

ITALY – SEA ARRIVALS

UNHCR UPDATE #5

January 2016

KEY FIGURES

5,270

Persons arriving by sea in January 2016.

153,840

Persons arriving by sea in 2015

129

Sea arrivals originating from Eritrea, the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and the Central African Republic in January 2016.

51%

Average EU asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian protection rate of top nationalities arriving by sea in Italy in 2015

83,200

Asylum applications in 2015 (including from sea and other arrivals).

645

Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) arrived by sea in January 2016.

257

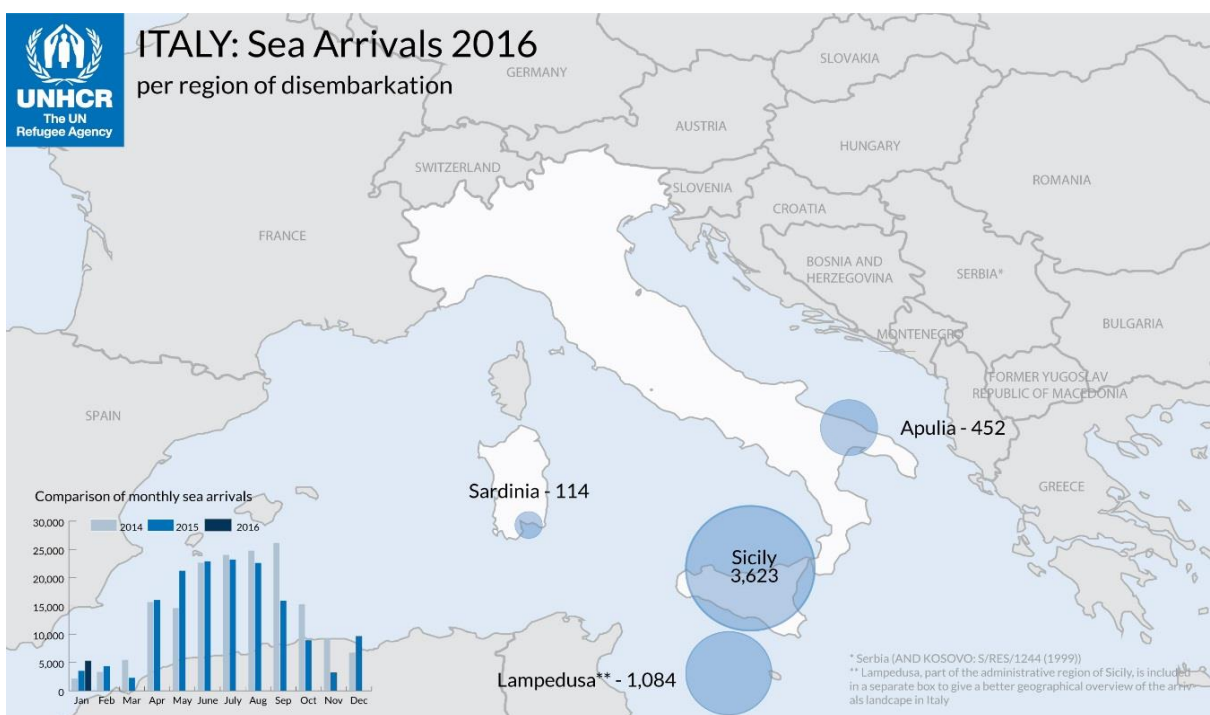
Asylum seekers relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme since ...2015.

18

UNHCR staff positioned at key arrival points.

