



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
PROTECTOR OF CITIZENS
71 - 88/15
Belgrade



Заштитник грађана
Zaštitnik građana



BEOGRADSKI CENTAR
ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA

Ref No. 36935 Date: 7 October 2015

NATIONAL PREVENTIVE MECHANISM

MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NPM RECOMMENDATIONS ON
IMPROVING THE TREATMENT OF MIGRANTS/ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF
SERBIA

Report on the Visits to the Regional Border Police Centre towards Hungary, the Subotica Police Directorate, the Kanjiža Police Station and the Kanjiža and Subotica and Social Welfare Centres

Belgrade, September 2015

MANDATE OF THE NATIONAL PREVENTIVE MECHANISM

Under the Act Ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Degrading or Humiliating Treatment or Punishment¹, the National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (NPM) shall visit institutions where persons are or may be deprived of their liberty with a view to deterring any form of torture or other form of ill-treatment by state authorities or public officials and to providing guidance to state authorities on putting in place accommodation and other living conditions in institutions where persons are deprived of liberty in accordance with the valid regulations and standards.

The NPM is entitled to unimpeded and unannounced access to all institutions where persons are or may be deprived of liberty at all times; to hold private interviews with such persons, with public officials, who are under the obligation to cooperate with it, and with any other persons who may have information of relevance to the treatment of persons deprived of liberty; to access all documentation regarding those persons; to issue recommendations to the competent authorities with a view to improving the treatment of persons deprived of liberty and the conditions in which they are held or detained.

Under Article 2a of the Act, the Protector of Citizens shall perform NPM duties and, in performing these duties, cooperate with the Ombudspersons of the autonomous provinces and with associations, the Statutes of which include the goal of improving human rights and freedoms in accordance with the law.

The Protector of Citizens and the AP of Vojvodina Provincial Ombudsperson have signed a Memorandum on Cooperation in Performing NPM Duties², under which the Provincial Ombudsperson shall actively partake in the visits by NPM Monitoring Team to institutions in the territory of the AP of Vojvodina where persons are deprived of liberty.

Pursuant to the procedure implemented after the publication of the Public Call³, the Protector of Citizens selected the associations with which it would cooperate in performing NPM duties, notably: the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), the Victimology Society of Serbia, Dialogue, the Mental Disability Rights Initiative - Serbia (MDRI-S), the Committee of Human Rights Lawyers (YUCOM), the International Aid Network (IAN), the Human Rights Committee - Valjevo, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia and the Human Rights Centre - Niš.

After its visits, the NPM prepares reports which it forwards to the visited institutions. Thereinafter, the NPM maintains continuous dialogue with the visited institutions and the authorities within which they operate, with a view to eliminating the identified deficiencies that may lead to torture or inhuman or humiliating treatment.

Whilst performing its NPM duties, the Protector of Citizens on 10 February 2014 issued Recommendations No. 75-6/14 to the competent authorities. Namely, during its review of whether the institutions were properly and lawfully treating asylum seekers and/or illegal migrants in the territory of Serbia and applying the valid standards to them, the NPM noted that the public authorities had not established a systemic approach facilitating efficient treatment in accordance with the valid regulations and international asylum and migration standards.

1 Official Journal of Serbia and Montenegro - International Treaties Nos 16/2005 and 2/2006 and Official Gazette of RS - International Treaties No. 7/2011.

2 Signed on 12 December 2011.

3 Published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia on 29 December 2011.

MAIN INFORMATION ON THE VISIT

VISITED INSTITUTIONS	Regional Border Police Centre (RBPC) towards Hungary, Subotica Police Directorate, Kanjiža Police Station and the Subotica and Kanjiža Social Welfare Centres
PURPOSE OF THE VISITS	Monitoring treatment of refugees and migrants
VISITS CONDUCTED BY	Protector of Citizens in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
DATE OF VISITS	17-18 September 2015
VISITS ANNOUNCED	The visits were announced in advance
VISIT TEAM	<p>Team Leader: Jelena Unijat, <i>Protector of Citizens Professional Service</i></p> <p>Team members: Snežana Nešić <i>Protector of Citizens Professional Service</i> Jagoda Vještica, <i>Provincial Ombudsman Professional Service</i> Dragan Božović <i>Belgrade Centre for Human Rights</i> Milena Vasić, <i>Belgrade Centre for Human Rights</i></p>

COOPERATION OF OFFICIALS WITH THE NPM TEAM

All officials of the visited institutions fully cooperated with the NPM Team, providing it with all the information it required and free access to the documentation on request.

