

PROVIDING A HOME FOR 74,000 PEOPLE

RHP HIGHLIGHTS 2012/2013

18 years after the armed conflicts of the 1990s ended, almost half a million people in the Balkan region still lack access to decent housing that would allow them to rebuild their lives.

On 24 April 2012 in Sarajevo, representatives of four Balkan countries gathered together with one specific aim: to raise funds in order to contribute towards finally resolving the remaining issues of the refugees and displaced persons, following the conflict in the territory of former Yugoslavia. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia (the "Partner Countries") addressed the international community and invited them to take part in the most ambitious joint initiative these four countries have taken following the conflict in the 1990s: to end the protracted displacement chapter in the region and provide the most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons with a durable housing solution. Recognising the urgent need to solve this issue once and for all, Donors pledged EUR 261 million in support of this initiative, of which EUR 230 million were pledged by the European Commission and EUR 31 million by other Donors.

A year after, this recognition has resulted in a historic partnership of the Partner Countries and the international community, consisting of the Donors - in particular the European Commission and the USA - strongly supported by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE¹), and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). This partnership has come to be known as the Regional Housing Programme (RHP).

This document outlines the major RHP achievements since April 2012.

WHAT IS THE REGIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMME?

It is a joint initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The RHP aims to provide a sustainable housing solution to close to 74,000 people or 27,000 households and its total cost is estimated to be approximately EUR 584 million over a five-year period.

WHY?

The aim is to contribute towards resolving the protracted displacement situation of the most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons following the 1991-1995 conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia, including internally displaced persons in Montenegro from 1999, by providing them with durable housing solutions. RHP should also be seen as providing impetus to national and regional efforts aimed at resolving the problems related to legal, social and economic dimensions of the protracted displacement and hence, contributing to the stability of the region.

HOW?

The RHP will comprise four Country Housing Projects, which will be implemented in parallel in the four Partner Countries, through several sub-projects and in several phases.



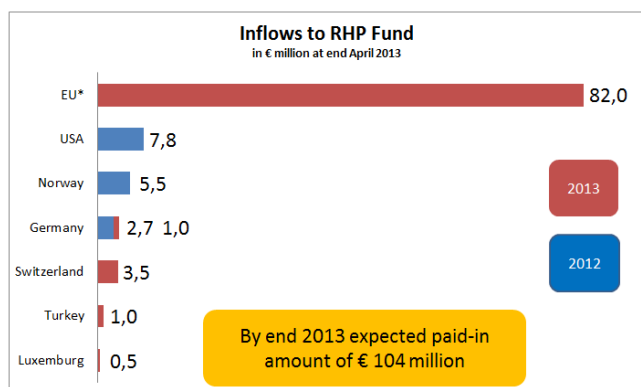
Donors' Conference held on 24 April 2012 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

RAISING FUNDS FOR RHP

The RHP is financed by contributions from Donors and the Partner Countries. The latter have committed to providing own contributions totalling on average 15% of each sub-project cost.

Since the Donors' Conference in Sarajevo in April 2012 the CEB, in coordination with the Donors, has set up the RHP Fund, which is conceived as a multi-donor fund where Donor contributions of at least EUR 250,000 are held. As of April 2013, seven Donors have contributed to the RHP Fund: the European Commission, the USA, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. Denmark and Italy will soon join the group of Donors.

In addition, a number of other Donors who contribute less than EUR 250,000 channel their contributions directly through the CEB. Their contributions shall cover expenses such as RHP promotional events or publications. As of April 2013, three Donors have contributed: Cyprus, Romania and the Slovak Republic.



*EU contribution in the amount of € 77 million pending upon the signature of Adherence and Contribution Agreement

MANAGING RHP

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

International stakeholders, i.e. the European Commission, the USA, the UNHCR and the OSCE have been supporting the Partner Countries from the outset of the RHP initiative. By playing a key role in the governance and coordination structure, they contribute to close Donor oversight and strong operational coordination.

CEB - Managing Housing Programme

The CEB plays three roles within the framework of the RHP:

- Fund Manager of the RHP Fund: Managing and reporting on contributions from Donors
- Finance Institution: Strong support in preparing and implementing the Country Housing Projects, monitoring the use of grants disbursed, and supervising technical assistance
- RHP Secretariat: Facilitating coordination between RHP stakeholders.

UNHCR and OSCE - Monitoring Beneficiary Selection and Sustainability

UNHCR and OSCE have been tasked with helping to reach and identify eligible beneficiaries, monitoring that their selection is done in a transparent manner, and ensuring that the beneficiaries receive adequate protection. As such, those institutions play a crucial role in monitoring that the RHP effectively provides sustainable housing solutions to those refugees and displaced persons most in need.

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

RHP Fund Governance comprises two bodies:

- 1- Technical Committee : Assessment of sub-projects
 - Members contributing at least EUR 5 million
 - Submits Partner Countries' grant requests to the Assembly of Donors
- 2- Assembly of Donors: Approval of sub-projects
 - Approves Partner Countries' grant requests and decides on any other grant -related issues
 - Monitors RHP Fund financial flows.

RHP Coordination structure has two levels:

- 1- RHP Steering Committee: coordination on strategic issues
 - Highest coordinating body of RHP, comprising all RHP stakeholders
 - Oversees progress of the RHP
- 2- Regional Coordination Forum: coordination on operational issues
 - Composed of Partner Countries, the European Commission, UNHCR, OSCE and CEB
 - Facilitates coordination on operational issues related to RHP preparation and implementation.

RHP's backbone for success: Partner Countries' ownership and commitment

Political commitment

The four Partner Countries have publicly committed, by signing a Joint Declaration during the Ministerial Conference in Belgrade in November 2011, to provide all necessary support required to end the displacement of refugees, returnees and displaced persons and to enable them to live as equal citizens, without discrimination.

