

# EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



© UNHCR/ Gordon Welters

Asylum-seekers face dangerously overcrowded conditions in Moria. Asylum-seekers prepare to spend the night in camping tents in the olive grove adjacent to Moria.

## TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

Over 19,900 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe via the three Mediterranean routes <sup>2</sup> in September 2019. In the first nine months of the year, the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe by these three routes dropped by 21% from 102,700 in 2018 to 81,000 in 2019. Most refugees and migrants entering Europe via the Mediterranean routes this year did so via Greece.

**Greece:** In September, some 12,500 people arrived by sea and land. This is the highest number of monthly arrivals since the Turkey-EU Statement was introduced in March 2016. In the first nine months of 2019, some 46,100 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece by land and sea, 24% more than the same period in 2018 (37,300). Some 38% of those who have arrived by sea in Greece so far in 2019 have been from Afghanistan, along with 25% from the Syrian Arab Republic and 8% from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Spain:** In the first nine months of 2019, some 23,400 refugees and migrants arrived in Spain, 46% less than the same period in 2018 (43,200). Sea arrivals (51% less) have decreased more than arrivals at the enclaves (10% less). In the first nine months of 2019, most people arriving in Spain were from Morocco (30%), Mali (14%), Guinea (13%), Côte d'Ivoire (11%) and Senegal (8%).

Mediterranean  
**81,000**  
arrivals in 2019 <sup>1</sup>

**1,042**  
estimated dead/missing in 2019 <sup>1</sup>

<b>Greece<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Italy</b>
<b>46,100</b>	<b>7,600</b>
5,842 9,334 12,530	1,088 1,268 2,499
Jul Aug Sept	Jul Aug Sept

<b>Spain<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Cyprus</b>
<b>23,400</b>	<b>1,500</b>
3,434 2,854 3,794	67 89 326
Jul Aug Sept	Jul Aug Sept

### New asylum applications in Europe <sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> [data.unhcr.org/mediterranean](http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean) as of 30 September 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Arrivals include Cyprus, Italy, Malta; Greece and Spain both include sea and land arrivals; Spain includes sea arrivals in the Mediterranean and to the Canary Islands.

<sup>3</sup> Sources: Eurostats for EU+ countries (Only partial data for May, June and July 2019. All data is provisional and last updated 06 August 2019); UNHCR for Eastern Europe and Turkey (as of 31 December 2018) and South Eastern Europe (as of 30 June 2019).

**Italy:** Some 7,600 refugees and migrants arrived by sea in Italy in the first nine months of 2019, a 64% decrease from 21,000 in the same period of 2018. Sea arrivals departing from Libya have decreased by 84% to 1,900 in the first nine months of the year compared to the same period of 2018, while the number of people crossing from Tunisia (mostly Tunisians) has also dropped by 39% to 3,100 in the first nine months of 2019.

While in previous years the vast majority of people arriving by sea to Italy had departed from Libya, in the nine months of 2019 around 25% of people who reached Italy by sea departed from Libya, 40% from Tunisia, 18% from Turkey, 9% from Algeria and 7% from Greece.

**Malta:** So far this year, some 2,700 refugees and migrants have arrived in Malta by sea after departing from Libya (compared to 780 during the same period of 2018). Some 75% of sea arrivals to Malta in 2019 were rescued in the Maltese Search and Rescue Region, almost all by the Armed Forces of Malta.

**Cyprus:** In the first nine months of 2019, some 1,500 refugees and migrants arrived in Cyprus by sea, compared with the same period in 2018 when 400 arrived. In the first nine months of 2019, most people arriving in Cyprus by sea were from the Syrian Arab Republic, Cameroon and Nigeria.

**Western Balkans:** In Serbia UNHCR and partners observed and assisted 3,700 asylum-seekers and migrants, who newly arrived in September, the highest number of irregular monthly arrivals since February 2016. UNHCR and partners counselled over 2,500 potential asylum-seekers on asylum at over thirty sites throughout the country. UNHCR project lawyers assisted 323 persons, including 18 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), to apply for asylum in Serbia and represented 465 asylum-seekers in

# 1,914

**Returns EU-Turkey statement** <sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Source: [Ministry of Citizen Protection](#), Greece as of 30 September 2019.

substantive asylum procedures.