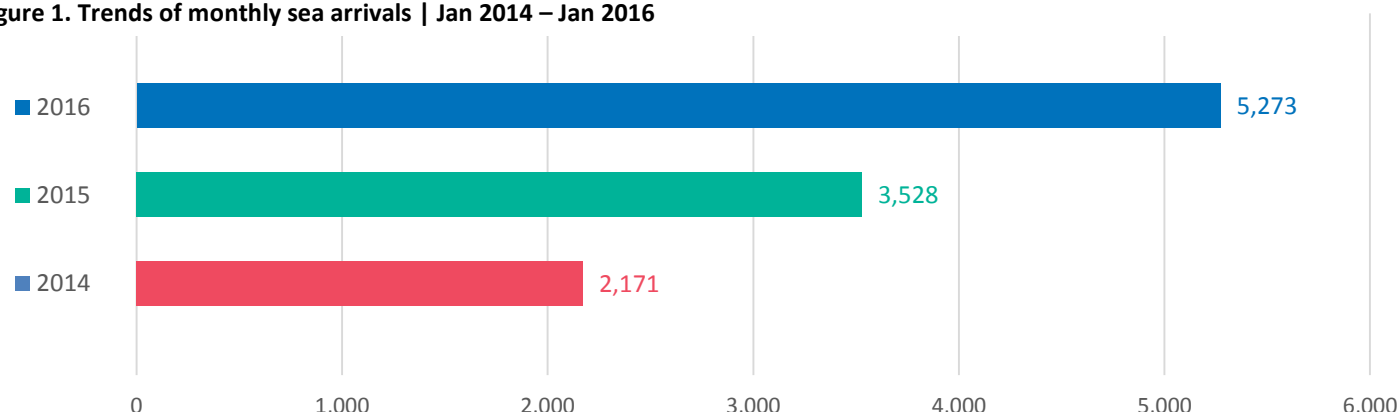
HIGHLIGHTS

- 5,270 individuals arrived by sea to Italy in January 2016. This number is considerable higher than in the same period in 2015 when 3,528 and January 2014 when 2,171 arrived. Arrival trends for January include the continuous decrease of Syrians arriving by sea and the steady proportional increase of Nigerians.
- At the end of December 2015, the total number of arrivals stood at 153,842 persons, compared to 170,100 in 2014 at the same time, corresponding to a 10% decrease.
- In January 2016, 67 asylum-seekers were relocated to Finland, Netherlands and Belgium under the EU relocation scheme. Since the decisions of the European Council entered into force, 257 persons were relocated from Italy. One additional hotspot became operational in Pozzallo in January. The facility has a capacity of up to 300 places.
- In January 2016, UNHCR counted 229 persons who were served with a return decree after their arrival in Lampedusa, many of them from refugees producing countries such as Somalia
- On 30 January, the bodies of five women and one man were retrieved and disembarked in Taranto. The six persons lost their lives following a shipwreck off the coasts of Libya on 27 January; 76 persons were rescued, while reportedly some 70 went missing.



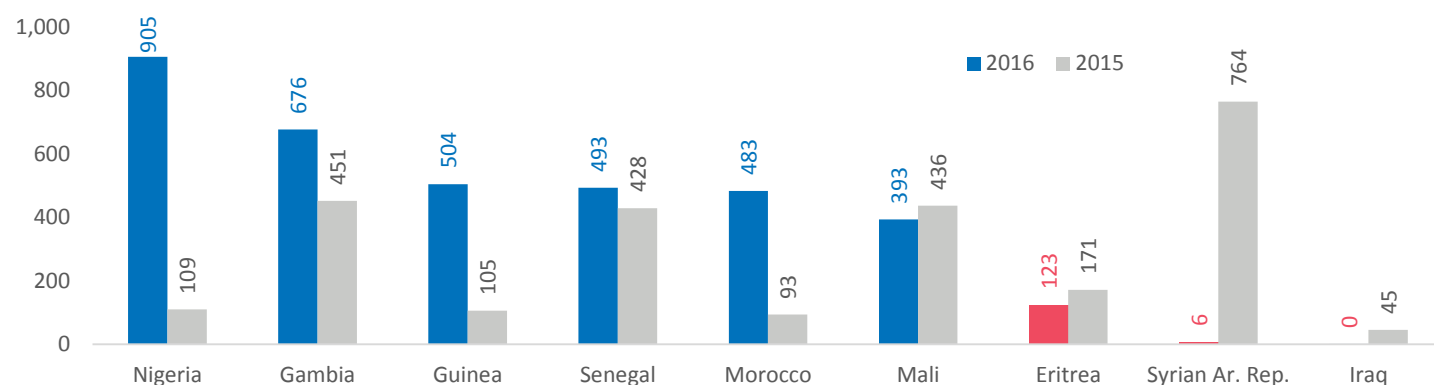
SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 1. Trends of monthly sea arrivals | Jan 2014 – Jan 2016



