

# Italy

March 2019

As of 31 March 2019, there were **121,994** **asylum-seekers** accommodated in reception facilities across Italy. In the first two months of the year, over 6,300 persons applied for asylum.

Between 1 and 31 March 2019, **262 refugees and migrants** arrived in Italy by sea. In March, some 90 persons crossed from Libya and were rescued by Italian authorities and NGOs.

Since the beginning of the year, steady numbers of **refugees and migrants arriving by land** are reported, including persons who travelled along routes in South-East Europe.

## KEY INDICATORS

**75%\***

Percentage of 2019 sea arrivals informed by UNHCR staff upon disembarkation

**4,994\***

Referrals of **sea arrivals with specific needs** to appropriate services since January 2015

**390\***

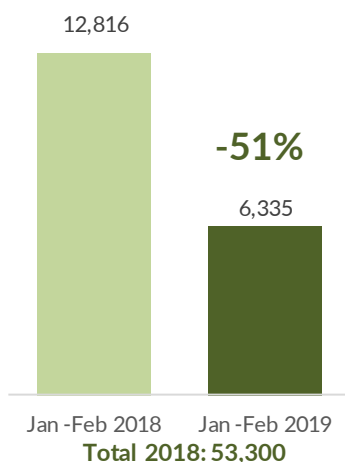
Monitoring **visits to reception centres** since May 2017, jointly with Minister of Interior staff and independent auditors

\* Source: UNHCR

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Asylum applications

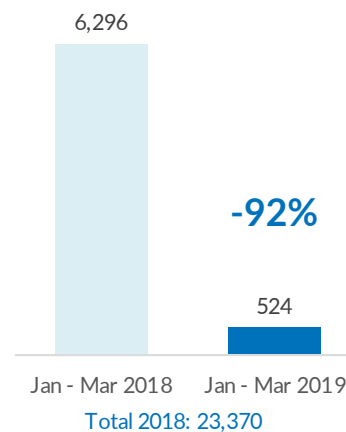
First time applications Jan-Feb 2018-2019



