

ITALY – SEA ARRIVALS

UNHCR UPDATE #4

December 2015

KEY FIGURES

153,850

Persons arriving by sea in 2015.

9,640

Persons arriving by sea in December.

47,640

Sea arrivals originating from Eritrea, the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2015.

52%

Average EU asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian protection rate of top nationalities arriving by sea in Italy (as of November).

77,200

Asylum applications up to November (including from sea and other arrivals).

12,360

Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) arrived by sea in 2015.

190

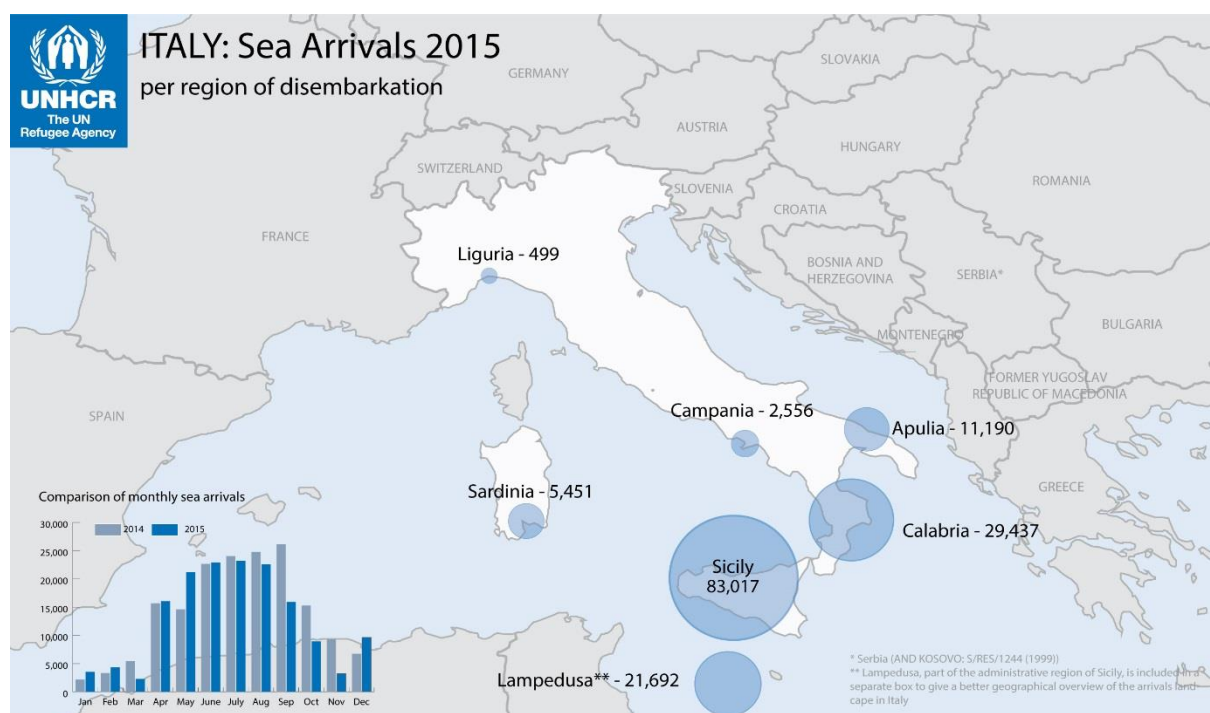
Asylum seekers relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme.

17

UNHCR staff positioned at key arrival points.

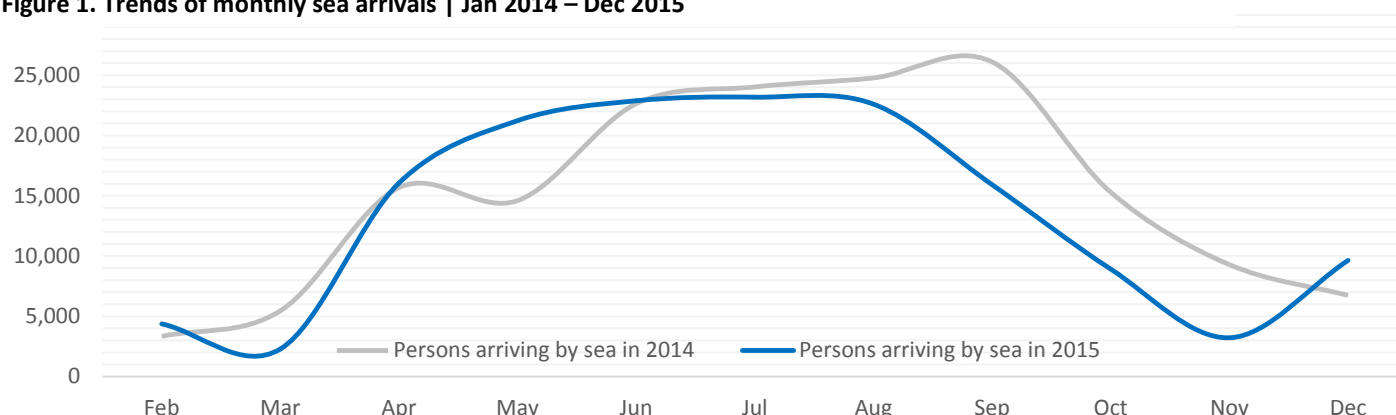
HIGHLIGHTS

- Italy witnessed a 43% rise of sea arrivals over the last month, compared to December 2014, bucking the seasonal decrease of refugees and migrants arriving by sea and the downward trend registered in the second half of 2015. Arrival trends for December include the steady decrease of Syrians arriving by sea and the continuing proportional increase of Nigerians.
- At the end of December 2015, the total number of arrivals stands at 153,842 persons, compared to 170,100 in 2014 at the same time, corresponding to a 10% decrease.
- In December 60 asylum-seekers were relocated to Finland, Portugal, Belgium and Spain under the EU relocation scheme. Since the decisions of the Council of Europe entered into force, 190 persons were relocated by Italy. One additional hotspot became operational in Trapani in the second half of December, with a capacity of up to 400 places. Italy opened two hotspots in 2015.
- UNHCR became aware of more instances of denied access to the asylum procedures. This, included also persons from refugee producing countries. On 28 December, 190 persons who were not subject to adequate screening were served with a rejection orders upon their arrival in Palermo.



