

Weekly Report



Key Figures

Mediterranean
5,709

arrivals by sea in 2017*

254

dead/missing in 2017*

Trends of Sea Arrivals

Between 23 and 29 January, 254 refugees and migrants crossed the sea to Greece from Turkey - on par with the 251 whom crossed the previous week. As of 29 January there have been a total of 1,203 sea arrivals in 2017, a decrease from the 1,665 whom arrived the previous month. While Lesbos recorded the majority of estimated sea arrivals during the week, an increase of arrivals to Kastelorizo was noted during the course of January. Almost half of the arrivals to Kastelorizo since August last year took place between December 2016 and January 2017, marking an increase of arrivals to this location in comparison to previous months.

In the same week, 1,852 persons (including 278 unaccompanied and separated children, i.e. 15%) arrived to Italy after having been rescued. This is a large increase from the 38 who arrived the previous week. So far in January 2017, 4,243 persons arrived by sea, which is on par with the 4,071 whom arrived by 27 during the same month in 2016. However, this is still lower than the 5,273 who arrived at the end of January last year. On 28 January, 39 Iraqi and Iranian nationals were intercepted by the authorities near Crotone, after they had autonomously reached the shore having departed from Turkey six days earlier. The majority of the new arrivals among this group were of Kurdish origin from Iraq. However, the overall top countries of origin among arrivals to Italy include Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Nigeria.

Despite the winter weather, sea arrivals to mainland Spain have been observed in January with an estimated 900-1,000 people having crossed by sea this month. The number of people crossing by sea to the Spanish mainland increased by 85% last year from 3,764 in 2015 to 6,979 in 2016. During the last weeks of January, eight corpses, including that of a 6 year old child, were found and at least seven are reported to be missing in the waters or in the beaches of Cádiz (southern Spain). Thus far,

there have been reports of 254 persons dead or missing at sea in 2017. Majority of these incidents (87%) have occurred along the central Mediterranean Sea route.

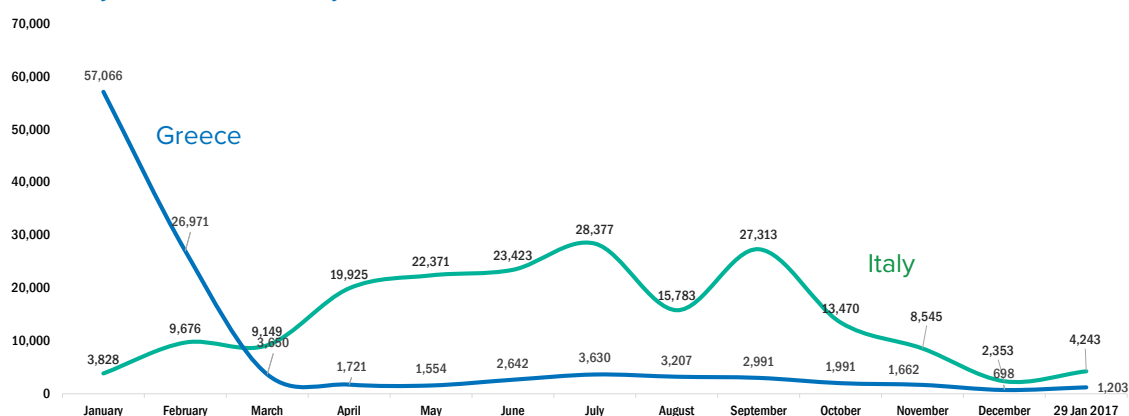
Key Developments

Situation in Greece

Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the Aegean islands continue to face serious challenges with capacity and shelter allocation for people present there, irrespective of new arrivals. Last week, two men, sharing a tent in Moria RIC, passed away. Clinical examinations are still establishing the cause of death. Another two men were admitted in intensive care for inhaling carbon monoxide on 30 January. UNHCR stands ready to support authorities in providing assistance and establishing preventive safety measures for those residing in tents. Following these incidents, a group of Moria residents protested outside the RIC. Community leaders met in an effort to defuse tensions and discuss the present situation. Representatives from the police, UNHCR, European Commission, Registration and Identification Service (RIS) attended the meeting, which was held in Moria. UNHCR has agreed to support the authorities with shelter solutions, but any substantial improvement can be made only if people are moved out of the site and there is a clear process of population management of the site by the authorities. Once population management is properly structured, UNHCR's planned intervention includes the gradual installation of 49 two-story and 22 single prefabricated housing units at the site and other infrastructure works in cooperation with the Greek Army.