Source: Eurostat and Ministry of Interior

## Sea Arrivals

Jan-Mar, 2018-2019

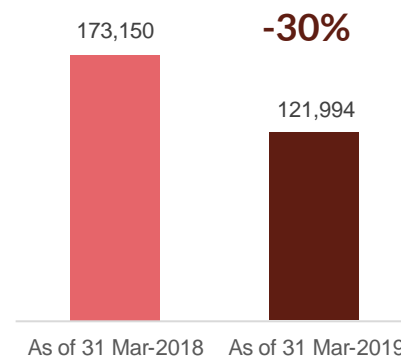


Source: Ministry of Interior

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Reception system

Population of concern in reception centres



Source: Ministry of Interior

## Operational Context

- As of 31 March, **121,994 asylum-seekers** were accommodated in reception facilities across the country. Approximately 14 per cent of them are accommodated in Lombardy, followed by Emilia-Romagna, Campania, Latium, and Piedmont, each accommodating 9 per cent of all asylum-seekers residing in reception facilities in Italy.<sup>1</sup>
- According to the latest available data, in the first two months of 2019, there were **6,335 new asylum applications** in Italy (including 128 from UASC applicants). Applicants most commonly originate from Pakistan (23 per cent), Nigeria (8 per cent), Bangladesh (8 per cent), Ukraine (5 per cent), El Salvador (4 per cent), Morocco (4 per cent), Senegal (4 per cent), Peru (3 per cent), Albania (3 per cent), and Venezuela (3 per cent). In the same period, Territorial Commissions decided 13,743 cases, recognizing refugee status in 9 per cent of cases, followed by granting 6 per cent subsidiary protection, and 2 per cent complementary forms of protection.<sup>2</sup>
- In Trieste, near the Italy-Slovenia border in northern Italy, steady numbers of **land arrivals** are reported, with an increasing presence of persons originating from northern African countries who travel along land routes in South-East Europe. Regular land arrivals are also recorded in Bolzano, near the Italy-Austria border, where new arrivals include adults and children from sub-Saharan African countries (mainly Nigeria) and Asian countries (mainly Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and Iraq).
- In March, **262 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores**. This is the highest number of monthly sea arrivals in 2019 so far (202 and 60 had arrived in January and February, respectively). Most persons arriving by sea in March (39 per cent) departed from Tunisia, while a significant percentage (34 per cent) departed from Libya. Furthermore, 13 per cent of monthly sea arrivals departed from Greece and reached autonomously Apulia, while another 14 per cent departed from Algeria and arrived in Sardinia. Monthly sea arrivals from **Libya** included a group of 40 individuals – mostly originating from Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan - who departed from Sabratha and were rescued by the Italian Coast Guard prior to disembarking in Lampedusa on 7 March. A further group of 50 refugees and migrants who departed from Zuwarah, Libya in mid-March were rescued by the NGO vessel Mare Jonio. Despite initial statements from Italian authorities refusing to allocate a port of safety, the Mare Jonio was eventually allowed to dock in Lampedusa on 19 March. At the time of the rescue, the Mare Jonio was the only NGO rescue boat operating in the Central Mediterranean. Upon arrival in Lampedusa, the NGO vessel Mare Jonio was seized, while Italian authorities launched an investigation against members of the crew on account of allegations of abetting illegal immigration. The boat was eventually released on 27 March.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of the Interior, *Cruscotto statistico giornaliero*, 31 March 2019, available at: [http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-03-2019.pdf](http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-03-2019.pdf) (last access 25 April 2019)

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of the Interior, *I numeri dell'asilo*, available at: <http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasil> (last access 5 May 2019)

By the end of March, the Alan Kurdi vessel, belonging to NGO Sea Eye, was at sea as the only NGO rescue vessel operating in the Central Mediterranean.

- On 18 March, the Minister of the Interior issued a **Directive aimed at coordinating the activities of Italian law enforcement authorities responsible for border surveillance**. The Directive states that Italy is under no obligation to allocate a port of safety to vessels that have conducted SAR operations in non-Italian SAR zones, without the coordination of the Italian Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre. It adds that to navigate towards Italy without authorization entails to facilitate the illegal entry on Italian territory, and calls on Italian authorities to prevent such illegal entry on Italian territory and territorial waters. On 28 March, the Minister issued a further Directive calling on Italian authorities to cooperate with Libyan authorities to enable the latter to carry out their responsibilities with regard to SAR procedures. In various press responses, UNHCR **stressed** that Libya is not a safe place for disembarkation and the need to restore rapid and safe disembarkation mechanisms.
- In March, the Italian **Senate voted against the authorization to bring a criminal case against the Minister of the Interior** in connection with the alleged kidnapping of over 170 refugees and migrants who were not allowed to disembark the Italian Coast Guard Diciotti vessel for over ten days in August 2018. Also, in late March, circumstances similar to those of the Diciotti case led judicial authorities to open an investigation against unknown persons in connection to the delayed disembarkation of 47 refugees and migrants who were prevented from leaving the NGO vessel Sea Watch 3 and reaching Italian shores for 12 days in January 2019.
- On 28 March, 54 Syrian nationals were transferred from Lebanon to Italy in the context of the **Humanitarian Corridors** Programme.
- On 6 March, authorities evicted and dismantled the San Ferdinando **informal settlement** in the southern region of Calabria, which was home to some 1,600 persons, most of whom are employed in nearby farmers' fields as agricultural workers often under exploitative conditions. Alternative housing arrangements were offered to evictees, taking also into account their entitlement to reception were they asylum-seekers or beneficiaries of international protection. However, only about half of those entitled to reception accepted the transfer. Other evictees were transferred to a tent camp set up by the authorities in a nearby location, and to an additional set of informal tents provided by the Ministry of Interior and installed in the proximity of the evicted settlement. On 22 March, a fire broke out in the tent camp causing the death of a 22-year-old Senegalese man.
- In March, the Florence Tribunal ordered the local Municipality to proceed to **register an asylum-seeker in the civil registry**, finding that the so-called Salvini Law Decree (Law 132/2018) did not repeal asylum-seekers' right to residence registration, but simply repealed the simplified procedure introduced in 2007.

