

RAS

REFUGEE AID SERBIA

FIELD

Report on Choice of Destination Country

RAS Field Report #5 / May 2018.

Activities Overview

Between April 10 and April 30, RAS Field Team focused on monitoring the overall situation in the Belgrade area. In total, RAS Field Team provided 963 migrants/refugees with information and conducted 242 interviews with both newly arrived and migrants residing in Serbia for more than a month during this reporting period. In these 20 days of April, RAS Field Team took notice of 240 new arrivals - 40% (98) of them coming from Pakistan, 23% (56) from Afghanistan, 21% (50) from Iran, and 8% (19) from Iraq. Other countries of origin include Algeria (3), Sri Lanka (4), Syria (5), Libya (9), Somalia (4), and Ghana (7).

In coordination with Praxis, 33 targeted non-food items (NFI) distributions were carried out as a result of which 45 persons were provided with 55 items of clothing. RAS Field Team referred up to 141 migrants/refugees to Praxis, CRPC, CYI, MSF, and other organizations for the purposes of legal aid, MHPSS, and medical services during the reporting period.

Destination Country

During the reporting period, 236 migrants/refugees were asked about their preferred country of destination. Although the answers vary greatly, there is an evident trend to move to Western European countries, namely France 44 (19%), Germany 40 (17%), and Italy 37 (16%). Serbia was also a choice of a significant number of migrants/refugees, 21 (9%). These four main destinations are followed by Spain, (4%), Norway (3%) and the United Kingdom (2%).

Furthermore, a significant number of respondents 21 (9%) said that they do not have a specific destination country in mind. More precisely, they are willing to settle wherever living conditions are acceptable. An additional 11 (5%) have not decided yet, whereas 7 (3%) wish to go to any country in Western Europe without specific preferences. Up to 18 respondents (8%) listed several countries as their possible final destination, mostly referring to Western Europe, but also including countries such as Serbia, Canada, and the United States.

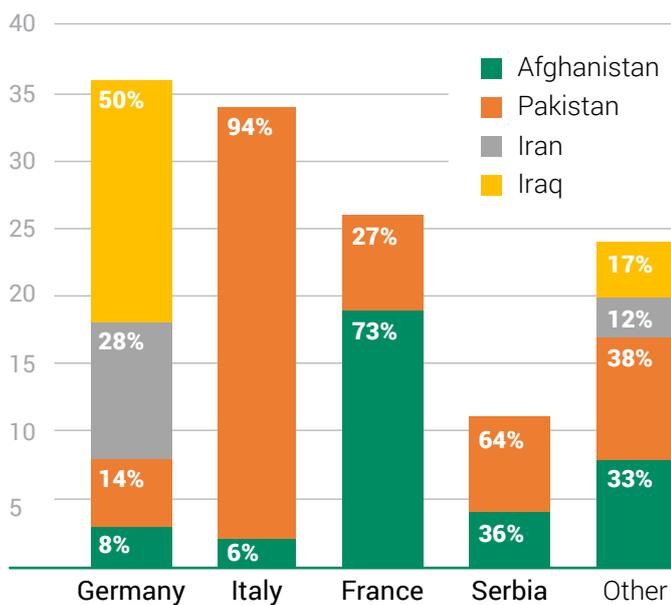
Certain Western European countries such as Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands or Switzerland are not commonly chosen countries of destination among the migrant /refugee population interviewed in Serbia.

Data analysis of the answers given by the newly-arrived migrants/refugees and those who have been residing in Serbia for one month or more does not imply any significantly distinct trends between these two groups. The distribution of destination countries remains the similar in either of the groups, with Germany, France and Italy being the primary preference destination countries. Furthermore, the number of those undecided or without a specific country of destination in mind is of similar proportions in both groups.

Demographics

Stark differences are noticed between most represented nationalities among the migrant/refugee population in Serbia – namely Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran - and their preferred countries

of destination. To be more specific, **among 41 interviews migrants/refugees from Afghanistan, nearly half (19) wish to reach France as their final destination.** Only a small minority wants to go to Germany (3) or Italy (2). On the other hand, **migrants/refugees from Pakistan tend to be more interested in continuing their journey towards Italy**, with more than half of the interviewed (32/60) listing this country in their answers. None of the interviewed migrants from Pakistan stated that they are undecided about their destination country.



Chosen countries of destination by migrants/refugees from most represented countries of origin

A great majority of the interviewed migrants/refugees from Iraq 18 (69%) see Germany as their destination country. Respondents from Iran also wish to reach Germany more than any other country (10 or 43%). Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents from Iran 10 (43%) have not decided or do not have a specific country of destination in mind.