On Samos, overcrowding and poor weather continues contribute to insufficient protection and a strained living environment in Vathy RIC, as well as in the temporary 'extended area'. Alongside partner Samaritan's Purse (SP), UNHCR offered support to authorities by carrying out

Arrivals to Greece and Italy per Month January 2016 to 29 January 2017



* data.unhcr.org/mediterranean as of 2 February 2017

Key Figures

Greece

254

Total Weekly Arrivals to Greek Islands

23 - 29 January 2017

36

Daily Average Arrivals to Greek Islands

23 - 29 January 2017

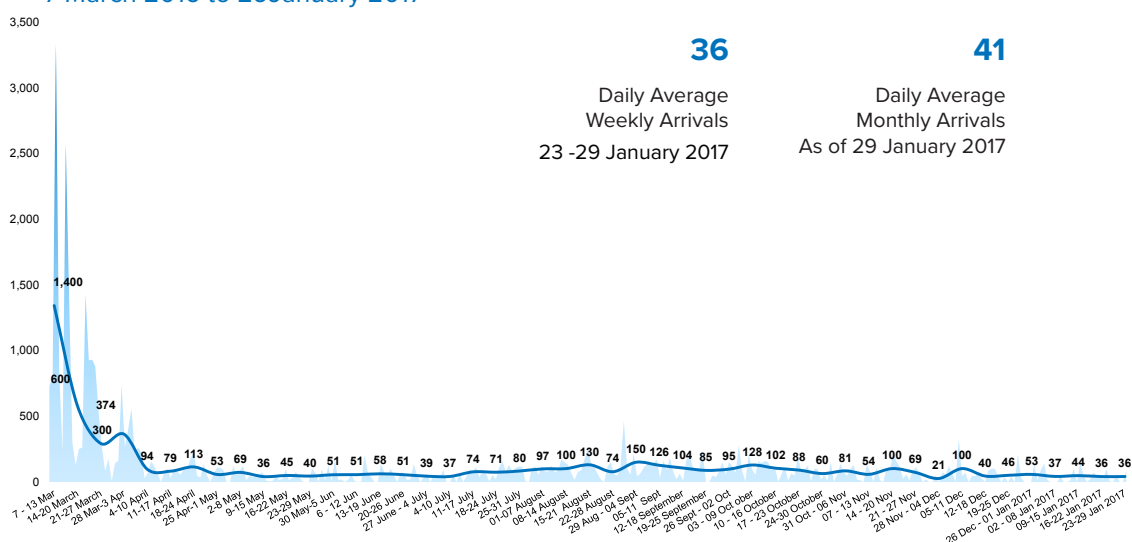
various construction works providing additional shelter and mitigation measures to flooding. One Iraqi Kurdish man passed away in the Vathy public hospital on 25 January. Whilst the official cause of death remains unknown, it is presumed that he had a heart attack. UNHCR is co-ordinating support with partners for his wife and three children. The same day, three attempted suicides were reported at the RIC. UNHCR is highly concerned about the lack of emergency accommodation for extremely vulnerable and urgent cases, such as shipwreck survivors and survivors of sexual gender based violence. Based on a framework agreement previously held with a local travel agency those with specific needs on Samos were provided with alternative accommodation or ferry tickets through the so-called "Emergency-One-Off-Assistance Scheme". However following the discontinuation of the framework agreement such services offered through the

scheme are currently unavailable.

While there has been gradual progression in transfers from islands to mainland to alleviate overcrowding, there is still a need for authorities to expedite procedures affecting the transfer of persons from the islands. UNHCR continues to advocate for improved reception conditions and establishment of additional and suitable space on the islands, accelerated transfers, speedy registration and processing of asylum claims, along with regular information provision and sufficient presence of security.

