

ITALY

UNHCR UPDATE #12

February 2017

KEY FIGURES¹

13,439

People arrived by sea.

1,875

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived by sea.

31%

Sea arrivals disembarked in hotspots.

487

Dead and missing at sea.

24,209

Asylum applications, including from sea and other arrivals.²

14,813

Asylum decisions made by decentralized Territorial Commissions.

3,941

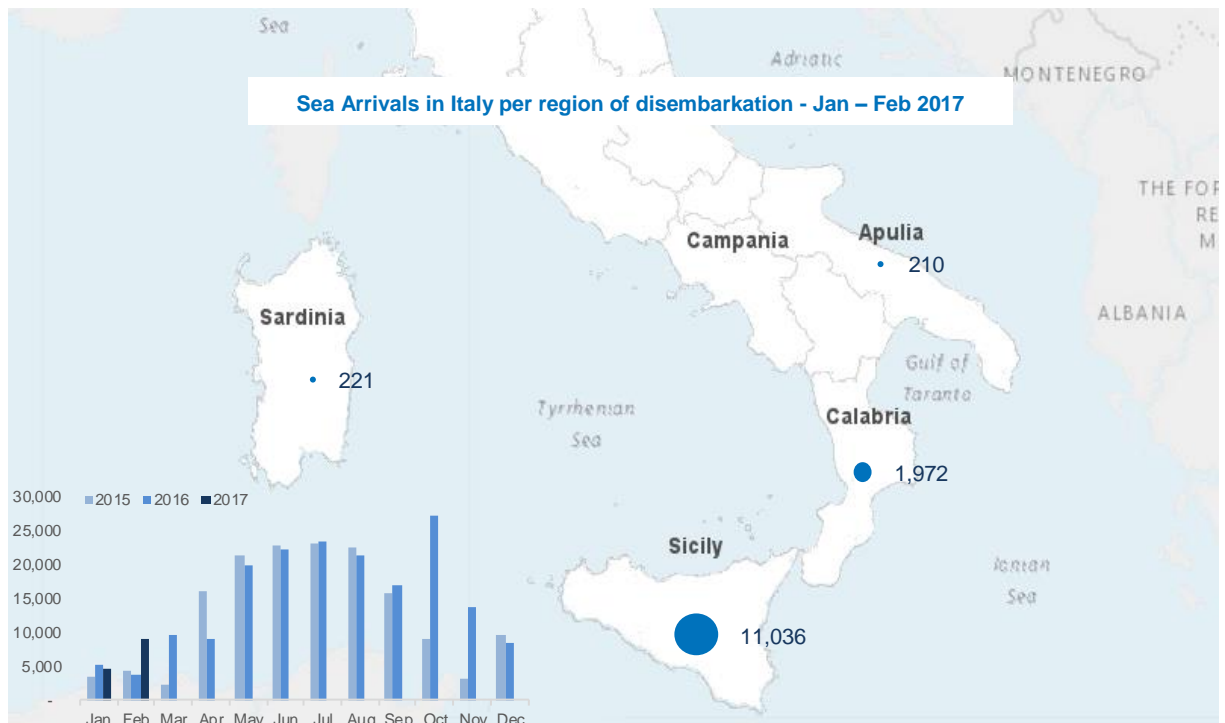
Total relocations from Italy under the EU relocation scheme.³

174,469

People accommodated in reception centres on 28 February 2017.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, a total of 13,439 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores. This is a 48% increase compared to sea arrivals in the same period last year (9,101). The main nationalities among sea arrivals are Guinean, Nigerian, and Ivoirian.
- In 2017 so far, 1,875 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived in Italy by sea. This corresponds to 14% of all sea arrivals.
- Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, over 24,000 asylum applications were lodged in Italy. In the same period, almost 15,000 decisions were made by Territorial Commissions tasked with RSD functions.⁴
- Since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council decisions on relocation up until 28 February 2017, 3,941 persons (10% of the 39,600 target) have been relocated from Italy.
- At the end of February 2017, 174,469 asylum-seekers were accommodated in reception centres across Italy, 78% of whom were in temporary facilities.