COURSE OF THE VISIT

During the first day of its visit (17 September 2015), the NPM Team visited the Kanjiža Police Station and Social Welfare Centre and the Border Police Stations Horgoš 1 and 2. On the second day of its visit (18 September 2015), the NPM Team visited the RBPC towards Hungary and the Subotica Police Directorate and Social Welfare Centre. The Team interviewed the officials of these institutions and perused the relevant documentation. It also collected data from the relevant Social Welfare Centres to gain insight in the authorities' treatment of particularly vulnerable categories of aliens.

1. REGIONAL BORDER POLICE CENTRE TOWARDS HUNGARY

According to the officials of the Regional Border Police Centre towards Hungary (hereinafter: RBPC), this Centre covers 174.6 km of Serbia's border with Hungary and the Bezdan border crossing with Croatia. The RBPC comprises 10 Border Police Stations (BPS), four of which are charged with controlling eleven state border crossings, while the other six are charged with guarding the state border. All 10 BPS have women police officers. Seventy two percent of the envisaged RBPC jobs are filled (80% in the stations controlling border crossings and 64% in stations protecting the state border). Ten Austrian and four German police officers accompany the RBPC officers on their duties and thus have insight in the border control and protection activities.

During the first eight months of 2015, the RBPC prevented 11,242 people from illegally crossing the state border. It filed 8,422 motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings against them for unlawfully crossing the state border, of which 6,695 against foreign nationals (such motions were not filed against aliens under 14 years of age).⁴ Motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings were filed against 861 alien minors (814 boys and 47 girls) and against 111 minors who are nationals of Serbia (72 boys and 39 girls). Motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings were filed against 332 Serbian and 578 foreign women. Apart from misdemeanour motions, the RBPC in 2015 filed also 286 motions for initiating criminal proceedings against persons suspected of human smuggling. The motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings were filed against the victims-witnesses. One motion for the crime of trafficking in humans was also filed, but the public prosecution office decided to prosecute the defendant for human smuggling. The RBPC issued 136 certificates of intent to apply for asylum in 2015. The aliens against whom misdemeanour or criminal motions have been filed and who have been issued certificates of intent are photographed and fingerprinted in the Subotica or Sombor Police Directorates or the Kanjiža Police Station (depending on where they are apprehended). The interviewed officials said that none of the refugees or migrants complained about their treatment by the police officers.

Aliens, against whom misdemeanour motions are filed, are escorted by the RBPC to the Misdemeanour Court and then to prison in the event they are sentenced to imprisonment or their fine penalty is substituted by the imprisonment penalty. The rulings ordering them to leave the country are issued by the relevant Police Directorates. According to the officials, misdemeanour judges issue warnings to women and older minors. Motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings are filed against aliens who try to cross into Hungary in other places, but not against those who attempt to enter it by walking along the railway tracks; the latter were let through. The RBPC did not refer any aliens to the Aliens Shelter in 2015.

The RBPC officers mostly communicate with the aliens in English. They usually come across aliens in groups, in which at least one person speaks English. The RBPC has personal data forms in Arabic. Its officers call the paramedics in the event the aliens are in need of medical assistance. The RBPC officers are in need of training in treatment of minors as only a small number of them are certified for work with them. Whenever they come across unaccompanied alien minors, they immediately notify the competent Social Welfare Centre (SWC). The RBPC officers have come across most of the refugees at the Horgoš 1 and 2 border crossings with Hungary. Few had been apprehended on their way to the Kelebija border crossing. The police have also caught the refugees cutting the wire fence erected by the Hungarian authorities on the border with Serbia.