## Main Activities

### Access to procedures

- On 19 March, UNHCR delivered information on international protection to individuals who disembarked in Lampedusa after having been rescued by the NGO vessel Mare Jonio. All new arrivals underwent identification procedures at the Lampedusa hotspot, before being transferred to reception facilities in Sicily on 24 March. Furthermore, UNHCR staff conducted regular visits to the Messina hotspot monitoring the situation of individuals who disembarked the Sea Watch 3 vessel in January 2019: all 32 adults arrivals claimed asylum and have been accommodated at the hotspot while awaiting transfer to European countries that have accepted to welcome them following disembarkation in Italy. As of 31 March, most individuals had reached their destinations in France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and Portugal, while 12 were still awaiting transfer to Germany and Romania. In March, UNHCR also continued to follow-up on the situation of some 10 individuals who disembarked in Italy in mid-July 2018 and who have been accommodated in reception facilities in the Ragusa area, awaiting post-disembarkation transfer to Germany as agreed in the context of negotiations between Italy and a number of receiving European countries.

### Protection outreach

- In March, UNHCR and partner NGO Medici per i Diritti Umani (MEDU) conducted protection outreach activities in various informal settlements in Rome accommodating refugees, asylum-seekers, and Dublin returnees, who reported difficulties in accessing asylum or document renewal procedures following authorities' requests to provide evidence of residence registration or failure to accept so called fictitious residence addresses. Furthermore, in various locations, asylum-seekers reported to UNHCR difficulties in opening bank accounts following the entry into force of residence registration provisions in Law 132/2018. In March, UNHCR also continued to conduct regular protection outreach activities in various locations in northern Italy, including Milan and Bolzano, where staff met with persons of concern, collecting their testimonies and providing information on asylum and other relevant procedures. In Bolzano, UNHCR visited local dormitories, transit centres, and temporary reception facilities accommodating individuals arriving by land, and advocated for prompt transfers from transit centres to temporary facilities and SIPROIMI facilities.
- In the context of protection outreach activities, UNHCR and its partner MEDU continued to monitor the impact of the implementation of Law 132/2018, collecting testimonies from persons of concern who reported increasing hindrances and discrimination in accessing health services as a result of provisions of the new law regarding residence registration. Refugees who live in informal settlements despite having been recognized status in Italy for years have also reported difficulties in accessing both health and social services. In the context of their outreach activities, UNHCR partner MEDU regularly provides information and guidance in this regard.

- In early March, UNHCR staff visited the San Ferdinando informal settlement, in the southern region of Calabria, which was home to some 1,600 individuals prior to its eviction and dismantling on 6 March. Residents at the settlement included some 200 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, who were transferred to temporary reception facilities and SIPROIMI facilities. UNHCR maintained close contact with local authorities to monitor the situation and the impact on persons of concern. UNHCR also closely followed-up on the eviction of over 180 persons from the Ex MOI urban occupation site in Turin. UNHCR arranged a meeting with the evictees, most of whom are beneficiaries of international protection originating from Somalia and Sudan, with a view to assessing their needs and liaising with local authorities accordingly.

### Community-based protection

- The second edition of the joint UNHCR-Intersos [PartecipAzione programme](#) was launched in March. The programme aims at developing the capacity of refugee-led and community-based organizations across Italy. The Programme's second edition focuses on organizations based in 11 selected regions: Sicily, Calabria, Lazio, Emilia Romagna, Piedmont, Lombardy, Tuscany, Sardinia, Apulia, Veneto. In March, UNHCR reached out to refugee-led and community-based organizations in the selected regions and arranged regional events in various Italian cities to present the Programme and the call for applications. Selected organizations will join the Programme for a period of five months, starting in June. Further information is available on UNHCR [press release](#).
- On 1 March, UNHCR held a consultation with a group of 16 refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and former refugees who have naturalized in Italy, originating from a wide range of countries. Attendees participated in focus group discussions aimed at identifying their major protection concerns in Italy. Reported concerns include: limited access to services and socio-economic integration, and increased administrative obstacles to residence registration following the entry into force of Law 132/2018, leading to increasing destitution and exposure to exploitation, particularly affecting persons with specific needs and children. Participants also expressed concerns about the rise of xenophobia, racism and discrimination, and about refugees' and asylum-seekers' widespread exposure to risks of sexual and gender-based violence.
- On 20 March, UNHCR held an information session for asylum-seekers and refugees attending the Joel Nafuma Refugee Centre in Rome. The session focused on sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, and available protection resources for survivors.