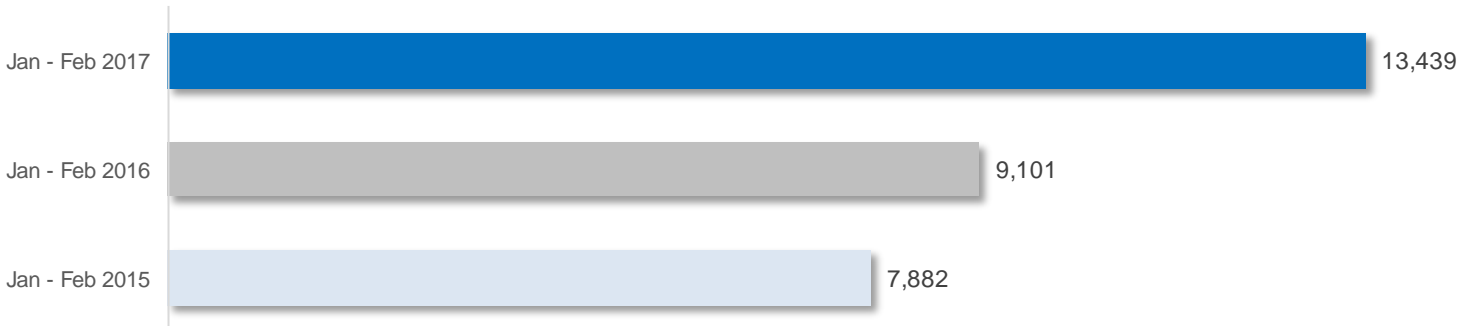
¹ Unless stated otherwise, figures reflect the period between 1 January and 28 February 2017. Sources: Ministry of Interior; Eurostat; European Commission (EC); UNHCR estimates.

² Ministry of Interior, *I numeri dell'asilo*, http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/febbraio_2017.pdf (last updated on 10 March 2017; accessed on 22 March 2017).

³ This figure reflects total relocations from Italy since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council decisions on relocations, as of 28 February 2017.

⁴ See footnote 2 above.

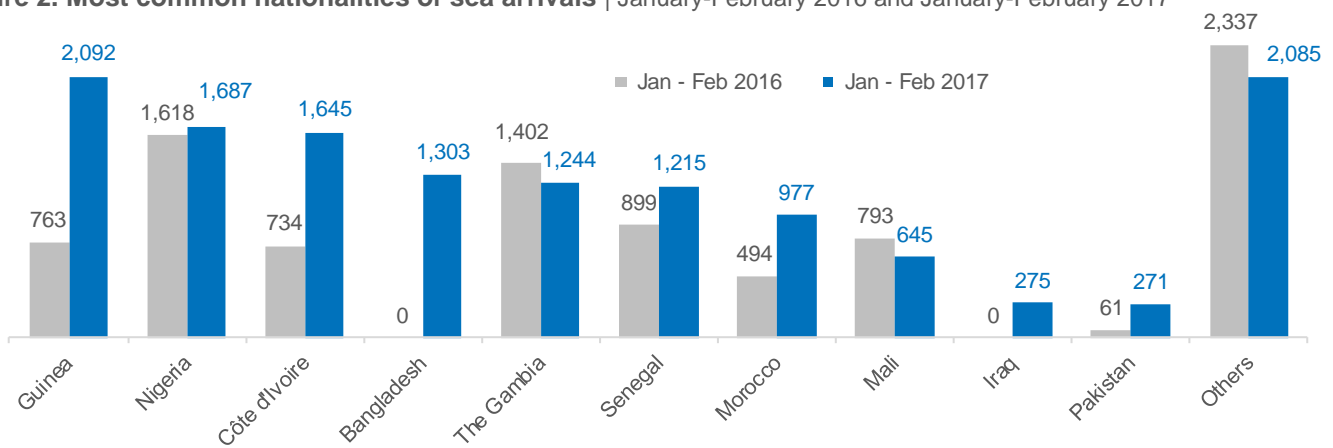
Figure 1. January - February sea arrivals in Italy | 2015, 2016, and 2017



In February 2017, **8,972 persons arrived in Italy by sea**, up from 4,467 who arrived in January 2017. This is a considerable increase compared to sea arrivals in February last year, when 3,828 persons reached Italian shores. Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, a total of 13,439 persons reached Italian shores. This is a 48% increase compared to sea arrivals in the same period last year (9,101). So far this year, most arrivals disembarked in the main ports of southern Italy. **31% of them disembarked in the operational hotspots** located in Lampedusa, Pozzallo, and Trapani, while the others disembarked in non-hotspot sea ports. Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, no disembarkations occurred in Taranto, where there is a fourth operational hotspot.