⁴ Most of Serbia's nationals, against whom misdemeanour motions have been filed, come from the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija.

According to RBPC officials, the RBPC officers implement the procedure of readmitting⁵ Serbian nationals deported from Hungary, while the Subotica Police Directorate and the Kanjiža PS implement the procedure of readmitting foreign nationals deported from Hungary. The RBPC officers merely participate in the latter procedure. RBPC data indicate that 5,154 aliens were readmitted to Serbia (of whom most were Syrians – 3,809, whereas the rest were Iraqis – 444, Palestinians – 130, Somalis – 172 and Pakistanis – 62). Motions to institute misdemeanour proceedings are also filed against the readmitted aliens, but by the competent police directorates.

Horgoš 1 and 2 Border Crossings

There are over 1,000 refugees, including several pregnant women and many children, at the border crossings, who have been trying to enter Hungarian territory, albeit unsuccessfully, because Hungary closed these border crossings with Serbia on 15 September 2015. The refugees cut through the wire fence between the Horgoš 1 and 2 border crossings, erected across a field, wherefore they can freely move from one border crossing to another. Arabic and Persian interpreters are manning these crossings and notifying the aliens that the border with Hungary is closed and that they should board buses (provided by UNHCR and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, hereinafter CRM) that will take them to the Kanjiža Reception Centre free of charge or the private bus carriers, which will drive them to Šid, at the border with Croatia, for a fee. CRM staff are deployed at these crossings and they notify the Kanjiža Reception Centre of the situation at the border crossings. Representatives of Serbian and foreign NGOs, UNHCR and the Red Cross are also at the border crossings, distributing humanitarian aid.

There is a food distribution point and tents in which doctors extend medical aid at Horgoš 2, but no toilets. The out-patient health clinic doctors and those working for the international NGO *Médecins Sans Frontières* are on duty. The aliens have put up tents by the highway next to the border crossing and have been staying in them since 15 September. There are 10 toilets at Horgoš 1, which the aliens may use free of charge.

According to the officials, Hungarian policemen used to admit five people every hour at a separate entry point at Horgoš 1 if they applied for asylum in Hungary and agreed to be fingerprinted. All the asylum applications were rapidly reviewed (within a few hours) by the Hungarian authorities and all of them were rejected. The authorities then issued the aliens decisions ordering them to leave the country and took them beyond the wire fence between Hungary and Serbia. The officials claim that these people were arbitrarily returned to Serbia by the Hungarian authorities, in the absence of any readmission requests or Serbia's consent.

An incident occurred at the Horgoš 2 border crossing in the afternoon of 16 September 2015, when Hungarian policemen applied force to prevent the illegal entry of several hundred refugees into Hungarian territory. Namely, as the border crossing had been closed for over 24 hours, a group of several hundred migrants tore down the fence erected by the Hungarian policemen. The Hungarian police responded by use of force, rubber batons, tear gas and water cannons. According to Serbian police officers, the Hungarian police applied these measures disproportionately and entered 150 meters deep into Serbian territory. A lot of people were injured and sustained grave physical injuries; tear gas was thrown at an ambulance while the doctors were extending aid to a pregnant woman.

⁵ Pursuant to the Act Ratifying the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Serbia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia – International Treaties No 103/07).