By the end of January 2016, 5,273 persons arrived to Italy by sea, corresponding to a 45% decrease compared to December 2015. **In 2015, the total number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea was 153,842**, corresponding to a 10% decrease compared to 2014. The overall decrease of arrivals can be partially explained by the significant drop of Syrian arrivals, who are now primarily using the [Eastern Mediterranean route](#) to reach Europe. Key disembarkation points are ports in Sicily and Apulia, which have been identified as hotspots in Italy's Rod Map: Augusta (27%), Pozzallo (23%), Lampedusa (21%), Trapani (14%) and Taranto (5%). UNHCR field staff was present during all phases of disembarkation procedures, providing support to local authorities in identifying vulnerable cases and information on international protection and the EU relocation scheme. In January 2016, UNHCR counted 229 persons who were served with a return decree, after their arrivals in Lampedusa. This included persons who originate from countries with a high refugee recognition rate, such as Somalia. The office raised concerns with regard to the verification of the nationality during the disembarkation procedures, specifically in cases of persons declaring to be Eritreans but assessed and registered as Ethiopians. Some 360 refugees and migrants are estimated to have died or were reported missing this year, whilst trying to reach European shores. This death toll includes some 70 persons perished in the shipwreck occurred off Libya's coasts on the 27th of January. Last year, **3,771 persons have lost their lives or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea**, the deadliest year on record.

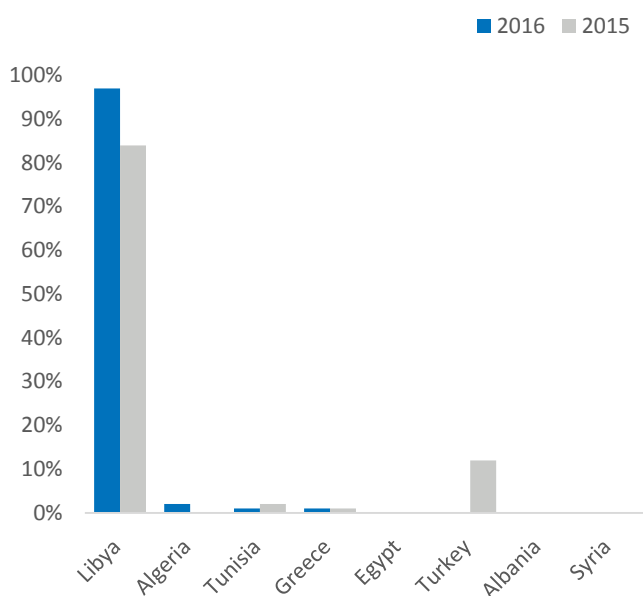
Figure 2. Top nationalities of sea arrivals + relocation nationalities | January 2016 compared to January 2015



In January 2016 **persons originating from 40 different countries arrived in Italy**. Nearly half of these arrivals come from just four countries: Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal and Guinea. The reporting month confirms the noticeable decreasing trend of Syrians arriving to the Italian coasts. Only 6 Syrians reached Italy in January 2016; far below the 764 Syrians disembarked in the same period of 2015. The number of Eritrean nationals arrived by sea in January 2016 has sharply decreased compared to the arrivals in the month of December 2015. Another noticeable trend is the **continuous proportional increase of the arrival of Nigerian nationals who constituted the main nationality of sea arrivals in the last three months**. Other proportional increases in comparison to the same period in 2015 related to persons originating from Guinea (9% in 2016 vs 3% in 2015) and Morocco (9% in 2016 vs 3% in 2015) whilst an opposite trend is recorded in relation to Mali (7% in 2016 vs 12% in 2015) and Somalia (5% in 2016 vs 11% in 2015). No sea arrivals of Iraqis were recorded, while only one Central African Republic national was registered.