In North Macedonia, a daily average of 169 new arrivals (5,100 individuals) was observed by UNHCR and partners during September (25% more than the average of 135 per day in August), primarily arriving from Greece and most people reported coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. At the end of September approximately 7,400 asylum seekers and migrants were estimated to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most people reported coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan or Bangladesh and smaller percentages from Iraq, Iran, Syria, or Algeria.

Push-backs continue to be widely reported across the region, including the use of violence, while at least 24 people are known to have died along the route so far this year, including while trying to hide in vehicles to cross borders and drowning in border rivers.

**Dead and missing:** In the first nine months of 2019, just over 1,000 people are believed to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean sea on their way to Europe. The majority of deaths took place in the Central Mediterranean where 660 people were believed to have died.

## OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey **4.0 million**

Refugees and asylum seekers <sup>5</sup>

Syrian Arab Republic	3,676,300
Afghanistan	172,000
Iraq	143,000
Other nationalities	57,000

<sup>5</sup> Source: UNHCR as of 31 August 2019

Ukraine **1.5 million**

Internally Displaced Persons <sup>6</sup> and Conflict Affected Persons<sup>7</sup>

Refugees: <sup>8</sup>	2,627
Asylum seekers: <sup>9</sup>	2,171
Stateless persons: <sup>10</sup>	35,650

<sup>6</sup> Residing more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).

<sup>7</sup> Estimated number of vulnerable, conflict-affected persons living along the 'contact line' in government-controlled areas (GCA) and non-government controlled areas (NGCA).

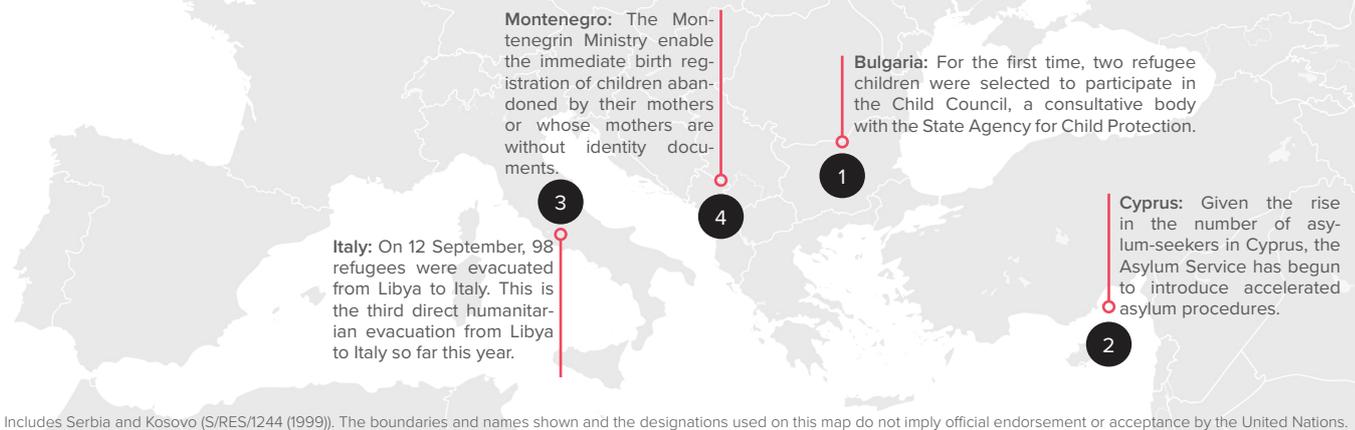
<sup>8,7</sup> 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), UNHCR

<sup>8</sup> Refugees, including persons with complementary protection, UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 30/09/2019

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR as of 30/09/2019

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 30/09/2019

# KEY DEVELOPMENTS



**Search and rescue in the central Mediterranean:** In September, over 2,100 people were disembarked after departing from Libya by sea. Of them, some 50% were disembarked in Libya following interventions by the Libyan Coast Guard.