According to the RBPC police officers, they have not received any official notice or instructions from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on how to act, although Hungary had announced in advance that it would shut its border down completely as of 15 September 2015. Furthermore, at the time of NPM Team's visit, the RBPC police officers had not been instructed on further action. **Given the above, the NPM is of the view that the Ministry of Internal Affairs should take a proactive approach and issue guidance to its units, providing them with all the relevant data and operational guidelines before the occurrence of likely crisis situations.**

2. SUBOTICA POLICE DIRECTORATE

Subotica PD officers said they had to date issued 163 certificates of intent to apply for asylum in 2015 (65 in 2014). In 2015, they filed 1,960 motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings and issued 5,221 rulings ordering the aliens to leave the country. The difference between the number of motions and number of rulings is due to the fact that the Subotica PD issues such rulings also with respect to aliens held liable for misdemeanours by the RBPC. Most misdemeanour motions were filed against aliens returned from Hungary under the Readmission Agreement (around 80%). The misdemeanour judges usually impose fines on or issue warnings to aliens (or reprimands to minors) and rarely sentence them to prison. Before January 2015, the Subotica PD would order the custody of aliens apprehended at night until the arrival of the misdemeanour judge. Since January, the judges are on duty rostering at night and the aliens are immediately taken before them after they are apprehended and processed. Both aliens issued certificates of intent to apply for asylum and those prosecuted for misdemeanours are photographed and fingerprinted, unless they have valid travel documents on their person. The Subotica PD did not refer any aliens to the Aliens Shelter in 2015.

At the Kelebija border crossing, the Subotica PD implements the procedure of readmitting aliens deported from Hungary to Serbia pursuant to decisions on readmission requests issued by the MIA Administrative Affairs Directorate. The Subotica PD readmitted 1,585 aliens in 2015. It readmitted six people the day before the NPM Team's visit.

The Subotica PD in 2015 filed seven motions for the criminal prosecution of 13 people suspected of human smuggling and nine motions for the criminal prosecution of nine people suspected of forging documents. It has not filed any motions against people suspected of trafficking in humans. An Afghani national was killed in Bački Vinogradi in 2015; the alien (also an Afghani), who is suspected of killing him, is in custody; he was initially placed under detention (lasting maximum 48 hours) in the Subotica PD custody cell. Furthermore, Syrians were victims of robberies on two occasions; the police suspect that they were robbed by nationals of Serbia.

The police officers mostly communicate in English with the aliens they come across. In the event none of the aliens speak English, the Subotica PD engages an Arabic or Kurdish interpreter based in Subotica. A Persian interpreter is not available locally. The Subotica PD officers call the paramedics in the event the aliens are in need of medical aid.

The Subotica PD officers notify the Subotica Social Welfare Centre (SWC) whenever they find an unaccompanied alien minor and, sometimes, when they find an accompanied alien minor who is, in their view, in a state of vulnerability of any kind. The officers emphasised that their cooperation with the SWC was good. The Subotica PD found 23 unaccompanied alien minors and, as far as it knows, the SWC staff temporarily place them in the Reception Unit of the Home for Children with Disabilities "Cradle" in Subotica. When issuing certificates of intent to apply for asylum to minors, the police enter the names of the persons accompanying them in the "Notes" box.

Two Subotica PD representatives sit on the City of Subotica Migration Council. They give suggestions and opinions on the treatment of refugees, notify the Council of issues related to refugees and manage the professional services. The police officers say that there are plans to build a Refugee Reception Centre in Subotica, close to the Old Brickyard, where aliens have been staying of their own accord.⁶

Old Brickyard in Subotica

Subotica PD police officers occasionally visit the Old Brickyard on the city outskirts to ensure that law and order are maintained in it. Around 250-300 refugees were staying in it at the time of NPM Team's visit. According to its interlocutors, most of the people there were from Afghanistan, living in tents in the yard and on the street, across from the Brickyard. A makeshift shower has been installed among the tents and the refugees have been provided with mobile toilet cabins.

The NPM Team learned from the refugees it talked to that most of them spent two or three days at the Brickyard. They have been rallying in groups to discuss how to enter the European Union since they found out that the border crossing with Hungary was closed. Only a few of the refugees the NPM Team talked to spoke English. Some complained they did not have the money to continue their journey. Most were told that there was a reception centre for refugees near Subotica, but they said they were not interested in going there. They qualified their cooperation with the Serbian police as very good.

Food, water and hygiene packages were being distributed to the refugees at the time of NPM Team's visit. The food was being distributed by the Red Cross in cooperation with the Communal Police, while the representatives of other NGOs and foreign activists were distributing water to the refugees.