UNHCR staff is present during all phases of disembarkation procedures, both at hotspots and non-hotspot sites in several locations in southern Italy. UNHCR field teams (24 staff) provide support to the authorities, delivering information on international protection and the EU relocation scheme. UNHCR also helps to identify people with specific needs, including persons with medical conditions, pregnant women, UASC, victims of trauma, and survivors of torture or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). UNHCR continues to work to strengthen the authorities' capacity to identify persons with specific needs. Upon disembarkation, UNHCR staff provide new arrivals with leaflets on international protection and later conduct group information sessions. Preliminary information is delivered immediately after new arrivals are pre-identified, while in-depth information is provided after registration.

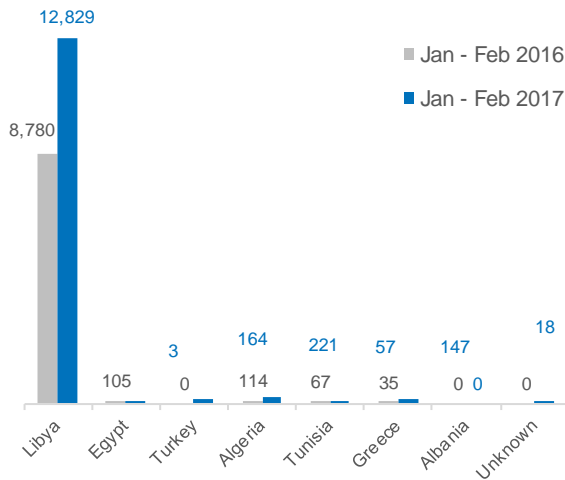
Figure 2. Most common nationalities of sea arrivals | January-February 2016 and January-February 2017



Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, **individuals arriving by sea mainly originated from Guinea (16%), Nigeria (13%), Côte d'Ivoire (12%), Bangladesh (10%), The Gambia (9%), Senegal (9%), Morocco (7%), Mali (5%), Iraq (2%), and Pakistan (2%)**. While this is largely consistent with arrivals in January 2017, a partial shift can be observed from the ten most common sea arrival nationalities recorded in the first two months of 2016 (when Somalia and Sudan were also included). However, such monthly fluctuations may depend on a variety of factors. As observed in recent months, the numbers of Ivoirian and Guinean sea arrivals have been on the rise. In the first two months of the year, they have increased by 124% and 174%, respectively, when compared with the same period last year. The percentage of Ivoirian and Guinean nationals among sea arrivals so far this year has also increased, compared to the same period last year, when each of the above national groups accounted for 8% of persons arriving by sea.

Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, increasing sea arrivals of Bangladeshi, Moroccan, Algerian, and Pakistani nationals were also observed, compared to the first two months of last year. In January and February 2017, an unusually high number of Iraqis (275) arrived by sea (none had arrived in the first two months of 2016). In the first two months 2017, higher numbers of Syrians, and to a lesser extent, Libyans were recorded at landing points in southern Italy, compared to the same period last year. Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, 104 Syrians and 49 Libyans reached Italian shores, compared to 6 and 4, respectively, in the same period last year. On the other hand, while significant numbers of persons originating from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea reached Italy by sea in January-February 2016, sea arrivals from these countries dropped considerably in 2017, decreasing by 36%, 81%, 73%, and 73%, respectively. According to Q3 2016 Eurostat data, around 33% of sea arrivals in Italy since the beginning of the year would be entitled to a form of protection if the average EU recognition rates were applied.