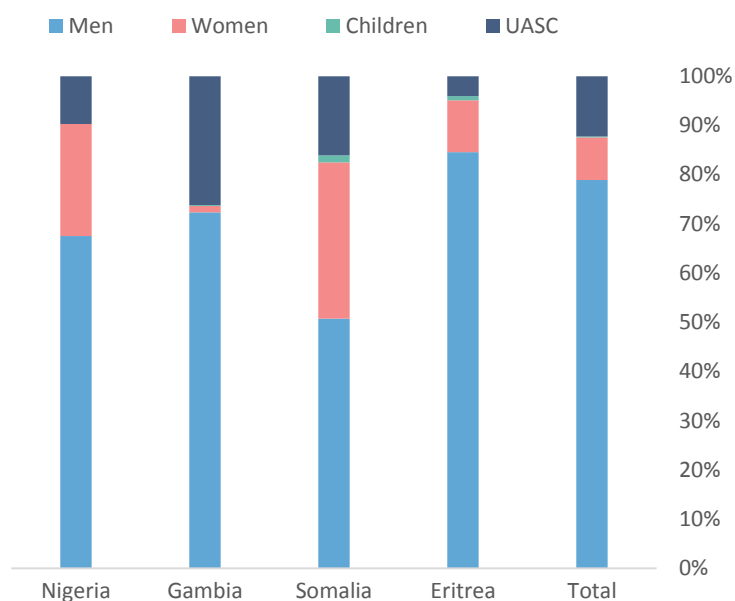
SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 3. Countries of departure of sea arrivals | January 2016 compared to January 2015



The vast majority of sea arrivals still leave from Libya (97%), with main departure points being Garabulli, Misurata and Subratha. In January 2016, no arrivals were registered from Turkey. **Abuse and ill treatment during transit in Libya** continue to be reported, committed by smugglers, security forces and armed groups. Whereas the number of boats almost doubled during January 2016 in comparison to previous year, the average number of passengers per boat dropped by almost 25%. Whereas no boats departed from Algeria in January 2015, 9 boats left in January 2016. All boats were comparable small and left with a limited number of persons (4-16). In view of the changing dynamics along the Western Balkan route, UNHCR is monitoring possible trends of sea arrivals to Italy from Albania, Greece and Turkey.

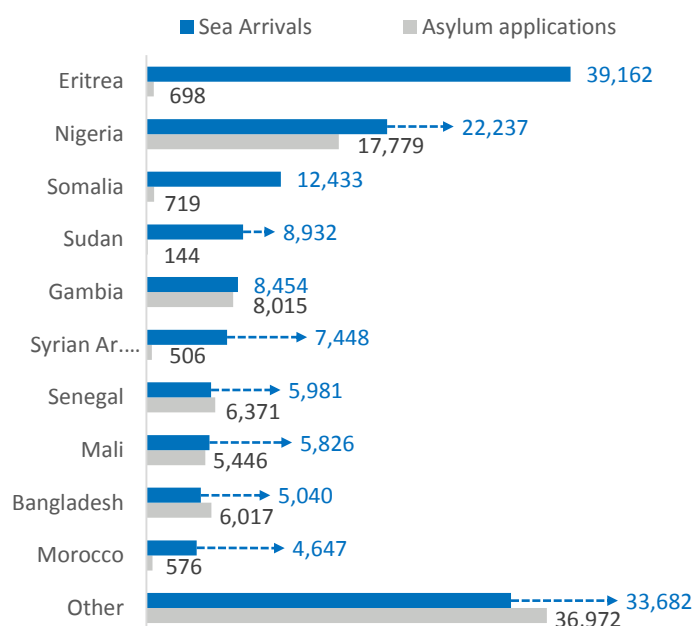
Figure 4. Demographic profile of Syrians compared to all nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan 2016



More than three quarters of all persons arriving by sea are male adults, a trend that appears to be relatively unchanged in comparison to 2015. However, gender and age profiles vary significantly among the arriving population groups. Most of the Eritreans and Sudanese who arrive by sea are male adults whilst the percentage of women and unaccompanied children from Somalia are well above the average. Contrarily, the drop in Syrian arrivals, which demographic profile more regularly included large families with young children and elderly people, led to a proportional decrease of women and accompanied children arriving by sea. During post disembarkation procedures, UNHCR staff support authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, particularly persons with medical conditions, pregnant women and unaccompanied minors. UNHCR continues to strengthen capacity to identify other persons with specific needs, such as persons suffering from trauma, victims of torture or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Unaccompanied minors (UASC) still represent a significant share (12%) of sea arrivals which confirms the general trend of 2015. **Around 645 UASC arrived in January, three times as much as those arrived in the same period of last year.** The two main countries of origin of UASC are the Gambia and Somalia. Approximately 90% of UASC are male and 15 years or older. Despite the high degree of protection offered in Italian legislation to children, reportedly large groups of **Eritrean and Somali UASC continue to consider Italy as a transit country** with the intention to travel onwards to other European countries. This onward movement exposes them to risks of violence and abuses. Three UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support information provision for unaccompanied minors at arrival points and in reception facilities.