During the reporting period from 1 June 2016 to 27 January 2017, 4,689 asylum-seekers were transferred by UNHCR. Of which 871 of them were supported in coordination with KEPOM and 1,984 of them were accommodated in Athens under the UNHCR relocation/accommodation

Daily and Weekly Average Arrivals to Greece¹ 7 March 2016 to 29 January 2017



Italy

265

Total Weekly Arrivals to Italy

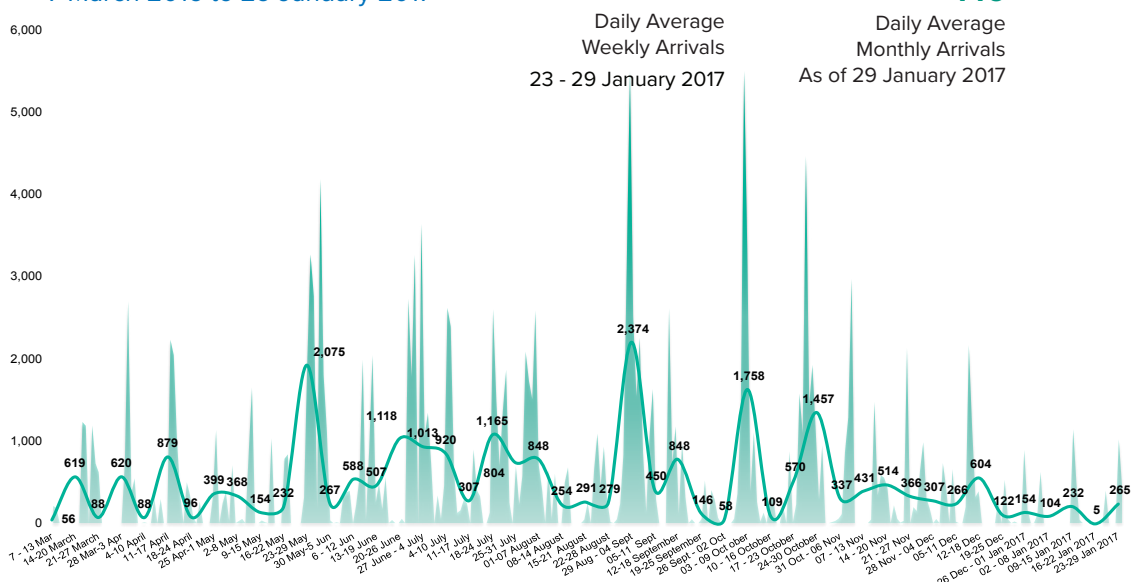
23 - 29 January 2017

38

Daily Average Arrivals to Italy

23 - 29 January 2017

Daily and Weekly Average Arrivals to Italy 7 March 2016 to 29 January 2017



¹ Lagadikia, Nea Kavala, Alexandria, Vasilika/Redestos and Pieria (Petra Olympou) in northern Greece; Katsikas, Filipladi and Agia Eleni (new site) in western Greece; Kipselochori and Styliada (new site) in central Greece; Schisto, Eleonas, Elefsina, Rafina and Andravidas in Attica and Peloponnese. ² Thermopiles, Trikala, Tsepelovo, Diavata, Kara Tepe and Moria.

scheme. In addition, UNHCR has provided 1,834 ferry tickets to those eligible for transfer.

In northern Greece on the mainland, plumbing and construction issues caused by inclement weather have mostly been addressed and repaired. However, WASH infrastructure complications at some sites still persist. In central Greece, UNHCR and child protection (CP) partners continued to conduct joint assessments at sites, in order to identify areas where Safe Zones for UASC can be established according to the Minimum Standards developed by the CP sub-working group. This initiative was initiated in December 2016 and up to now the regions of Attica, Central Macedonia and Central Greece have been assessed. In Attica, the safety and security of the asylum-seekers is highly compromised at Elliniko II. As a general observation, the security of people in Elliniko is not ensured by the authorities as security incidents continue and police intervention is minimal. UNHCR's field office team in Elliniko received a significant number of individual cases for counselling and has arranged meetings with the community in order to address their concerns. Additionally, multiple sessions with the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) and UNHCR legal unit were organized in order to discuss procedures of legal proceedings with those affected.