Figure 3. Sea arrivals by country of departure
January - February, 2016 and 2017



Libya is by far the main country of departure for persons arriving in Italy by sea. Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, over 95% of sea arrivals crossed from Libya. Most of them reported leaving from the coastal town of Sabratha. New arrivals reported the precarious security situation in Libya, as well as instances of abuse, including torture, which occurred there. Most new arrivals departing from Libya reached Italian shores following SAR operations conducted by various actors, including the Italian Navy, the Italian Coast Guard, vessels from other countries, and NGOs.

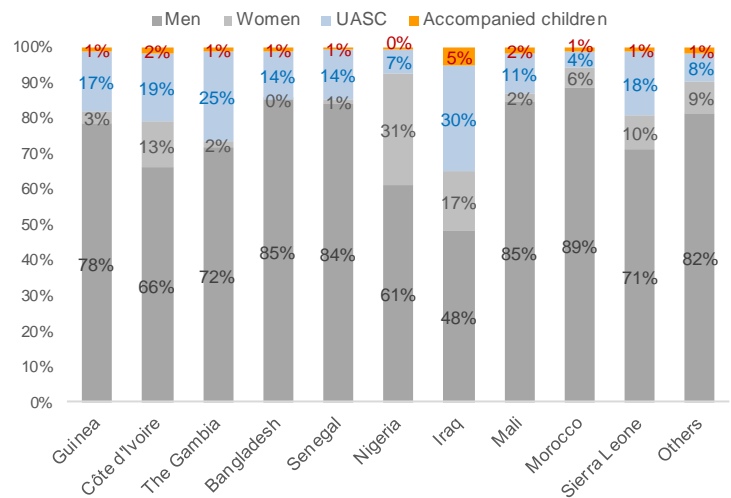
While in January 2017, no sea arrivals were reported of persons departing from Egypt, on 8 February the Italian authorities intercepted three persons close to shore who reported departing from Egypt.

A number of autonomous sea arrivals occurred during the month, with comparatively smaller groups of persons reaching southern Italy after departing from Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Greece. Most autonomous arrivals involved vessels that were intercepted by the authorities just off the Italian coast and transferred to port sites, with persons subsequently undergoing identification procedures. In a smaller number of cases, persons autonomously reached shore and were only subsequently intercepted and identified by the authorities. Small groups of Algerian nationals autonomously reached Sardinian shores on 1, 18, 19, and 20 February. Furthermore, two groups of Tunisian nationals were intercepted by Italian authorities off the coast of Sicily and Lampedusa on 17 February. In the first half of the month, two groups of Iraqi and Iranian nationals arrived in Apulia, having departed from Greece and Turkey.

Numerous tragedies at sea occurred in February, with over 230 persons reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean. 216 of them perished in the Central Mediterranean. Between 1 January and 28 February, the death toll in the Mediterranean reached 487, including 438 persons dead or missing in the Central Mediterranean.

Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, most sea arrivals were men (76%), followed by UASC (14%), and adult women (9%). During the first two months of the year, 160 accompanied children arrived, accounting for 1% of total sea arrivals and representing a slight increase

Figure 4. 10 most common nationalities of sea arrivals: breakdown by age and gender
January - February 2017



compared to previous months. Consistent with last year, the proportion of women is significantly higher among Nigerian sea arrivals. 527 Nigerian women arrived in the first two months of 2017, accounting for 31% of all Nigerians reaching Italian shores since the beginning of the year, up from 25% in the same period last year. Similarly higher proportions of women were recorded among nationals of Côte d'Ivoire (13%), Cameroon (18%), Somalia (34%) and Ethiopia (24%). This is largely comparable with trends in the same period last year, except for Ivoirian women whose share increased from last year's 8%.