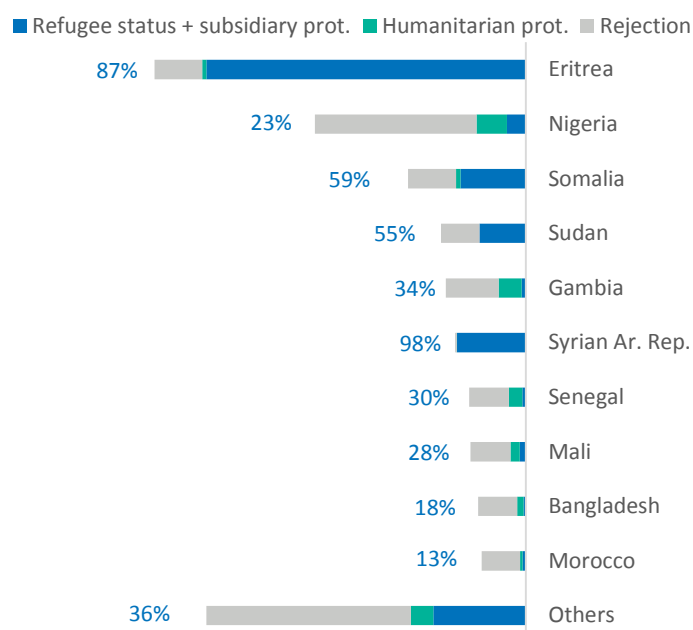
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN ITALY

Figure 5. Asylum applications in comparison to top nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Dec 2015*



*Asylum application figures also include asylum seekers who do not arrive by sea. Furthermore, applications are usually recorded at different periods after arrival, varying from a few weeks to over a month. Therefore, the chart merely provides an **indicative comparison**.

Figure 6. Average first instance recognition rate in EU of top nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Dec 2015*



*Percentages reflect the total number of persons granted refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection in first instance processes, in the EU in the third quarter of 2015.

In 2015, around 83,200 lodged an asylum application in Italy. The main countries of origin of asylum-seekers are Nigeria (21%), Pakistan (12%), the Gambia (10%), Senegal (8%), Bangladesh (7%), Mali (7%), Ukraine (6%) and Afghanistan (6%). Thus the ranking of asylum applications differs significantly from the main countries of origin of sea arrivals (see figure 5). **Asylum applications increased by 31% in 2015**, compared to the year before. Trends for 2015 include the absolute and proportional increase of asylum applications by persons from Nigeria and Pakistan as well as the doubling of asylum claims submitted by Ukrainian nationals. An opposite trend is registered for persons coming from the Gambia and Mali. - Despite an unusual peak in October, the number of applications from persons originating from Eritrea and Syria remained substantially unvaried compared to 2014. Eritreans lodged approximately 700 applications, a 50% increase compared to 2014. In absolute terms however, the number remains very small if compared to the number of sea arrivals. On average in first instance procedures, of the sea arrivals in Italy **51% would be entitled to refugee status, subsidiary and humanitarian protection in the EU**, highlighting the mixed migratory nature of sea arrivals into Italy (see figure 6).

UNHCR participates in first instance Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, as members of the Territorial Eligibility Commissions and by providing support with regards to eligibility criteria, procedural standards and country of origin information. In 2015, **the Territorial Commissions examined around 71,100 asylum applications which is a 96% increase** compared to the same period in 2014. Of these asylum applicants, 5% received refugee status, 14% subsidiary protection and 22% humanitarian protection. Humanitarian protection is based on national legislation and is granted in consideration of serious humanitarian concerns, as well as constitutional and international obligations such as Article 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. During 2015, the National Commission for the Right of Asylum in cooperation with UNHCR, developed a mechanism to monitor the quality of RSD procedures. In October the Civil Liberties and Immigration Department established a working group with the aim to prepare proposals for a reform of the asylum procedures in Italy, consisting of UNHCR, Ministry of Interior and the National Commission for the Right of Asylum.

