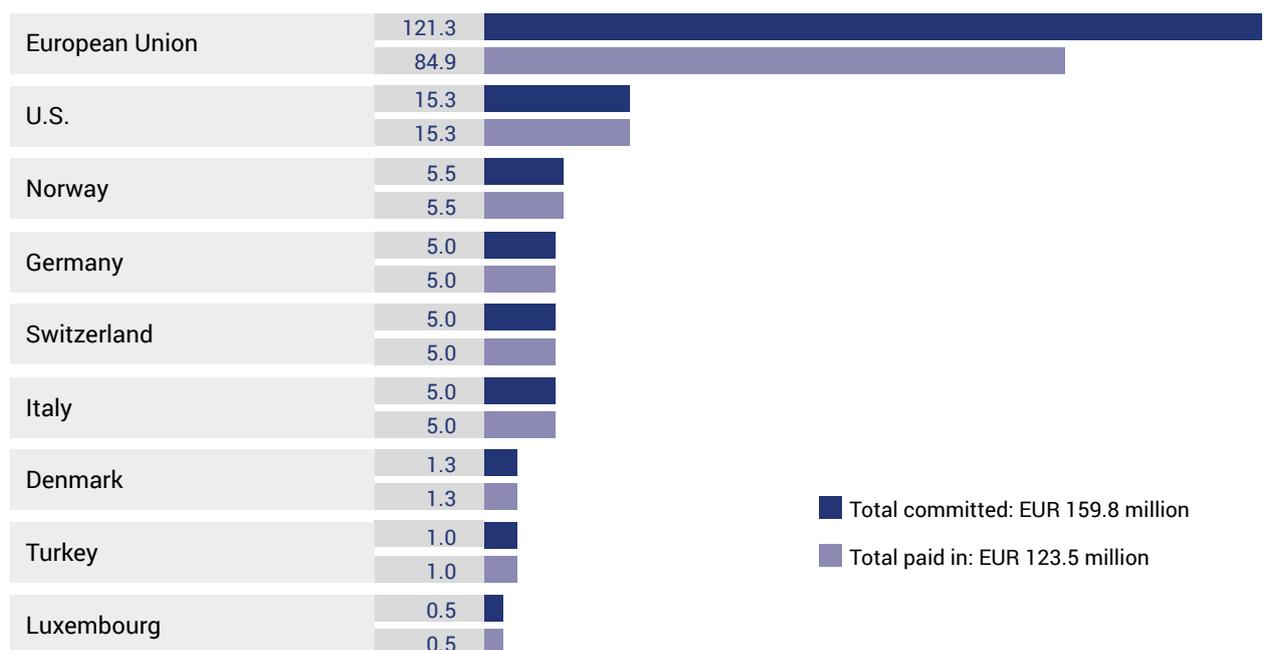


CONTRIBUTIONS BY DONORS

The Donors have committed EUR 159.8 million to the RHP Fund, of which they have paid in EUR 123.5 million. The latest instalment, amounting to EUR 2 million, was paid in by Italy at end-September 2016. With this instalment, Italy has paid in the total of its EUR 5 million contribution. With EUR 121.3 million committed and EUR 84.9 million paid into the RHP Fund, the European Union is the main Donor to the RHP.

Contributions committed and paid into the RHP Fund

(in EUR million, at end-September 2016)



RHP Fund Status

DISBURSEMENTS TO PARTNER COUNTRIES

At end-September 2016, the total volume of disbursements since the start of the Programme amounted to EUR 47 million. Of this total amount, EUR 26 million, or 56%, 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 78 million out of EUR 141 million, or 55%.

Disbursements to Partner Countries

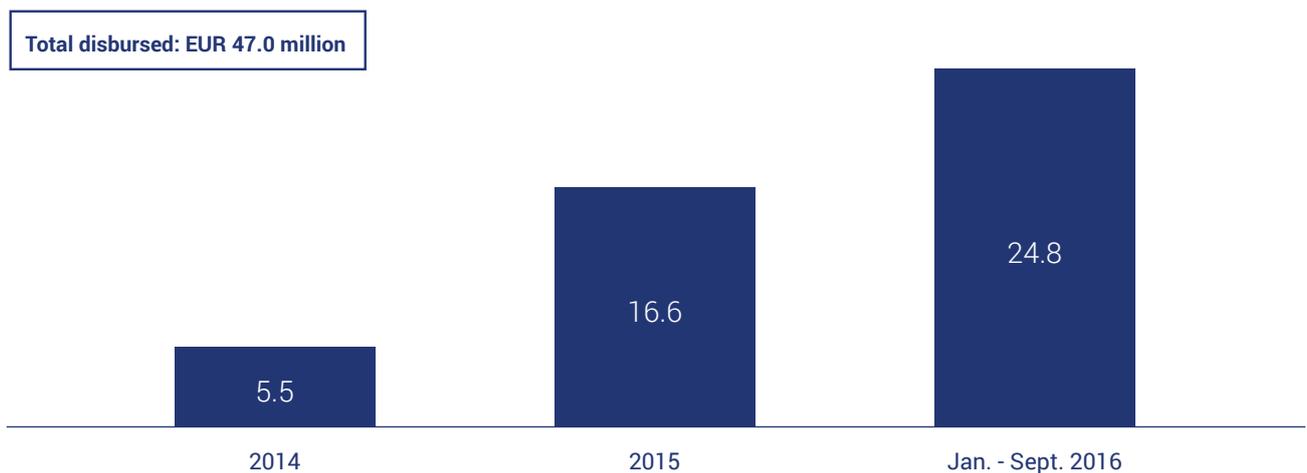
(per Partner Country, in EUR million at end - September 2016)



The significant increase in disbursements to Partner Countries since the start of the Programme is demonstrated by the following annual figures:

Disbursements to Partner Countries

(per year, in EUR million at end - September 2016)



Upcoming Activities (October-December 2016)

RHP Events

6 October 2016

18th Regional Coordination Forum. Belgrade, Serbia

October 2016

Signing of contract and start of construction works on housing units in Berane (MNE4), Montenegro

October 2016

Signing of contracts with Local Self Governments (LSG) for building material packages and village houses within SRB5, Belgrade, Serbia

November 2016

Visibility event to mark beneficiaries moving into pre-fabricated houses within SRB1, Serbia

November 2016

Visibility event to mark beneficiaries moving into reconstructed houses within BiH2 and BiH4, Bosnia and Herzegovina

December 2016

"A New Home", a joint exhibition by the project "EU Support for Improving the Living Conditions of Forced Migrants" and the RHP, Belgrade, Serbia

23 December 2016

Hand-over of the building and keys to beneficiaries in Knin (HR2), Croatia



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. RHP is implemented by Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia and mostly financed by the international donor community. The main donor is the European Union. The other donors are the USA, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, Turkey, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Hungary.

www.regionalhousingprogramme.org