A significant number of sea arrivals in Italy are UASC. Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, 1,875 UASC reached Italian shores (14% of sea arrivals). UASC arrivals have surged compared to the same period last year, when 1,336 UASC arrived. However, the proportion of UASC among sea arrivals was largely comparable to the first two months of 2016, when 15% of those arriving by sea were UASC. Between 1 January and 28 February 2017, the most common nationalities of UASC arriving by sea were Guinea (359), Côte d'Ivoire (320) and The Gambia (312). While UASC accounted for 17% of all Guinean arrivals, their proportion among Ivoirian and Gambian nationals reached respectively 19% and 27%. In the first two months of 2017, significantly high numbers of UASC also originated from Bangladesh (176), Senegal (168), and Nigeria (121), accounting respectively for 13%, 14%, and 7% of total sea arrivals from their nationalities. Only 5 Eritrean UASC arrived by sea in the first two months of the year. This is comparable to the same period last year, when 5 arrived, despite Eritreans representing the most numerous among UASC sea arrivals in the whole of 2016.

Three UNHCR child protection experts currently work with the authorities to promote good practices on best interest assessment and determination. Training and capacity building activities, including with reception centre staff are also carried out. Furthermore, UNHCR staff support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception facilities.

Figure 5. Monthly sea arrivals in Italy of Syrians and Eritreans (nationalities eligible for relocation) | January 2014 – February 2017

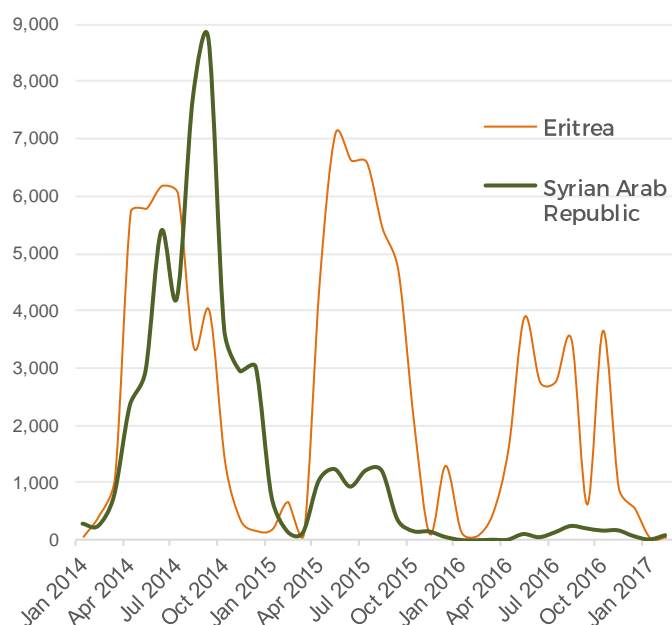
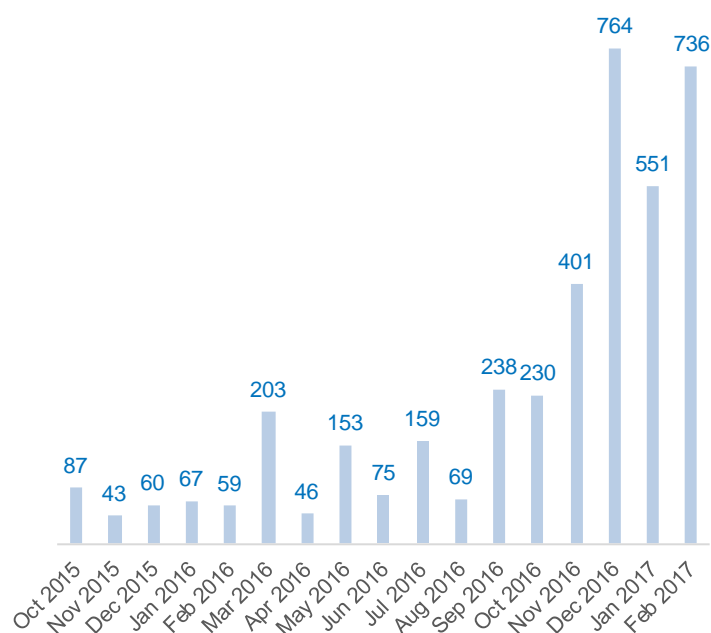


Figure 6. Relocations from Italy under the EU relocation scheme | October 2015 – February 2017



Four hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto, and Trapani) are currently operational in Italy, with a total capacity of approximately 1,600 places. Representatives of the European border agency Frontex, EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Europol and Eurojust provide operational support to Italian authorities in the hotspots, in order to identify new sea arrivals. However, identification procedures are routinely also carried out in other sea ports.