HOTSPOTS AND RELOCATION

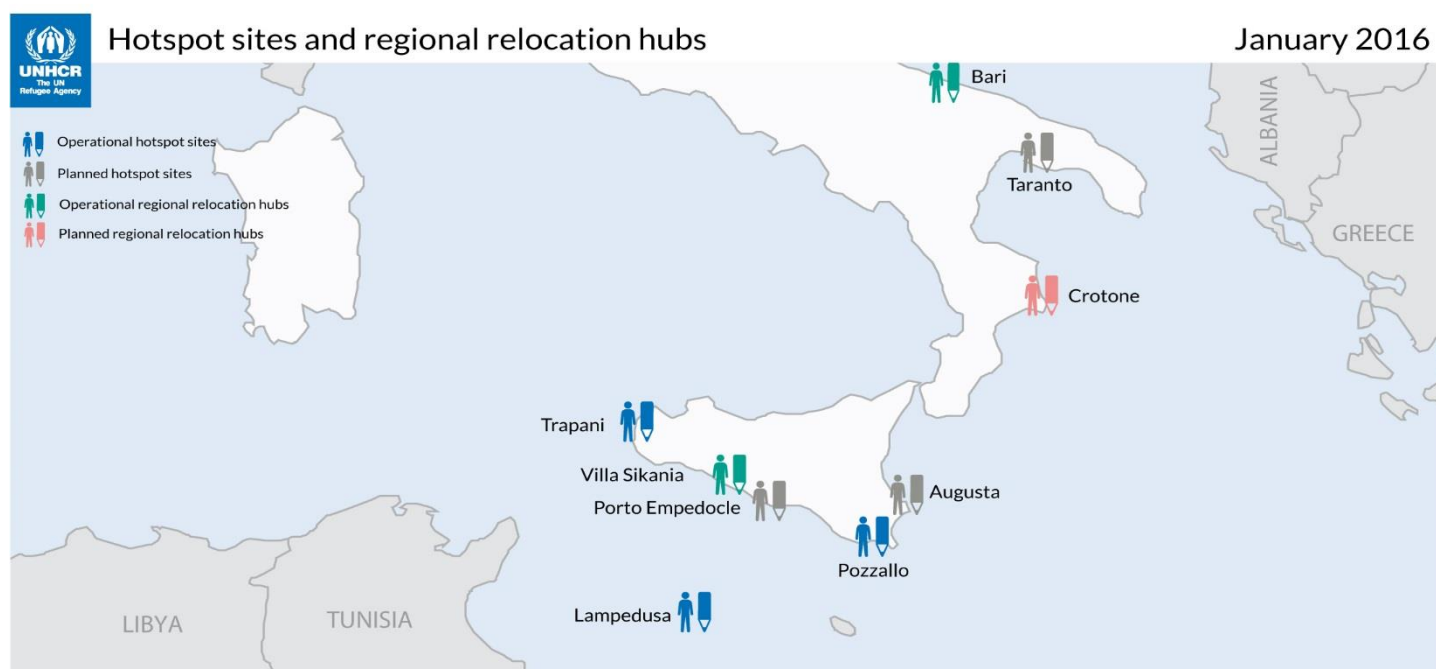
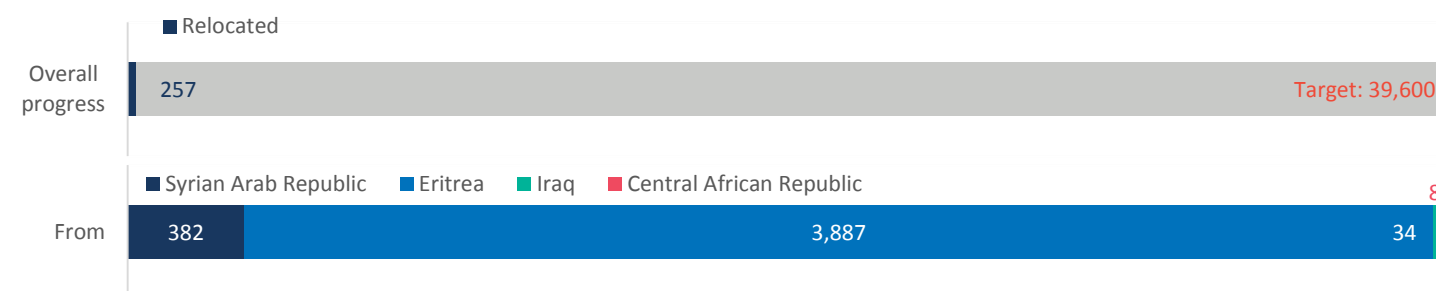