Almost 1,100 others were disembarked in Italy and Malta (54% in Italy and 46% in Malta), 42% of whom were rescued by NGOs. Since the start of the year, 75% of those disembarked in Malta were rescued in Malta’s Search and Rescue Region (SRR) while 46% of those disembarked in Italy were rescued in Italy or Malta’s SRR or arrived spontaneously.

**Armenia:** On 05 September, UNHCR jointly with the Migration Service and the Armenian Red Cross Society conducted a “Training of Trainers” for 20 border guards on refugee law.

**Bulgaria:** UNHCR and NGOs initiated several discussions with professors from ten universities on opportunities to support refugee integration. Proposals included UNHCR co-sponsoring university roundtables and conferences, using university newspapers, radios, and TVs to mainstream refugee issues and create awareness, cooperating with professors for the establishment of accredited internships and volunteering programmes.

For the first time in the country, two refugee children **1** were selected to participate in the Child Council, a consultative body with the State Agency for Child

Protection. First meeting took place at the end of September with refugee children taking part in the discussions and activities. Participation in the Child Council will contribute to improving the representation of refugee children and ensuring their voice on decisions affecting them is heard.

**Cyprus:** Given the rise in the number of asylum-seekers in Cyprus, the Asylum Service has begun to introduce accelerated asylum procedures. Between January and June 2019, a total of 6,669 persons applied for asylum in Cyprus, which represents a 132 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2018 (in the whole of 2018, 7,761 persons applied for asylum).

On 17 September, UNHCR and the European University Cyprus signed an agreement which establishes collaboration on a range of activities including a scholarship programme for refugees and a research and awareness programme.

**EU:** The Council has extended the mandate of Operation Sophia by six months until 31 March 2020. However the deployment of the Operation’s naval assets will remain temporarily suspended until EU Member States find an appropriate solution to disembarkation. The training of the Libyan coastguard will be continued as part of the Operation’s core mandate to disrupt the business model of migrant smugglers and human traffickers in the Southern Central Mediterranean.

**Greece:** In 29 September, an Afghan woman died as a result of a fire in Moria Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). Another 17 asylum-seekers, including two children, were admitted to the hospital and discharged the following day. Four two-story accommodation containers were destroyed. As of 29 September, there were 30,547 refugees and migrants on the islands, including an estimated 14,500 people on Lesbos, 43% of whom are children. In September, Lesbos has received 4,850 arrivals, nearly half of the 10,300 sea arrivals to the Aegean islands this month. Moria RIC today hosts 12,600 people, in a site intended for 2,000.

**Italy:** On 12 September, 98 refugees were evacuated <sup>3</sup> from Libya to Italy. This is the third direct humanitarian evacuation from Libya to Italy so far this year (a total of 393 individuals were evacuated from Libya to Italy in 2019 so far). The group originates from Eritrea (55), Ethiopia (1), Somalia (26), and Sudan (16), and comprises 52 unaccompanied and separated children, of whom two girls and 50 boys. Many experienced detention in Libya and almost all presented with specific needs, having survived torture and sexual violence in Libya.

On 6 and 9 September, six Eritrean refugee students [arrived](#) in Italy from Ethiopia. They are the first group participating in the University Corridors programme, and will be continuing their postgraduate studies at Bologna University and LUISS University in Rome.

**Montenegro:** Following advocacy by UNHCR, the Montenegrin Ministry of Interior has shared an instruction with all branch offices informing them on the procedure they should follow to enable the immediate birth registration of children abandoned by their mothers or whose mothers are without identity documents. This initiative will help address one of the main factors leading to the risk of statelessness in the country. <sup>4</sup>

**North Macedonia:** On 24 September, the Government of North Macedonia has adopted the Information for the need to accede to the 1961 UN Convention for Reduction of Statelessness, as well as the legal measures that are required for the ratification of the Convention.

**Serbia:** Joint field-teams of the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and UNHCR continued visiting all persons granted international protection, assessing their needs and preparing individual integration plans. The SCRM also invited UNHCR to assist in an analysis of challenges faced by persons granted international protection. Following a meeting with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, the Government of Serbia established an informal working group of five line-Ministries, chaired by the SCRM, to analyse Serbia's implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and prepare substantive good models, pledges and contributions

for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) on 17-18 December in Geneva. UNHCR and partners counselled over one hundred refugees and asylum-seekers on local integration, assisted 48 with cash based interventions, obtained work permits for three and ID cards for twelve.

