

# Spain

May 2019

From January to **April 2019, 35,887 applications**. Until **April 2019, 8,512 persons applied for asylum in Spain**. The five main nationalities were Venezuelan, Colombian, Nicaraguan, Hondurans and Salvadorians. Spain is currently the **3<sup>rd</sup> EU country in asylum**

persons arrived to Spain. The number of sea arrivals reached 6,716 persons, whereas 1,796 entered Spain through the enclaves. This is an increase of 28% in comparison with the same period in 2018. At least **137 persons were reported dead or missing** during these first four months.

## Main Activities

### Advocacy

- UNHCR is working closely with asylum authorities in the design and implementation of an **action plan** to increase sustainable **efficiency and quality of the Spanish asylum procedure** as well as to manage the current **backlog of over 80.000 pending applications to date**.



- UNHCR Office in Spain organized on 8<sup>th</sup> May in Madrid a **policy dialogue on refugee protection**, calling for collective responsibility and political commitment on the eve of Europe's Day. The very well-attended gathering brought together **prominent candidates to the upcoming European elections** from the four main Spanish political parties to discuss and share their commitments on asylum and protection, addressing the regional, national and European dimensions of the issue. The event, was also a platform for UNHCR Representative to the EU Institutions, Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, to present **UNHCR 7 key Calls for future MEPs**, which served as guidelines for the debate. The common denominators among the four candidates

included:

- the important role of the EU in reaching global refugee solutions and better responsibility sharing;
- the recognition of the universal right to seek and enjoy asylum;
- the need for the EU to build a strong common asylum space;
- the necessity to secure adequate search and rescue capacities at sea;
- the requirement to establish an effective and fair relocation mechanism; and
- the importance of the community based sponsorship model for Spain and other EU member states to promote refugee resettlement and integration.

The event served to showcase international protection challenges and EU-wide solutions. The debate **triggered positive media coverage**, with UNHCR messages being echoed by a wide range of major media outlets.

### Reception

- UNHCR teams covering the **south-eastern coast of Spain** actively engaged with the authorities, the staff working at the Center for Temporary Stay of Immigrants (CETI), NGOs, and women, men and children of concern to identify most pressing needs and work on proposals to **improve reception systems**.

- UNHCR conducted two monitoring visits to the **Madrid Barajas airport** to assess the situation of the **premises for asylum-seekers**. UNHCR regularly engages with counterparts of the National Police and the Red Cross - responsible for providing basic assistance to asylum-seekers- and conducts information sessions, group discussions and individual interviews with persons of concern, mainly from Central America, Colombia and Venezuela. On-site visits also focus on preventing and tackling **Gender-Based Violence** in the context of the asylum procedure.



### Access to territory and to procedures

- UNHCR and the NGO Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) work in the main disembarkation points -Almería, Málaga, Motril and Algeciras- **providing information and organizing group counselling sessions** for women, men and children arriving by sea. Both entities work closely with the authorities to better **spot international protection and other needs** among sea arrivals. To the date, over 4,700 persons of concern were counselled on their rights and the asylum procedure, representing 61% of those

arriving via sea to the Andalusian coast. UNHCR also supports the National Police, NGOs and Bar Associations to guarantee the access to the asylum procedures for those arriving via land to the enclaves and through the main Spanish airports.

### Persons with specific needs

- UNHCR actively monitors the Spanish asylum procedure and the reception system to guarantee proper identification, assistance, referral and support of all persons of concern, including those with **specific needs**. In addition, UNHCR regularly supports capacity-building and coordination with stakeholders in the main entry points **by land, air and sea**.

- UNHCR lands and participates in several activities and trainings with lawyers, experts and students, organized by NGOs and universities, to enhance the protection of **LGBTI persons of concern**. In this context, UNHCR hosted a **workshop** for lawyers working with 13 asylum NGOs that have recently joined the asylum system, as well as several **participatory assessments** with LGBTI asylum-seekers and refugees.



- UNHCR, together with other key national stakeholders and NGOs, is part of a working group focused on the elaboration of a draft **Protocol for the referral of potential victims on trafficking of human beings** (VTHB) who apply for asylum at airports, to be adopted on June 4 by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security.

- The UN Refugee Agency also engages with child protection services in the mainland and in the enclaves to provide technical expertise, guidance and capacity building to guarantee the identification and referral of **unaccompanied children** (UASC) in need of international protection. Likewise, UNHCR advocates for reception procedures upon arrival that guarantee the best interest of the child and supports family reunification cases in the Mediterranean context. UNHCR has also facilitated the coordination between child protection services and authorities to ensure access to the asylum procedure and address the international protection needs of a group of children disembarked from the **Open Arms** in December 2018.