Migrants/refugees traveling alone or with at least one friend are more likely to consider Italy as their country of destination (23% of the interviewed migrants traveling alone and 20% of migrants traveling with friends in contrast to only 9% of those traveling with families). At the same time, **migrants traveling alone are also much more likely to consider Serbia as their country of destination (21%), whereas only 4% of those traveling with friends and 8% of those who reached Serbia with family members see Serbia as their final destination.**

Over half of the respondents traveling with

family members wish to reach one of the two countries in Western Europe – Germany (25%) and France (24%). France is also a preferred destination country among those traveling with friends (20%). None of the migrants traveling with family members wish to reach countries such as Spain, Austria, or Belgium.

Among the 236 interviewed migrants/refugees, only 27 were female. Their responses, however, showed no interest in Serbia as their country of destination, and a preference to live in Germany (8) or France (6).

Making a Decision

In order to find out how migrants/refugees make important decisions about the continuation of their journey, RAS Field Team conducted an analysis of their responses related to reasons behind these decisions as well as the sources of information they used when making the choice.

In total, 222 interviewed migrants/refugees stated one or more reasons for choosing a particular country or countries as their destination. **Forty two percent of interviewees (93) made a decision to try to reach a certain country because they have family living there. In the majority of cases, it is not immediate family, such as parents or spouse, but members of extended family, for instance, uncles and aunts. In over 50% of cases, these family members reside in Italy, Germany and France.**

In addition, **45 respondents (20%) chose a certain country based on their beliefs about the conditions of employment** – either due to the ease of obtaining a job, greater need for extra work force in that country, or general financial gains. In these cases, Western European countries such as Germany are again predominant. At the same time, **15 respondents (7%) stated going to school or university as their main reason for choosing a specific country. Among those, nearly a third would consider Serbia as their country of destination for the purposes of education.**

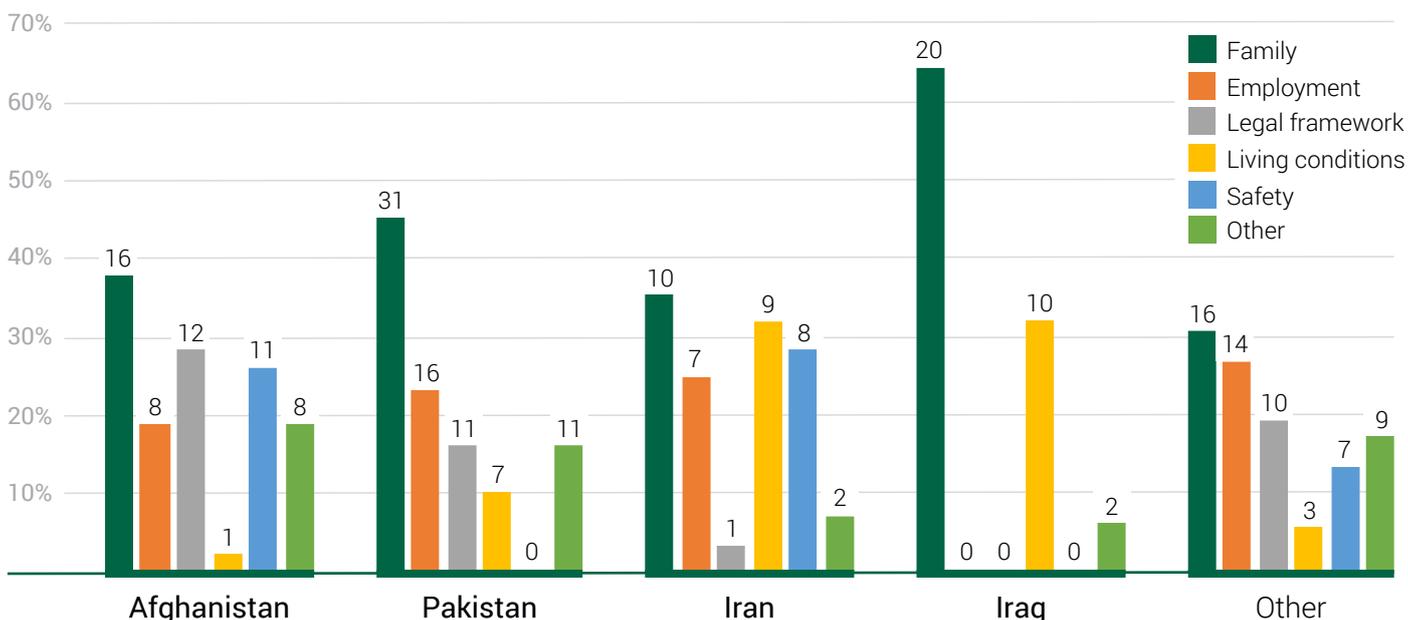
Among other prevalent reasons for choosing one (or several) countries over others are legal framework 33 (15%), good living conditions 30 (14%), and security and safety 26 (12%). When it comes to legal considerations, most respondents choose countries such as Italy because they have information about the lack of application of the Dublin III Regulations, or France because they believe it will be easier to have their asylum application approved than in, for instance, Austria or Serbia. A number of migrants is