3. KANJIŽA POLICE STATION

During its visit to the Kanjiža PS, the NPM Team interviewed the Kikinda PD Head of the Department for Aliens, Suppression of Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Humans, wherefore the data it collected regard the activities of the whole Police Directorate, within which the Kanjiža PS has the greatest workload. This Kikinda PD Department has seven members of staff, one of whom is a woman.

The Kikinda PD issued around 300 certificates of intent to apply for asylum in the Republic of Serbia since the beginning of the year. As reported, police officers no longer file motions to institute misdemeanour proceedings against aliens with expired certificates. As per the nationality of the aliens, the police officers underline that over 90% of the aliens they apprehended were Syrian. They filed a total of 6,094 motions to institute misdemeanour proceedings against aliens and issued 5,806 rulings ordering them to leave the country. The Kikinda PD fingerprinted and photographed 6,875 people (those issued certificates and those prosecuted for misdemeanours). According to Kikinda PD officers, they stopped filing motions to institute misdemeanour proceedings against aliens identified as refugees in early September. At the time of NPM Team's visit, the Kikinda PS officers referred the aliens they came across to the Šid and Beždan border crossings.

Around 10 motions to institute criminal proceedings against people suspected of human smuggling and 50 or so motions against people suspected of forgery and deceiving an authority

⁶ Since ownership of the land on which the Brickyard has been built is still under dispute.

into certifying false data have been filed since the beginning of the year. No motions to institute criminal proceedings against people suspected of trafficking in humans have been filed in the same period.

The Kanjiža PS implements the procedure of readmitting aliens deported from Hungary at the Horgoš 1 border crossing; 3,491 people had been readmitted to Serbia from 1 January to 15 September 2015. The officials say that 20-30 people are readmitted every day on average. However, according to the Head of the Kikinda PD Aliens Department, the implementation of the Readmission Agreement, under which persons are readmitted from Hungary, has been suspended since 15 September 2015 and the Kanjiža PS was notified thereof orally by the Border Police Directorate. The last aliens to be readmitted from Hungary, 19 of them, entered Serbia on 14 September. Until the Hungarian authorities closed the border, misdemeanour proceedings had been conducted against aliens readmitted to Serbia after their registration, including their photographing, fingerprinting and personal data registration. In the vast majority of cases, the Misdemeanour Court had issued the aliens warnings or imposed them fines, after which they were issued rulings ordering them to leave the country within 10 days. The police officer said that the Misdemeanour Court issued warnings to aliens who did not have money and imposed 5000 RSD fines on those who did. The judges substituted the fine penalty by the penalty of imprisonment in case of aliens who had money but refused to pay the fine. According to the police officers, revenues from the fines imposed in 2015 totalled around 16.5 million RSD.

Most police officers speak English and the officer(s) in charge of the police patrol schedule have made sure that each patrol has at least one police officer fluent in English. The police thus communicate directly with the refugees and migrants, who travel in groups, each of which includes at least one person who speaks English. Three Arabic interpreters have been engaged, in cooperation with the NGOs. The officers qualified their cooperation with UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice, which ceded them offices in the Basic Court, as excellent and their cooperation with the local self-government as good.

No complaints about the treatment of aliens by the Kikinda PD officers were filed in 2015. The latter did not apply coercion against any aliens in 2015.

The Kanjiža PS officers said that they had a serious shortage of vehicles given the huge number of aliens in the territory under the jurisdiction of this PS and that they had alerted the MIA to this problem. **Given their huge workloads due to the greater inflow of refugees and migrants in the jurisdiction of the Kikinda PD, the NPM urges the Ministry of Internal Affairs to review its requests for additional vehicles.**

4. NPM'S CONCLUSION AND OPINION

Judging by the above findings in the Report, the RBPC and PDs file motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings for illegal entry or residence in the Republic of Serbia against many aliens fleeing their war-ravaged countries and passing through the Republic of Serbia.

