

Spain

15 February 2019

In 2018, **58,569** persons arrived to Spain by sea and **6,814** did it through the enclaves. In addition, the number of asylum applications in 2018 substantially increased, reaching **55,668**.

In January 2019, **4,612** persons arrived to Spain through coastal areas, Ceuta and Melilla. In the same period, **6,644** persons applied for asylum. UNHCR carries out its protection work

towards ensuring information and adequate identification of protection needs of arrivals, and supporting access to and quality of the refugee status determination procedure.

KEY FIGURES - JANUARY 2019

➤ **4,612** Sea and land arrivals

70% Sea arrivals benefitted from information on international protection

18% Women and girls arrived by land and sea

➤ **6,644** Asylum applications

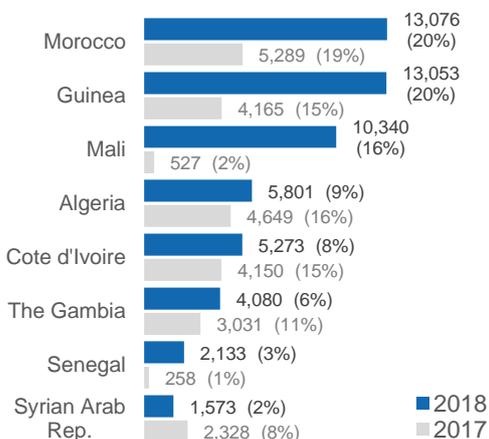
67% Asylum applications from Venezuela, Colombia and Central America

➤ **8,626** Reception places

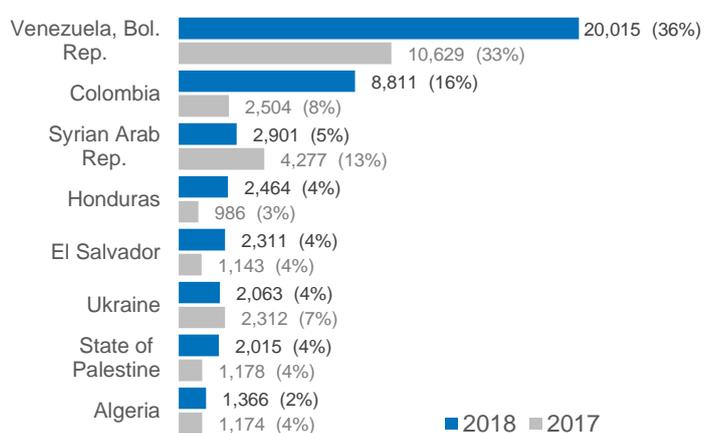


KEY FIGURES - 2018

MOST COMMON NATIONALITIES OF SEA AND LAND ARRIVALS



MOST COMMON NATIONALITIES OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS



Main Activities

Advocacy

- In January 2019, UNHCR continued to advocate for improvements in the identification of international protection needs and referral of persons with specific needs arriving irregularly by sea and through the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. To this end UNHCR held several relevant meetings with competent authorities such as the **National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings**. UNHCR also took part in the **working group established by the Government Office for Gender-Based Violence** which focuses on evaluating the improvements achieved by the “II National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking of Women and Girls for the purposes of Sexual Exploitation” where UNHCR recommendations were noted.

Reception

- The Spanish reception system has currently **8.626 places where accommodation is provided for 6 to 9 months to asylum seekers and refugees**. In the case of the first line reception for sea arrivals, as of November 2018, there are 4.900 places for temporary accommodation. UNHCR works closely with the competent authorities to identify solutions to the insufficient capacity of the reception system for the current needs.

Protection outreach

- UNHCR and its partner (CEAR) continue working to support authorities to **identify international protection and other needs** among sea arrivals. In 2019 so far CEAR has reached out to over 3,200 persons with the support of UNHCR field team, representing 70% of the persons arriving via sea to the Andalusian coast.