In 2016, UNHCR participated in an *ad hoc* Ministry of Interior working group supporting the Italian authorities in drafting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be applied by competent authorities in the hotspots. The SOPs - published in May 2016 and implemented as a pilot document - aim to ensure that access to the territory and to the asylum procedure are granted in accordance with national and international standards. UNHCR monitors the implementation of the SOPs and has suggested review and amendments, where required, to promote procedural safeguards and their tailored implementation in non-hotspot sites as well. In particular, UNHCR has advocated for discontinuing the practice of involving consular authorities in nationality screening before new arrivals have had the opportunity to state whether they wish to apply for asylum. UNHCR has also advocated for the improvement of screening procedures upon arrival.

In line with the hotspot approach, three official regional hubs (Bari, Crotone, and Villa Sikaniana) are also operational and host relocation candidates, with a total official capacity of over 2,200 places. These hubs host both relocation candidates and asylum-seekers whose application is to be determined by Italian authorities. Other facilities throughout the country also host relocation candidates.

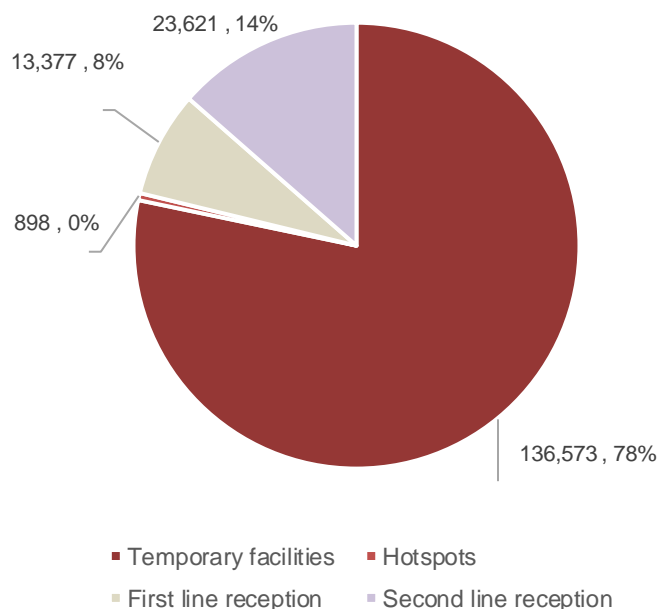
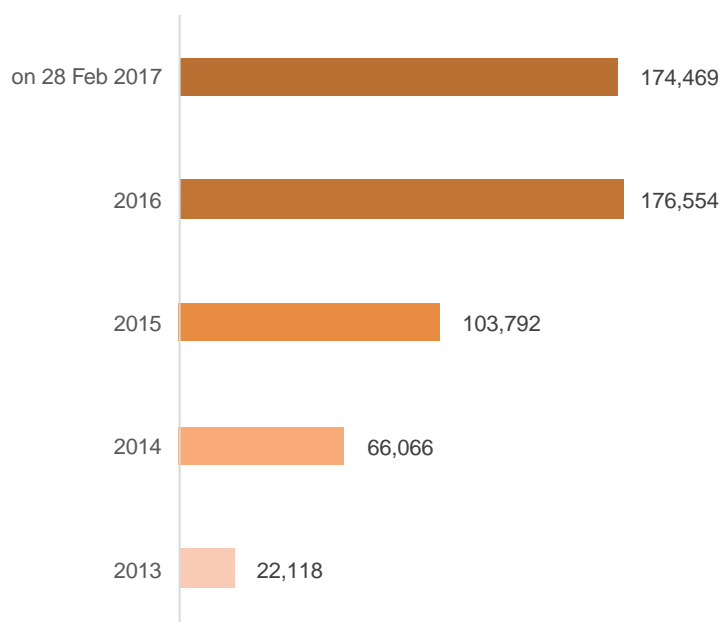
In the first two months of 2017, some 150 potential relocation candidates (Syrians and Eritreans) arrived in Italy by sea. While 551 persons were relocated in January 2017, **736 persons were transferred in the month of February**, more specifically to Germany, Portugal, Finland, Switzerland, Belgium, and The Netherlands, bringing total relocations from Italy to 3,941 (10% of the 39,600 target). **No UASC have been relocated from Italy yet.** While authorities are making efforts to begin relocating UASC, an effective procedure is yet to be developed. UNHCR has been liaising with the Ministry of Interior to enhance efforts towards implementing UASC relocation.

