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Information bulletin no. 1

Europe: Extreme winter weather

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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The situation

Severe winter weather and extreme temperatures as low as – 30 degrees Celsius in some areas are affecting much of Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, including Turkey and Greece. The worst of the cold weather began at the beginning of January in many countries but in Poland, the impact of freezing temperatures was felt as early as November 2016.

The media has reported at least 40 deaths. Homeless people, asylum seekers, refugees in camps and IDPs in Ukraine are among the most vulnerable.

Roads and water supply have been interrupted in some areas and there have been reports of power outages.



Temperatures drop in Greece: Hellenic Red Cross volunteers are providing support to Athens' homeless as well as to asylum seekers and refugees across the country's camps

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

National Societies across the region have been responding to the extreme winter weather. Below is an overview of National Societies' response in some of the most affected countries.

Eastern Europe

Heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures are affecting the region, with IDPs from Eastern Ukraine particularly vulnerable. The exact death toll in Ukraine is unconfirmed but media reports¹ vary between 18 and 37 people this month. There have also been reports of landslides and avalanches in the country.

Belarus

- 107 heated tents across the country providing hot food, shelter and warm clothes for almost 10,000 people
- Caring for homeless people by providing food, blankets, first aid and medical care – particularly in rubbish dumps/landfill sites where homeless people are known to stay
- Supporting 120 stranded motorists in heavy snow
- More than 330 volunteers and staff have been responding and have reached 13,587 vulnerable people

¹ [Daily Telegraph](#)

Latvia

- 140 people stayed at the Red Cross's night shelter in Riga – exceeding its usual capacity of 85

Romania

- Distributing food parcels in the most affected areas
- Distributing hot tea and soup across the country

Ukraine

- Nine emergency response teams on the ground provide warm clothing, hot food and tea and first aid for burns, frostbite and trauma
- Eight heated tents have been set up across the country to provide shelter, hot food and clothing to more than 1,000 people
- PSS is also being provided to people in the worst-affected areas

Balkans

Temperatures have been as low as -30C in some parts of the Balkans and many areas have been affected by heavy snowfall. Migrants in Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are at particular risk.

Albania

- Distribution of food, blankets and hygiene kits to vulnerable families in the four most affected areas: Peshkopi, Kukes, Puka and Shkodra
- Distribution of blankets to homeless and elderly people in the capital Tirana
- Volunteers stand ready to provide extra first aid and social support

Bulgaria

- Crisis centres for homeless people
- Supporting stranded motorists with food and hot drinks
- Awareness raising and first aid tips for the public

Croatia

- Supporting most vulnerable through home care system and in homeless shelters
- Awareness raising and first aid tips for the public

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

- Public information campaign on first aid and tips to stay safe in extreme winter weather
- Hot food, warm clothes and relief items provided to migrants at the country's two main centres and via mobile team in the north

Montenegro

- Distribution of blankets and warm clothes to homeless people and to displaced Roma people
- Visiting households in rural areas with snowmobiles to provide support

Serbia

- Teams on stand-by to provide support to stranded local population including food supplies, blankets and warm clothes
- Regular distribution of hot meals, hot drinks, blankets and clothes in migrant camps across the country and for those stranded at the border with Hungary, and additional capacity to provide more support as needed
- Soup kitchen programme to provide food for homeless and vulnerable people continues as usual

Central Europe

Central Europe has seen extreme cold, with ice floes in the Danube and reports of homeless people dying from hypothermia/exposure.

Czech Republic

- Support for homeless people in the capital around the country at shelters

Hungary

- Increased monitoring of people on the streets, providing shelter and social care for the homeless
- Providing hot tea and blankets

Poland

- Emergency hotline established
- Teams are monitoring places where homeless people are staying and identifying needs for food, medical care, transport to homeless shelters or hospitals, and psychosocial support

Southern Europe

Heavy snowfall has been reported in southern Europe including Sicily and the Greek islands. In Greece, asylum seekers and refugees living in the country's reception centres are especially vulnerable to the extreme weather as it compounds already poor conditions.