As the NPM Team established during its prior visits to other Police Directorates and Regional Border Police Centres that some of them have ceased the practice of filing motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings against aliens for illegally entering or staying in the Republic of Serbia, it may be concluded that the authorities have not adopted a uniform approach to the treatment of all refugees and migrants. It remains unclear under which criteria the RBPC towards Hungary files misdemeanour motions in view of the fact that aliens trying to cross Serbia's borders are prosecuted for misdemeanours when they are apprehended in some places but not in others (e.g. the rail tracks on the border with Hungary).

After they are issued penalties in misdemeanour proceedings, the refugees and migrants are allowed to leave the territory of the Republic of Serbia themselves, pursuant to rulings ordering them to leave the country, although most of them do not have valid travel documents or other documents they need to leave Serbia legally; nor can they be returned to their countries of origin due to the situation in them. The question thus arises why they are imposed penalties in misdemeanour proceedings.

In view of the above, the NPM recommends to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to take measures within its purview to halt the filing of motions to initiate misdemeanour proceedings for illegal entry or residence in the Republic of Serbia against aliens who have fled their war-torn countries.

5. KANJIŽA SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE

The Kanjiža SWC has 10 members of staff, four of whom are professional staff (social workers, psychologists and pedagogues). Three of them fulfil the requirements to perform guardian duties.

The SWC opened 2000 cases since the beginning of the year (around 1000 on the request of the parties, 972 *ex officio*, and around 374 cases referred by other authorities). The SWC staff noted that it was understaffed to handle such a huge workload and that everyone did everything (transported the beneficiaries, performed field visits, drafted project proposals, rendered decisions on submitted requests, represented the beneficiaries, etc.).

The problem has been aggravated further by the refugee crisis that began in mid-2015. SWC staff say that the situation has been particularly difficult since July, when greater numbers of refugees started flowing in. Their normal workload increased also due to the involvement in the crisis of children, nationals of Serbia, who are registered with or are the beneficiaries of this Centre. These children mostly live and/or work in the streets and their families are on welfare; most of them are Roma. These children are involved in smuggling and taking the foreign nationals across the border, or are sent with the groups of foreign migrants to Hungary to beg and work in the streets there.

The SWC has been notified of all alien minors found by the Kanjiža PS and RBPC officers, in accordance with the procedure. The SWC says that no unaccompanied minors were found in 2015, wherefore it did not extend guardian protection to any alien minors. In 2015, the SWC extended alien minors and their families only the services of momentary and emergency accommodation, and direct aid in water, food and clothing, in cooperation with the Red Cross, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and other humanitarian NGOs and citizens, mostly on an *ad hoc* basis, when such cases were reported to them.

Since the beginning of the year, the SWC handled 300 cases in which misdemeanour proceedings were conducted against alien minors, who had entered the country illegally. In most cases, the Court issued the minors reprimands. The SWC did not act as the minors' guardian in these cases, as all of them were in Serbia with their parents/guardians or were accompanied. Its staff were involved in the misdemeanour proceedings only if the children and their families were in need of professional aid or assistance. No suspicions of human trafficking in these cases were reported to the SWC; nor has anyone asked the SWC to intervene in cases of domestic violence among foreign nationals.

The SWC applies the following procedure in case the police identify an unaccompanied minor: the SWC appoints a guardian to the unaccompanied minor and places him/her in the institution for children "Cradle" in Subotica, "if it has room" i.e. capacity. The SWC staff (psychologist or social worker) are under the obligation to drive the child to "Cradle" in the official vehicle, because the SWC does not have a driver on staff. As the SWC Kanjiža did not identify any unaccompanied minors in 2015, there was no need to drive anyone to the "Cradle" Reception Unit.