Germany is the country that has relocated the largest number of applicants from Italy (1,070) so far, followed by Finland (504), the Netherlands (475), Switzerland (471), Norway (415), France (282), and Portugal (275). Only eight countries (Germany, France, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Portugal, and Switzerland) are fully engaged in relocation from Italy. Other Member States (Belgium, Croatia, Latvia, Romania, and Spain) have only relocated a few persons so far. Some Member States have not yet relocated a single person from Italy (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Hungary, Lithuania, Austria, Poland and Slovakia).

In close cooperation with EASO, UNHCR provides potential relocation candidates with counselling and information. UNHCR also liaises with the Italian authorities to expedite the registration of non-registered candidates, in particular persons who were dispersed and then moved to facilities in Rome. UNHCR has also deployed a team in northern Italy, where it conducts capacity-building activities to assist the authorities in providing persons in transit with information on the asylum and relocation procedures. In northern Italy, the team also monitors land border procedures and their potential impact on access to international protection. Furthermore, the team monitors instances of readmission, focusing in particular on people with specific needs, such as UASC. Readmissions of UASC to Italy have been reported, more specifically from France and Switzerland.

Figure 7. Persons accommodated in reception facilities in Italy | 2013-2016 and on 28 February 2017

Figure 8. Persons accommodated in Italy by type of facility on 28 February 2017



On 28 February 2017, 174,469 persons were accommodated in reception centres across Italy. Italian law provides for a 3-tier reception system, composed of: (1) first assistance facilities (so called CPSA) and hotspots; (2) first-line reception facilities, including first reception centres (so-called CPA) and regional hubs; and (3) second-line reception facilities (so-called SPRAR centres, run by the National Association of Italian Municipalities). If no spaces are available in first-line or second-line reception centres, the law stipulates that persons be accommodated in temporary facilities, also known as extraordinary reception centres, or CAS. Persons remain in first assistance centres and hotspots only for the purposes of undergoing identification and fingerprinting procedures, before being transferred to first-line or second-line reception centres.

The vast majority of persons are currently accommodated in temporary reception centres. On 28 February 2017, 898 persons (0.5% of the total) were in the four operational hotspots, while 136,573 persons (78%) were accommodated in temporary facilities, and 13,377 (8%) were in first-line reception centres.⁵ Furthermore, 23,621 persons (13%) were in second-line reception facilities.⁶ UNHCR provides support to the Italian authorities in developing mechanisms to monitor reception conditions. UNHCR advocates for the harmonization of reception conditions across the three-tier system and for their compliance with national and EU standards.

Reception capacity in Italy has steadily increased in recent years in order to keep pace with rising numbers of persons staying in Italy. Such rising numbers can be linked to tighter border controls making it increasingly difficult for persons to move onward across Italy's northern borders to France, Switzerland, and Austria. Furthermore, strengthened identification and fingerprinting procedures also contribute to the fact that the majority of those arriving by sea now remain and register their asylum applications in Italy. In 2016, over 181,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea and over 123,000 asylum applications were lodged, a significant increase compared to 2015, when some 84,000 claims were submitted.

⁵ These figures reflect the situation on 28 February 2017 and are subject to constant change. Please note that Mol data does not statistically capture the reception capacity of transit facilities opened by local authorities in the northern border areas (e.g. Como, Ventimiglia) to provide basic services to refugees and migrants in transit.

⁶ As of 27 February 2017.