### Durable solutions

- On 21 March, the awarding ceremony of the [Welcome - Working for refugee integration](#) project took place in Milan, at the presence of the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi. Seventy-five [companies](#) were awarded the project logo in recognition of their efforts to promote access to employment and integration for refugees in Italy throughout 2018. Awarded companies include large-sized companies as well as medium and small-sized

companies covering various sectors, from agriculture to hospitality. This is the second edition of the project, which has been supported by the Ministry of Labour and Confindustria. Since 2017, 120 companies were awarded the project logo. For further information, please refer to the [press release](#) and [video](#) featuring refugees working for the awarded companies.



*UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi attends the awarding ceremony of the Welcome – Working for refugee integration project in Milan on 21 March. A special award was given to law firm Baker & McKenzie in light of their longstanding commitment towards refugee inclusion at the workplace. Pictured with the High Commissioner are Andrea Cicala, partner and coordinator of the “Promoting Refugee Integration” project at Baker & McKenzie, and Abd, IT technician at Baker & McKenzie. Credits: ©UNHCR/Alessandro Penso*

### Capacity development

- On 7 and 8 March, UNHCR delivered a training to judges of the Catanzaro Tribunal, focusing on inclusion and exclusion criteria, interviewing techniques and evidence assessment in the context of refugee status determination. A refugee was engaged as co-facilitator of the session on interviewing techniques. Furthermore, on 18 March, UNHCR delivered a presentation on migration and minorities law in the context of a criminal law training aimed at lawyers in Venice. UNHCR’s presentation focused on exclusion from and refusal of international protection, touching upon the need for a judicial assessment of the international protection needs in the context of the adjudication of expulsion orders. On 20 March, UNHCR delivered a training on trafficking in the context of asylum procedures, highlighting relevant aspects favouring the identification of victims, sharing the Standard Operating Procedures developed by the National Commission for the Right to Asylum

together with UNHCR, and promoting and strengthening referral mechanism. The training was aimed at staff and interpreters working in Territorial Commissions, and at staff of local anti-trafficking organizations.

### External relations

- On 9 March, UNHCR **presented** the book *Anche Superman era un rifugiato* with UNHCR testimonial Lino Guanciale and refugee Alidad Shiri in Trento. The book was also presented to high school students in Benevento on 27 March. During the month, UNHCR took part in a variety of events, including a presentation focusing on trafficking of human beings which took place at the Quirinale to mark International Women's Day, and a public interview at the **Biennale della Democrazia** at the invitation of Gustavo Zagrebelsky in Turin on 31 March. On 22 March, the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi **delivered** the **Martini lecture** at Bicocca University in Milan, under the title "Esodi forzati oggi: una questione di umanità", which was attended by over 300 people.



*The poster of the Anche Superman era un Rifugiato book presentation taking place in Trento on 9 March.*

## Working with Partners

- Since 2017, UNHCR has engaged in partnerships with a number of NGOs in Italy, with a view to enhancing its protection delivery, focusing in particular on SGBV prevention and response, child protection and integration. In 2019, partners include [ARCI](#), [Cambalache](#), [Caritas \(Consortio Communitas\)](#), [Carta di Roma](#), [CIDAS](#), [Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati](#), [Di.RE](#), [Fondazione Adecco](#), [Intersos](#), [LILA Catania](#), [MEDU](#), and [University of Pollenzo](#). Further information is available on the [What we do in Italy](#) publication.



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