Most of the cases handled by the Kanjiža SWC professional staff concerned minors readmitted to the Republic of Serbia, who originate from the AP of Kosovo and Metohija and are nationals of Serbia. The police have alerted the SWC staff to the readmission of these children and they have participated in the misdemeanour proceedings conducted against them. Four such Kosovo families, with 30 members, were readmitted in 2015. The SWC told the NPM Team about a 16-year-old girl from Kosovo, who was caught crossing the border with her aunt and false (someone else's) documents. However, as soon as the court proceedings were initiated, the girl's father appeared and took her, wherefore there was no need for the SWC to appoint her a guardian. The Court did not notify it of the outcome of the proceedings. The SWC has not had other such cases since the spring of 2015.

6. SUBOTICA SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE

There were 12,000 beneficiaries and 4,000 families, as well as 137 foster families, in the records of the Subotica SWC in 2015. This SWC has 61 members of staff, 38 of whom are professional staff. The Child and Youth Protection Department comprises the Head of Department, two supervisors and 13 case officers. They have adjusted their work to the circumstances and the refugee crisis – a monthly roster has been introduced and one professional is always on call after hours.

The Subotica SWC extended guardianship protection to 24 unaccompanied alien minors in 2015. In January, it received a report that the police found 19 unaccompanied minors. As provided for by the procedure, after they expressed the intention to apply for asylum, they were appointed temporary guardians and referred to the Banja Koviljača Asylum Centre. The children were transported to the Asylum Centre vehicles provided by the SWC (in one car), "Cradle" and the Gerontology Centre (two vans). However, since the SWC is understaffed and has a huge workload as it is, one professional acted as the temporary guardian of the 19 children who had expressed the intention to apply for asylum and took them to the Banja Koviljača Asylum Centre.

The Subotica SWC also appointed a temporary guardian to a ten-year-old boy from Tehran, who was referred to the Banja Koviljača Asylum Centre in June, and another 11-year-old Afghani boy in July, who had been separated from his family while they were crossing the border and placed in the "Cradle" Reception Unit. The boy, accompanied by his temporary guardian, was then referred to the Migrant Children Reception Centre in Belgrade within the Vasa Stajić Home for Children and Youths. The boy was reunited with his family with UNHCR's assistance in early August and the family continued its journey with the other refugees.

The Subotica SWC is notified of all unaccompanied alien minors found by the police officers of the Subotica Police Directorate and the RBPC. The SWC was in July alerted to suspicions that a group of men tried to rape two Syrian girls the previous night and that their underage brother killed one of the perpetrators during the incident. The girls were placed under temporary guardianship of the Subotica SWC and accommodated in the Cradle Reception Unit. The SWC

appointed a temporary guardian to the brother, who is in the Subotica District Prison, charged with aggravated murder. The Head of the Department ensured a Farsi interpreter assisted the boy during the proceedings. The boy's case officer, temporary guardian and the SWC psychologist attended the interrogations and court hearings of the boy.

The Subotica SWC in 2015 also extended urgent accommodation services to foreign nationals (one refugee without a leg was transported and accommodated in the Krnjača Asylum Centre and the international organisations provided him with a wheelchair). The SWC also facilitated the provision of medical assistance (to a mother and her three children found by a street light in Subotica) and directly provided aid in water, food and clothing. No suspicions or knowledge of human trafficking, unaccompanied women or domestic violence have been reported to this SWC.

The SWC Director and professional staff who were present during NPM's visit said that they have undergone additional training in treatment of refugees (the seminar was held in March; on 14-16 September, they attended the event on the human rights of migrants and refugees organised by the UN Country Team in Serbia) and that they were visited by UNICEF representatives. They, however, are not fully satisfied with the response, support and aid of international organisations. They mentioned an event when they had to wait for the old SWC vehicle to return to transport a refugee with a disability to Belgrade, in which his wheelchair could not fit. While waiting, at the spot there were several humanitarian organisations with large enough vehicles. The NPM Team also learned that the Red Cross had already spent all the available funds and supplies designated for the Subotica local self-government unit and that the SWC asked the Commodity Reserves Directorate to facilitate the provision of additional humanitarian aid. The SWC is of the view that international organisations should increase their donations of funding and immediate aid in food, water, clothing, mobile beds, blankets, tents, et al.