Persons with specific needs

- In Andalusia, UNHCR is supporting the regional child protection authorities in identifying and addressing protection and specific needs of **135 unaccompanied children** (UASC) who arrived by sea in December in the Open Arms vessel accepted by Spain. All of them are registered as asylum seekers. According to child protection authorities and Save the Children, although some children were potential victims of human trafficking, proper referral and coordination has not been successfully achieved due to the lack of sufficient resources. UNHCR is supporting the authorities by providing technical expertise, guidance and capacity-building activities to child protection professionals as well as legal counselling in specific cases.

Persons with specific needs in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla

- Through its permanent presence in Melilla, UNHCR has been supporting the authorities there to identify international protection needs of sub-Saharan women arriving through Chafarinas Islands, some of them with indications of being **Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings**.

- UNHCR is also supporting **LGTBI** asylum seekers as well as women survivors of gender-based violence present in both cities. UNHCR is promoting enhanced coordination among relevant stakeholders to guarantee assistance, support and referral, advocating for their freedom of movement and their prompt transfer to the mainland.

Access to territory and to procedures

- In the current context of increased asylum applications and challenges in the system to register and process applications UNHCR participates in a Working group with the **Ministry of the Interior** (Moi) established by UNHCR to jointly identify solutions and address protection gaps. In December and January, UNHCR had a series of meetings with the authorities of the Ministry, including the Asylum Office and the National Police, to agree a joint needs assessment and follow up to the implementation of several measures announced by the authorities.

Capacity Building activities

- As the Spanish asylum workforce is increasing, UNHCR has established and developed a **capacity building plan addressed to new hearing officers, case workers and police officers** carrying out registration and interviewing asylum seekers in airports and police stations. In January UNHCR undertook a training on interviewing techniques for new case workers for countries of **Central America**. In February, UNHCR delivered a training on basic international protection concepts for 67 new hearing officers. UNHCR expects this general training to be shortly followed by thematic ones in order to improve the quality in the assessment of asylum applications by new decision-makers.
- In addition, UNHCR and the Airport Chief of Police agreed further **capacity-building activities for police officers** working in the accelerated procedure. In February UNHCR delivered a two-day training for border guards at Madrid Airport in collaboration with the Spanish Asylum Office.

Integration

- The Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security has announced and opened up a consultative process for the design of a **National Plan on Citizenship and Integration**. UNHCR is currently providing input on gaps, good practices and recommendations on refugee integration.
- Together with the **Madrid Conference of University Rectors** and specialised NGOs providing assistance to refugees, UNHCR has set up a working group (WG) to address the challenges in accessing higher education. National and regional education authorities are also participating. The WG has started the preparation of a handbook on access to higher education targeting beneficiaries as well as universities' and NGOs' staff involved in counselling refugees.

Resettlement and other legal pathways

- In November 2019 the Spanish Government announced a pilot program on **refugee sponsorship** in collaboration with the Basque Country, UNHCR, CARITAS and the Jesuit Migrant Service for 25 to 30 refugees to be selected in the framework of the annual resettlement quota. Preparations to receive this

first group are underway. GRSI partners have visited Spain in mid-February to discuss with national and regional authorities the implementation of the pilot and its possible later expansion at a national level. GRSI will also facilitate a training in February to a group of sponsors taking part in this first pilot.

Communications

- The [Desperate Journeys](#) report was translated into Spanish and widely covered by printed and digital media, as well as TVs and radios.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR and the NGO Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) are currently working in the main disembarkation points -Almería, Málaga, Motril and Algeciras- **providing information and group counselling sessions** to persons arrived by sea. The project, started last August, is supporting Spanish authorities in identifying international protection needs among sea arrivals.
- A **UNHCR-UNV partnership** has led to a pilot which is being implemented in 4 EU countries (Sweden, Hungary, France and Spain) to ensure effective communication between UNHCR and refugee communities, giving them the opportunity to participate in the country's protection response. During this 1st phase, UNHCR is conducting **a refugee-led organizations mapping**.
- UNHCR, in cooperation with UNICEF and IOM, is collaborating with Lumos Foundation conducting a research on **care arrangements provided to UASC in Europe**. In Spain -where legal custody, accommodation and guardianship of unaccompanied children is a regional competency -UNHCR is focusing on data related to the regions where most children concentrate: Andalucía, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Ceuta, Melilla and the Basque Country.

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