- In Melilla, UNHCR Spain worked on improving access to rights of **refugee children, best interest procedures and the right to family unity** involving competent authorities at the highest level and representatives of civil society (CEAR and the Jesuit Service), and presented to the authorities a **Draft Protocol** on the subject, elaborated together with the University of Comillas.

### Capacity Building activities

- UNHCR carries out extensive capacity building activities in Spain addressed to all stakeholders on different protection related issues in a wider range of locations, including main entry points for sea and land arrivals.
- Together with The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (**FRA**) and in collaboration with **EASO**, UNHCR delivered training for staff working in the **Care, Emergency and Referral Centre** in Cádiz and Seville focused on access to the asylum system, identification of international protection needs, referral mechanisms, trafficking, children family tracing and reunification. In the upcoming months two more sessions will take place in **Ceuta** and **Melilla**.
- UNHCR also contributed to work carried out by **Frontex Joint Operation Indalo**.

### Integration

- UNHCR supports the **NIEM project**, a six-year long **EU-transnational project** that will develop a system of **integration indicators** and establish a **mechanism** for a biennial, comprehensive and comparable **evaluation of the integration** of beneficiaries of international protection in 15 EU Member States. The objective is to help preparing key actors to better face challenges and improve integration outcomes. UNHCR contributes to the NIEM project by providing expert advice and by reaching out to key actors, ensuring that asylum-seekers and refugees are heard throughout the process.

### Resettlement and other legal pathways

- Between March and April, a total of 224 Syrian refugees were resettled from Jordan to Spain in three different groups. With these arrivals, the total number of refugees that have arrived to Spain in the framework of the **National Resettlement Program this year amounts to 578 persons** (174 Syrian Refugees from Turkey and 180 from Jordan already arrived in January and February). These groups are part of the 2017 National Resettlement quota of 1000 persons that was processed in 2018 and is arriving in 2019. A new quota of 1.200 was approved in December 2018.
- As part of a group of 163 resettled refugees that arrived on 26 March, 29 refugees (5 families – 9 girls, 6 boys, 6 women and 8 men) were identified to take part in a **Community Sponsorship Pilot (CSP) Project in the Basque Country actively supported by UNHCR**. After 6 weeks in Spain, the families **are in a positive settling process and increasingly engage with this new environment**. An evaluation of the pilot will provide useful information for an eventual expansion of the Community Sponsorship program to other regions in Spain.

### Statelessness

- On 25-26 April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain and UNHCR jointly organized in Madrid the International Conference on Addressing Statelessness in Europe. Participants included representatives from EU Member States, international and regional organizations, academia and civil society. The Conference, which was built upon UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-2024, was held in light of the upcoming High-Level Segment on Statelessness of UNHCR's Executive Committee that will convene in Geneva on October to mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024. The event provided an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis of the current situation of statelessness in the region, fostered a common understanding, the exchange of good practices, and helped to elaborate very topical and practical recommendations.

- In the margins of the International Conference on Addressing Statelessness in Europe UNHCR and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) presented on April 25<sup>th</sup> a **photo exhibition** “**Statelessness, the labyrinth of the invisible**” in Casa Árabe, Madrid.

### Communications

- UNHCR supports more than 15 public and private universities in Spain in promoting access to tertiary education by refugees. UNHCR has recently launched a **video-story that shows the testimony of Zeena, an young Iraqi refugee** who left her country due to the violence and insecurity and is currently studying Geological Engineering at the Complutense University of Madrid.



## Working with Partners

- **The first phase of the UNHCR-UNV pilot project** is coming to an end. In the past months a mapping exercise has been fulfilled to collect, among other issues, relevant information on refugee-led organizations. In the following weeks UNHCR will conduct **focus group discussions** with persons of concern in Madrid and Barcelona to validate the collected data and assess the best way forward for the second phase of the project, where a **communication strategy with refugee communities** will be developed and implemented.
- **UNHCR and IOM** went on a second mission to the **Spanish-French border in Irún-Hendaye and reception facilities in both sides**. The objective was to assess the situation after the decision of the TJEU condemning France for return practices of persons in the context of border controls carried out under the anti-terrorist act. It was also an opportunity for both organizations to better understand the drivers for onward movements from Spain and to identify protection needs and possible joint actions.
- UNHCR continues to support in **Ethiopia** the **Shire Alliance**, a Spanish innovation public-private partnership created in 2014 aiming at developing and implementing sustainable solutions for the supply of energy to vulnerable communities. During its second phase, the Shire Alliance will expand its work to the camps of **Adi-Harush, Hitsats, Mai-Aini** and **Shimelba**. The Alliance is formed by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), acciona.org Foundation, Iberdrola, the Innovation and Technology for Development Centre (itdUPM) of the Technical University of Madrid (UPM) and Signify.

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### LINKS

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