**Ukraine:** On 13 September, UNHCR jointly with local authorities and the Canadian Embassy opened a sport-ground at the Kyiv Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Centre for children which was constructed as part of UNHCR's Peaceful Coexistence Projects. This facility is the only space in Kyiv region that provides accommodation and care to unaccompanied or separated asylum-seeking children. As of September 2019, UNHCR has initiated the implementation of 66 Peaceful Coexistence Projects in Ukraine.

In September, UNHCR jointly with NGO partners delivered six trucks of humanitarian assistance to the conflict-affected areas in eastern Ukraine. Anticipating the arrival of cold temperatures, UNHCR scaled-up its shelter assistance and completed repairs of 285 houses. UNHCR also managed to reach out to the previously inaccessible villages of Pervomaiske and Sakhanka in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, providing its residents with assistance.

**United Kingdom:** On 11 September, 86 persons including women and children, mainly from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia, were rescued at sea by the British authorities and brought to Dover. These individuals were crossing the Channel on several small boats. Since the beginning of 2019 around 1,500 refugees and migrants have tried to cross the English Channel, compared to 586 individuals in 2018.



© UNHCR/ Gordon Welters

## REFUGEE STORIES

### [Life-saving programme offers safe path to Italy for refugees](#)

By Matthew Mpoke Bigg in Rome | 18 September 2019

This was not just any arrival at Rome's busy main airport. These 15 families have the chance to start a new life, thanks to a unique partnership called Humanitarian Corridors.

At first they looked nervous as they walked into the terminal building after the flight from Lebanon, unsure of how they would be received.

But a line of volunteers greeted them as they walked through the gate. They told the 77 refugees they were welcome - even saying the word "welcome" in Arabic. The volunteers regaled them with flowers and snacks and offered the children balloons. Soon the mood lightened.

"I was afraid before I arrived here," said a woman soon after landing with her husband and their four-year-old boy. "I didn't know people. Maybe they would be unfriendly .... When I came in (to the airport) and saw people smiling and the welcome, I was no longer afraid."

In less than four years Humanitarian Corridors programme has brought more than 2,000 people to Italy and 350 more to France, in a legal way with a humanitarian visa in their hands. A recently signed agreement will allow 600 more refugees and other vulnerable people to travel from Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia and Niger.

In Italy the programme is facilitated by an agreement between a consortium of religious organizations, Sant'Egidio Community; Caritas Italiana, the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) and the Waldensian Table, together with the foreign and interior ministries. It has been expanded to several other European countries.

The programme was selected as the regional winner for Europe for UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award — a prestigious annual prize that honours those who have gone to extraordinary lengths to support forcibly displaced and stateless

people – for sponsoring refugees to resettle in Italy and start a new life.

On arrival, they apply for asylum and so far almost all have been granted international protection as refugees.

A growing number of extremely vulnerable refugees cannot either stay in their current host country or go home. They urgently need legal pathways allowing them to resettle in another country. This is why sponsorship programmes like Humanitarian Corridors are important because they provide a lifeline for those at greatest risk.

To help refugees to become self-supporting and integrate swiftly into Italian society, the organization offers a year of support including housing, legal aid and language classes. These are all paid for through its private funds.

Some of the refugees have lost homes, others family members, some had been imprisoned and tortured, while others have serious medical problems.

As an example, one Syrian family was from Damascus. The father was shot in the chest. He and his wife fled to Lebanon, where their son – now four years old - was born. They were selected among the most vulnerable by FCEI and now they have a chance of a fresh start.

Humanitarian Corridors has its origin in the sinking of a boat carrying refugees and migrants off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa on 3 October 2013. More than 300 people died. The wreck that shocked the country, in part because it happened close to shore.

"It was the point of no return. The whole community experienced this moment of shame. We had the idea of finding another mode of organizing things for refugees," said Maria Quinto of Sant'Egidio.

While the programme currently covers just a fraction of those arriving overall as asylum-seekers, the organizations behind it are actively working to provide a safer alternative to dangerous sea crossings for an increasing number of people. The organizations behind it hope to see it extended to refugees in detention in Libya.