Greece

- Distribution of emergency winter kits in camps in the Attica region and northern Greece prior to winter weather setting in (thermal blankets, sleeping bags, rain coats, leggings, winter socks, warm hats, gloves, scarf and long sleeve fleece top)
- Supporting the Government of Greece, which is responsible for the planning and implementation of camp improvements and upgrades, including installation of flooring to insulate tents against the cold and providing heaters for camps prior to winter weather setting in. Additional emergency shelter infrastructure support can be provided should it be needed (e.g. improved water supply, drainage, and better insulated showers and toilets)
- Organizing emergency blanket distributions on the Greek islands during the current severe conditions
- Providing cash assistance to migrants and vulnerable local population
- Caring of the homeless across the country including providing first aid and distributing food, hot drinks and sleeping bags

Italy

- Emergency hotline established
- Distribution of hot meals, hot drinks, blankets, warm clothes and increasing shelter spaces for homeless people
- Supporting stranded motorists
- Transferring patients in isolated towns and villages to hospital

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



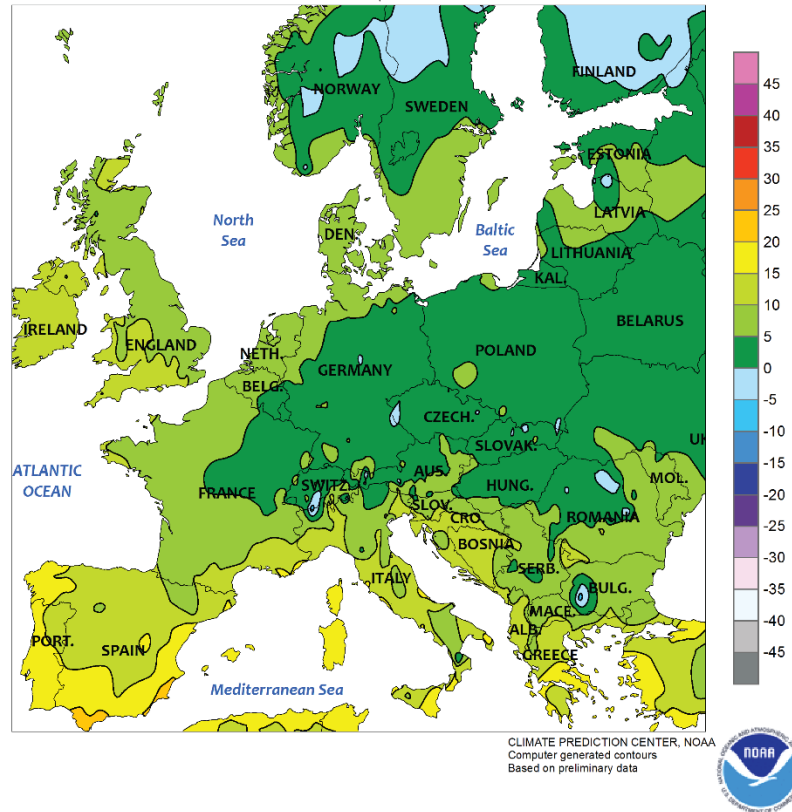
Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



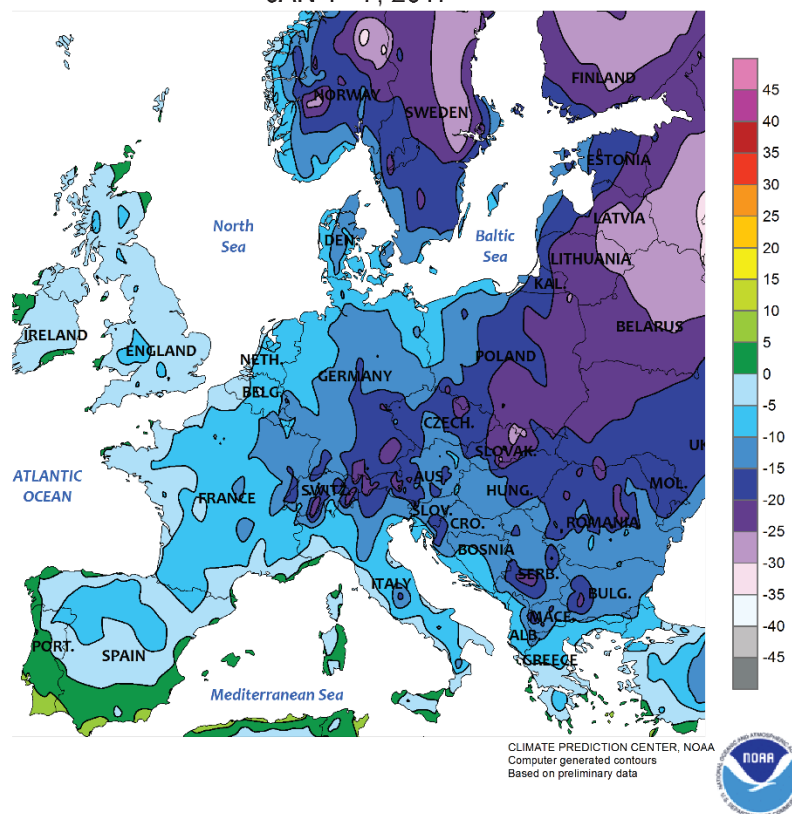
Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.