An initiative launched on 10 May last year, spearheaded by the Swiss Embassy, and has developed a lexicon to facilitate communication between refugee communities and site management/NGOs/UNHCR in all open sites on the mainland. UNHCR distributed 7,000 copies to 4 sub offices in Attica, Thessaloniki, Larissa and Ioannina. The Swiss Embassy had already produced two previous lexicons with Greek NGO EADAP, on primary education and health issues.

Update on Returns from Greece to Turkey

Two return operations were carried out from Greece to Turkey within the scope of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 during the reporting period. According to Greek authorities, 13 Syrians were returned from Lesbos to Adana on 25 January 2017. Of the group 11 withdrew

their asylum applications while two withdrew their will to apply for asylum in Greece. On 26 January, 14 of different nationalities (three Algerians, seven Pakistani, two Iranians, one Iraqi and one Moroccan) were returned by boat from Lesbos to Dikili. Regarding the basis of return for individuals in this group: nine of them were rejected at second instance, one withdrew their asylum application, one withdrew their will to apply for asylum and three did not express the will to apply for asylum.

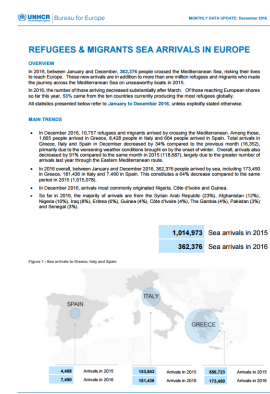
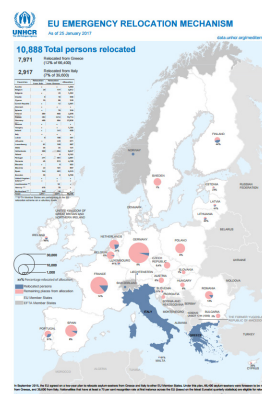
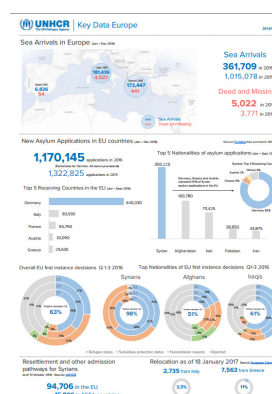
The total number of returns to Turkey from Greece under the EU-Turkey Statement is 865 as of 31 January.

Situation in Serbia

The overall number of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Serbia continues to grow from an estimated 7,300 to over 7,800. A new high, 6,480 (83% of those in Serbia), were sheltered in 17 government facilities. The others were in Belgrade city centre or at the two sites near the Hungarian border. The authorities, UNHCR and partners maintain presence and provide support, such as protection assistance and monitoring, legal counselling on asylum and support for coordination amongst authorities and humanitarian agencies in all sites throughout the country.

Resolving the situation of refugee and migrant men and boys sleeping rough in Belgrade city centre remained a priority for the authorities, UNHCR and partners. To keep the momentum of successful relocations to the new facility in Obrenovac near Belgrade, UNHCR continued to provide rapid support to the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) in expanding the capacity of Obrenovac centre through refurbishment of another large building. The SCRM voluntarily transferred 320 men and boys from the city centre to Obrenovac, while UNHCR and partners transported 20 newly registered asylum-seekers to other centres with available capacity. On 29 January, the Ministers of Interior, of Labour, Employment, Social and Veteran Affairs, of Defence, as well as the UNHCR Representative addressed the media at the new Obrenovac centre. Despite all these efforts, a high number of refugees and migrants remained in Belgrade city centre. On 26 January, UNHCR, SCRM and

Key Documents from the Web portal



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partners jointly estimate that there were closed to 1,200 refugee/migrant men and boys in the city centre. Almost half of them indicated they were willing to move to government shelters. The others expressed preference to continue squatting in Belgrade, despite the cold weather and better shelter offered.

In the North, Subotica Transit Centre (TC) sheltered 130 asylum-seekers, Sombor TC some 110, while due to the cold weather, only four asylum-seekers camped at Horgos and seven at Kelebija border sites, awaiting admission into Hungarian “transit zones”.