Financial commitment

The Partner Countries have committed to contributing EUR 83 million out of a total cost of EUR 584 million. These contributions will include allocation of land, provision of necessary permits, the supervision of works as well as financial contributions.

Operational commitment

Based on experience and best practices, the Partner Countries have made great progress in setting up appropriate implementing structures and preparing the Country Housing projects, as well as in identifying eligible beneficiaries.

IMPLEMENTING RHP SUBSTANTIAL AND SUSTAINED CAPACITY SUPPORT

One of the particularities of RHP is that the Partner Countries will be supported by substantial Technical Assistance throughout the RHP implementation. This Technical Assistance will enable the Partner Countries to address institutional capacity constraints while leaving them firmly in charge of implementing their Country Housing Projects. It will be front-loaded and decrease over the years.

In late 2012, the Partner Countries, supported by Technical Assistance, began drafting their Country Feasibility Reports. The Country Feasibility Reports should create a solid basis for project implementation, as they shall describe in full detail institutional, legal, technical and other aspects of each Country Housing Project.

In addition, Project Implementation Manuals will be developed, in which standard implementation procedures and control systems will be described and templates provided, with dedicated chapters for financial management and audit, procurement and contract administration as well as monitoring and periodic reporting.

The Technical Assistance is financed by the European Commission through a bilateral contribution agreement with the CEB. It is provided by consultants and supervised by the CEB.

Integrated Approach to Implementing RHP

The Partner Countries have also taken an important accompanying steps to contribute to the sustainability of the housing provided. They have:

- Agreed to establish accelerated procedures for allowing refugees and IDPs to access civil status documentation, to regulate their civil status on permanent basis and thus allow them to fully and effectively enjoy their rights and achieve durable solutions;
- Discuss possible solutions for outstanding issues related to the pension legislation, aimed at harmonisation with relevant international standards;
- Agreed to exchange data on displaced populations in the context of the Regional Housing Programme, so as to ensure that no eligible beneficiary is excluded and to avoid duplication of assistance; and
- Agreed to carry out joint outreach campaigns, with the support of the UNHCR and OSCE, to allow refugees and displaced persons to make an informed choice on available durable solutions, as well as to regularly inform them about their rights and the programmes aimed at their social and economic integration or reintegration.

REGIONAL INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

In March 2012, the Partner Countries, in cooperation with UNHCR, launched an extensive information campaign in the region. The campaign aims to provide comprehensive information to refugees about possibilities related to voluntary repatriation, reintegration or local integration. The regional information campaign, which will last in all the four countries throughout March and April 2013, will be funded by a personal USD 25,000 donation of Ms Sadako Ogata - the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The campaign was launched with a press conference in Belgrade, and resulted with vast media coverage. Soon after this, similar media events were organized in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Podgorica. Representatives of leading institutions in each country took part in these events.

The tailor-made national information campaigns, to last throughout the Programme implementation, are funded by the European Union and implemented by the leading implementing institutions in Partner Countries.



Press conference in Sarajevo, 3 April, 2013



Press conference in Zagreb, 13 March, 2013

PREPARING COUNTRY HOUSING PROJECTS



Partner Countries provide housing solutions to beneficiaries in their countries through several sub-projects. There are four housing modalities envisaged: provision of construction materials for building and reconstruction, building or purchase of apartment buildings, purchase of village houses and construction of pre-fabricated houses.

In 2012, the Partner Countries began preparing their Country Housing Projects, with the support of CEB, UNHCR and OSCE. In January 2013, the Partner Countries submitted first sub-project proposals for financing to the RHP Fund Assembly of Donors. These proposals were approved by the Donors in April 2013, and implementation of these sub-projects should start in autumn 2013. The total estimated cost of the sub-projects is EUR 8.7 million and the total amount of grants approved is EUR 7.1 million.

This so-called “first wave of sub-projects” was designed to be fairly limited in size so as to enable the Partner Countries to finalise the setting up of project implementing structures while at the same time launching the first sub-projects. The next sub-project applications should be finalized by the end of June, to enable a second round of approvals in autumn 2013.

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DESCRIPTION OF FIRST RHP SUB-PROJECTS APPROVED

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Provision of building materials to 20 families and turnkey reconstruction assistance to 150 families



Estimated sub-project cost: EUR 2,316,000

Approved grant amount: EUR 2,035,000

This sub-project will help both returnees and internally displaced persons residing in or returning to the two political Entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Federation) and Republika Srpska. The sub-project will be implemented in up to 16 municipalities.

CROATIA

Construction of apartment building for 29 families in the municipality of Korenica



Estimated sub-project cost: EUR 1,398,211

Approved grant amount: EUR 1,048,658

The beneficiaries of this sub-project are the former occupancy/tenancy right holders who applied for the national Housing Care Programme. The proposed sub-project envisages a construction of new apartment building in the settlement Korenica located in the Municipality of Plitvice Lakes, which is part of the Areas of Special State Concern.

MONTENEGRO

Construction of two blocks of flats providing housing to 62 families in the municipality of Nikšić



Estimated sub-project cost: EUR 2,780,000

Approved grant amount: EUR 1,980,000

The proposed sub-project envisages the construction of two new blocks of apartments in the municipality of Nikšic, the second biggest municipality by population in Montenegro, for 62 families.

SERBIA

Provision of 70 pre-fabricated houses and 125 packages of building materials to 195 families



Estimated sub-project cost: EUR 2,212,500

Approved grant amount: EUR 1,993,000

Prefabricated houses will be provided to those beneficiaries who possess their own building plots; building materials will be provided to beneficiaries who have started the construction of their houses. The housing solutions will be implemented in 60 municipalities throughout Serbia.