Annex 1: Extreme maximum and minimum temperatures between 1-7 January 2017 in Europe

EUROPE
Extreme Maximum Temperature (C)
JAN 1 - 7, 2017

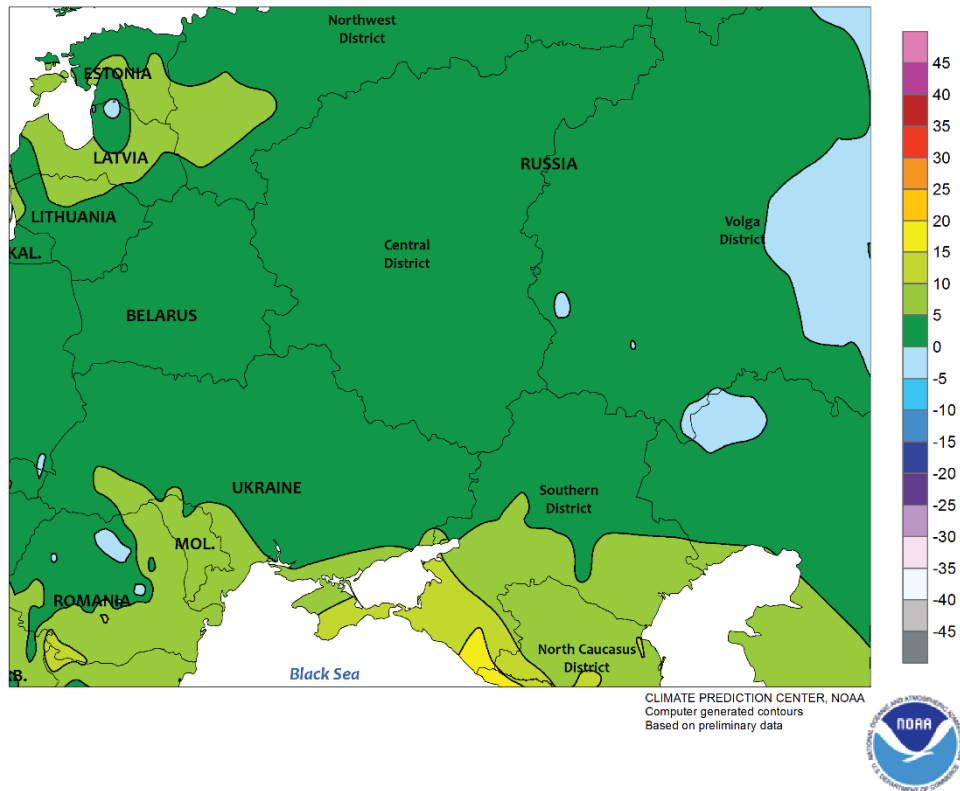


EUROPE
Extreme Minimum Temperature (C)
JAN 1 - 7, 2017



Annex 2: Extreme maximum and minimum temperatures between 1-7 January 2017 in Eastern Europe

EASTERN EUROPE
Extreme Maximum Temperature (C)
JAN 1 - 7, 2017



EASTERN EUROPE
Extreme Minimum Temperature (C)
JAN 1 - 7, 2017