UNHCR and partners continued receiving reports of push-backs from Hungary and Croatia, and during the week, close to 100 refugees/migrants reported to have been denied access to asylum procedures in Hungary or Croatia pushed back into Serbia.

Hungary

During the week, Hungarian officials continued to admit up to 10 persons per day via the two ‘transit zones’ (5 in each transit zone), resulting in 50 people being granted access during the week to seek asylum in Hungary. A further reduction from the 101 admitted the previous week. The waiting period for families to access the transit zones ranges from four to six months, while single men can wait up to seven months. In light of extensive waiting periods, many continue to attempt to cross into Hungary irregularly. Last week, the Hungarian police reported 48 apprehensions for irregular entry, while 633 people were prevented from crossing the green border and another 276 people were intercepted inside Hungary and sent back to the other side of the border control fence.

As of the 16 January, asylum-seekers detained in the closed accommodation areas are no longer allowed by the authorities to approach the independent lawyer of UNHCR’s partner the Hungarian Helsinki Committee. Asylum-seekers are left with the option of requesting the intervention of a state lawyer.

The border police, the military, Immigration and Asylum Office (IAO), the Constitution Protection Office (CPO), and the Government’s Office which provides legal information maintains presence inside the transit zones. UNHCR has been conducting daily visits to the transit zones and providing asylum-seekers with information and counselling on their rights and obligations, Dublin procedures and on the implications of the safe third country notion.

UNHCR Concerned About Amendments Made to Asylum Law in Slovenia

UNHCR is very concerned about a number of changes in Slovenia’s Law on International Protection, the Alien’s Act, which can jeopardize the rights of those seeking asylum in the country. On 26 January the National Assembly confirmed the amendments to the Aliens Act. The amendments would allow Slovenia to limit access to territory and asylum procedures to asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants in the event of emergency situa-

tions. Prior to the confirmation of the amendments, UNHCR presented detailed comments and issued a [press release](#) on the proposed amendments and sought the support of the Prime Minister and the President of the National Assembly. UNHCR believes that these changes to Slovenian law are not compatible with obligations under international law and the Refugee convention.

Update on Relocation

No relocation transfers took place during the week. In January so far, 263 persons were relocated from Italy to other European countries, bringing total relocations from Italy since the beginning of the relocation scheme to 3,205 persons (8% of the initial 39,600 target). No UASC have been relocated from Italy yet ([latest EC data](#)).

A total of 722 asylum-seekers were relocated from Greece during the week, to Germany (487), Netherlands (103), Portugal (60), Spain (55), Romania (12) Liechtenstein (10), Latvia (4) and Ireland (1). According to the latest figures provided by the EC, 8,412 (12.6% of the initial 66,400 target) relocations have taken place from Greece to other European countries since the start of the programme. There were 335 new pledges from Norway (120), Netherlands (100), Finland (100) and Malta (15) during the reporting period. In support of the relocation program, UNHCR in Athens assisted 385 relocation candidates by providing them with accommodation and 307 received transportation services during the week.

EU Related Developments

On 25 January, the European Commission (EC) released a [Communication](#) entitled “Migration on the Central Mediterranean route – Managing flows, saving lives”. With that document, the EC aims to feed into discussions ahead of the 3 February 2017 informal meeting of Heads of State and Government by presenting measures to “strengthen the EU’s work” along the Central Mediterranean route, “in particular with and around Libya”. For a [list](#) of the document’s key objectives and related actions.

On 25 January, the EC also released a [recommendation](#) in favour of prolonging the temporary controls currently in place at certain internal Schengen borders in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway by a further three months, under a number of conditions. The Council now needs to take a formal decision for the controls to be prolonged.

On 26 January, EU Ministers of the Interior met in Malta for an informal Justice and Home Affairs Council. They [mainly discussed](#) asylum related matters and IT systems. On the latter, Malta’s Minister of the Interior Abela [indicated](#) that work on the reform on the Common European Asylum System would continue, and indicated what he sees as the “need to look beyond asylum” to also continue the work relating to migration issues.

Timeline Overview

Highlights