Figure 7. Overall progress on relocation and nationality of potential candidates for relocation arrived by sea | Oct 2015 – Jan 2016



In January, **67 Eritrean and Syrian asylum-seekers were relocated to Finland, Netherlands and Belgium, bringing the total number of asylum-seekers relocated from Italy to 257, since October 2015.** This number is far below expectations, considering that Italy and participating European states are expected to relocate 39,600 persons by the end of September 2017. The hotspot in Lampedusa, Trapani and Pozzallo are currently operational, with Villa Sikania and Bari serving as operational regional relocation hubs. In the hotspots, the European border agency Frontex, EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Europol and Eurojust are providing operational support to Italian authorities. As foreseen in the roadmap developed by the Italian Ministry of Interior (Moi), UNHCR, in close cooperation with EASO, provides potential candidates hosted in the hotspots in Lampedusa, Trapani and Pozzallo and in the regional relocation hubs, information and targeted individual counselling on the relocation procedure. In view of the low number of arrivals in the hotspot of Lampedusa, Moi intensified efforts to identify asylum-seekers to participate in the EU relocation scheme nationwide. At the same time, Moi is still working to operationalize additional hotspots and regional relocation hubs in 2016.

A Working Group established by the Moi intensified its efforts to finalize Standard Operating Procedures to be applied by competent authorities in the hotspots. The Moi is also leading the drafting and publication of a leaflet on Relocation, to be distributed to all Moi branch offices and to be used to provide to potentially eligible asylum seekers basic and clear information about key points related to the functioning of the relocation programme in Italy (e.g. eligible nationalities, registration / fingerprinting, identification of the country of relocation, timeframe).

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Links: [Regional web portal](#) [UNHCR Italy webpage](#) [Twitter: @UNHCRItalia](#) [Facebook UNHCRItalia](#)

Sources: UNHCR, Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, EC - **unless indicated otherwise, figures included reflect the period up to 31 January.**

Operational context

-  Main landing points
-  Operational hotspot sites
-  Planned hotspot sites
-  Regional relocation hubs
-  Planned regional relocation hubs

Roving Capacity


-  2 Monitoring Experts
-  1 Child Protection Expert
-  1 Cultural Mediator

UNHCR office




Campania

-  1 Child Protection Expert

Apulia

-  1 Legal Associate

Lampedusa**

-  1 Legal Associate
-  1 Cultural Mediator
-  2 Cultural Mediators

Sicily

-  3 Legal Associates
-  4 Cultural Mediators
-  1 Child Protection Expert
-  1 Cultural Mediator
-  1 Legal Associate
-  4 Cultural Mediators

* Serbia (AND KOSOVO: S/RES/1244 (1999))

** Lampedusa, part of the administrative region of Sicily, is included in a separate box to give a better geographical overview of the arrivals landscape in Italy

UNHCR response to sea arrivals

UNHCR advises key governmental counterparts on policy formulations and legislative developments, through its participation in the National Coordination Group. UNHCR participates in first instance refugee status determination procedures, which are conducted by the the decentralised Territorial Eligibility Commissions. Direct participation of more than 40 staff allows UNHCR to continue to monitor the asylum-procedure and to contribute to ensuring adequate protection levels and pursue efforts to improve procedural standards. Additionally, UNHCR provides technical support to the authorities in ensuring the quality, fairness and efficiency of the procedure.

Access to Territory

UNHCR has ten staff positioned at key arrival points to support authorities with the provision of information on international protection and to identify persons with specific needs and refer them to specialised services. This is conducted in partnership with IOM. UNHCR also monitors conditions in first and second line reception facilities.

Relocation

UNHCR carries out information activities in hotspot sites and regional relocation hubs as well as in reception facilities and informal transit sites nationwide. UNHCR operates in close cooperation with EU Agencies, under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Interior.

Child Protection

Three UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support legal information services for UASC in first reception structures.



Co-funded by the European Union

19 landings assisted in January 2016

4,857 sea arrivals benefitted from information session on international protection and asylum in January 2016

146 sea arrivals with specific needs referred to specialised services in January 2016

351 first information sessions on relocation and follow-ups supported from September 2015

88 monitoring visits to reception facilities conducted in January 2016

1,688* unaccompanied and separated children impacted by technical support of UNHCR child protection experts by January 2016