Figure 9. Asylum-seekers by nationality
January – February 2017

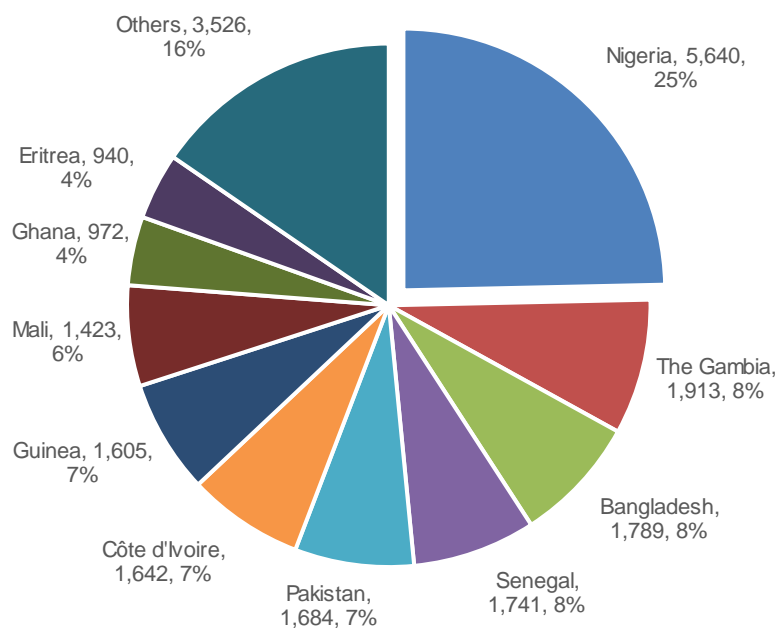
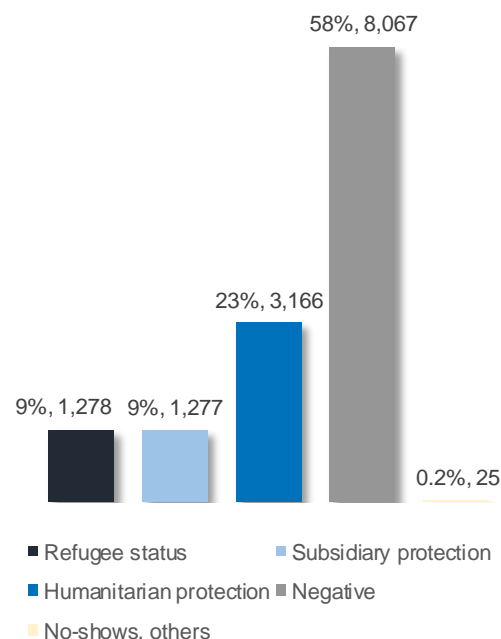


Figure 10. Outcome of RSD decisions in Italy
January – February 2017



In the first two months of 2017, 24,209 asylum applications were lodged in Italy. 20,479 applicants (85%) were men, while 3,730 (15%) were women. UASC have submitted 1,279 asylum applications in 2017 so far. Since the beginning of 2017, the main countries of origin of asylum-seekers in Italy have been Nigeria (23% of the total); The Gambia (8%); Bangladesh (7%); Senegal (7%); Côte d'Ivoire (7%); Pakistan (7%); Guinea (6%); and Mali (6%). A total of 940 applications were lodged by Eritrean nationals so far, amounting to 4% of the total. Applications by Somali, Iraqi, Syrian, and Afghan nationals were limited in number.⁷

In the first two months of 2017, the 48 decentralized Territorial Commissions decided on 13,813 asylum claims. Although RSD trends should be assessed over time, 2017 statistics so far show an overall international protection rate of 18% (10% refugee status; 8% subsidiary protection), while 23% of applicants were granted humanitarian protection.⁸

UNHCR participates in first instance Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, with staff members posted in the 48 operational decentralized Territorial Eligibility Commissions. These UNHCR staff provide advice on the use of eligibility criteria, procedural standards, and country of origin information. Furthermore, UNHCR teams, in close cooperation with the National Commission for the Right of Asylum, monitor the quality of RSD procedures and support the implementation of guidelines for the referral of potential victims of trafficking who seek asylum.

Together with the Ministry of Interior and the National Commission for the Right of Asylum, UNHCR continues to be involved in the working group on the reform of the asylum procedure, which was set up in October 2015.

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⁷ See footnote 2 above.

⁸ See footnote 2 above.