mostly led by good living conditions in a country, including people’s attitudes towards migrants and an overall amiable atmosphere. Many of these respondents also remain undecided about where to go or do not have a specific preference in Western Europe as long as the living conditions are considered acceptable. Finally, **migrants/refugees who fled their country due to security and safety concerns are inclined towards listing this as the single most important reason for choosing a particular country as a place where they wish to build their lives.** In their response, they often do not have a specific country in mind and/or wish to stay in Serbia.

Other recorded reasons that help migrants/refugees make a decision about their destination country include friends who live there, health related reasons, and their knowledge of the official language. Four interviewed migrants/refugees wish to go to a particular country because they had previously resided in it for a period of time and liked the life they were living before they were deported.

about reaching their destination. A total of 141 respondents provided answers to these questions. In accordance with the reasons why migrants want to reach a certain country, **the majority received information about their destination country from a family member 80 (57%).** More than half of the respondents from Iran (56%) and nearly all respondents from Iraq (95%) tend to rely on family members for this type of information.

Twenty two percent are informed by their friends who have reached the destination country. Other migrants/refugees, including those currently residing in Serbia, are also one of the main sources of information. To be more precise, **16% of the respondents stated that they decided to go to a specific country based on the information they received from other migrants/refugees.** This also explains why migrants/refugees from one same country tend to have similar preferences towards one destination country while other nationalities choose a different location . **A significant number of migrants/refu-**

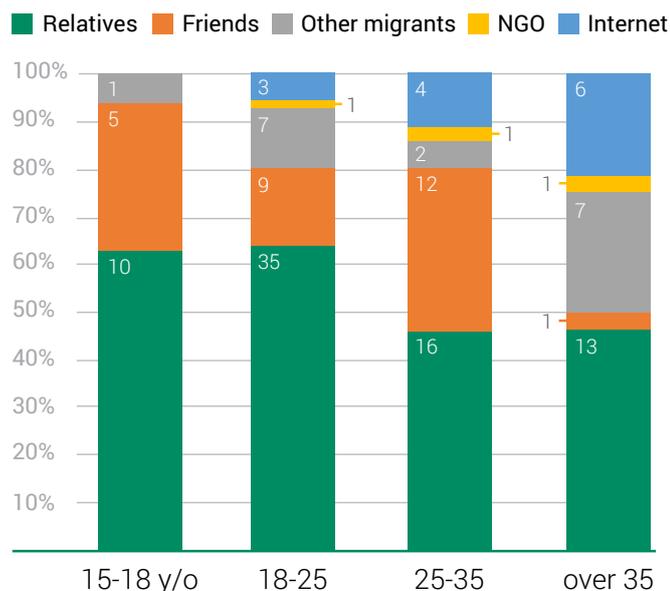


Reasons given for choosing the destination country (some persons provided multiple answers)

Sources of Information

Considering that almost none of the respondents have previously been to their country of destination, RAS Field Team decided to explore the source of information these migrants/refugees use in order to make their decisions and subsequent plans

gees rely on the Internet to find relevant information about their destination country (13%). This largely refers to those who seek to move to another country for legal reasons such as the complexity and duration of the asylum procedure. Finally, only 2% of interviewed migrants stated that they received some sort of information about their preferred destination country from an NGO.



Sources of information when choosing destination country by age group

Time of Decision

RAS Field Team also collected information about whether migrants/refugees change their destination country preferences. For this reason, Field Team asked some of the interviewed migrants to elaborate on when they made a decision to move to a specific country. In total, 139 interviewees provided answers to this question. **Only in a handful of cases 7 (5%) respondents made a decision about their destination country less than a month before the interview. In the majority of cases 53(38%), migrants/refugees decided on their country of destination between 6 and 12 months before the interview.** Typically, they had already left their country of origin by then and found themselves in Turkey, Greece or Bulgaria or they made a firm decision some months prior to their departure. Among this category, the majority have plans to reach France and Germany.

Nearly a quarter of the interviewed migrants 30 (22%) made their decisions a long time ago – a year or more before the interview – usually upon leaving their countries of origin or about a year into their journey. The rest of the interviewed decided on

their destination country 1-6 months ago, whereby nearly half of them left their countries of origin much before with a different plan in mind. Among the reasons why migrants change their destination countries preferences while on the road are disappointments in the living conditions and asylum processes in Greece and Bulgaria, and the overall discussions in migrant communities about which countries are least difficult and/or dangerous to reach without being pushed back or deported.