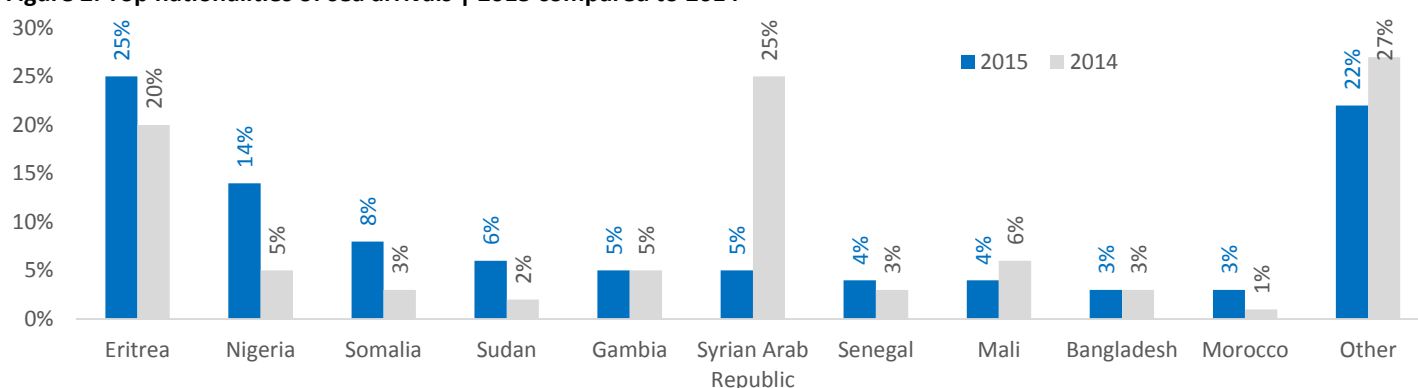
SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 1. Trends of monthly sea arrivals | Jan 2014 – Dec 2015



At the end of 2015, the total number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea was 153,842 persons, corresponding to a 10% decrease compared to last year. Italy witnessed a 43% rise of sea arrivals over the last month, compared to December 2014, bucking the seasonal decrease of refugees and migrants arriving by sea and the downward trend registered in the second half of 2015. The overall decrease of arrivals can be partially explained by the significant drop of Syrian arrivals, who are now primarily using the [Eastern Mediterranean route](#) to reach Europe. Key disembarkation points remain Sicilian ports, which have been identified as hotspots in Italy's Rod Map: Pozzallo (19%), Augusta (15%), Lampedusa (14%), Taranto (10%) and Trapani (5%). Other disembarkation point include Reggio Calabria (11%), Catania (6%). In December, UNHCR was present at main disembarkation points with 17 staff, by providing information on international protection and relocation scheme. In 2015, **3,771 persons have lost their lives or gone missing** in the Mediterranean Sea whilst trying to reach European shores, the deadliest year on record. In 2014 3,500 persons perished. Another noticeable trend is the decline in deaths at sea in the Central Mediterranean route where, after an unprecedented 1,300 casualties in April alone, search and rescue operations were increased in scope and coverage. This underlines that with the right operational response it is possible to lower the risks and save lives. In 2015, UNHCR delivered training on international protection, with a particular focus on the principle of non-refoulement and the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees in a mixed-migration context to some 500 military and border authorities engaged in the Mediterranean, including Eunavfor med, Italian navy, coast guard and tax and custom police.

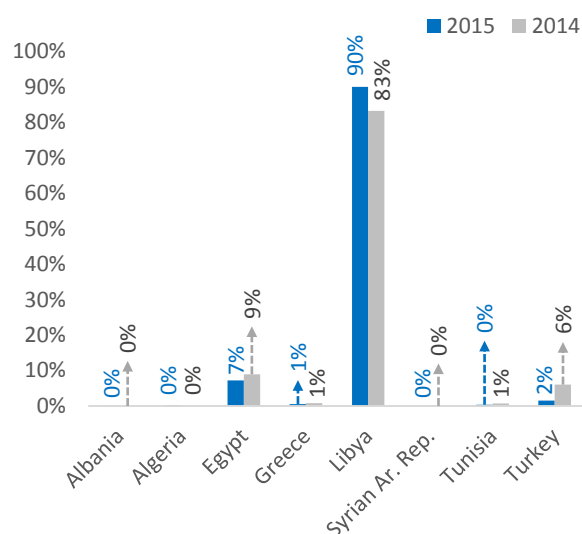
Figure 2. Top nationalities of sea arrivals | 2015 compared to 2014



During 2015 **persons originating from over 65 different countries arrived in Italy**. The trend of decreasing numbers of Syrian sea arrivals continued into December. Overall a **six fold reduction of Syrian arrivals in 2015** has been observed, compared to 2014, while Eritrea, with some 39,000 sea arrivals in 2015, ranked among top countries of arrivals for the 4th consecutive year. Another noticeable trend is the **continuous proportional increase of the arrival of Nigerian nationals**. Sea arrivals from Somalia and Sudan also increased consistently, together accounting for 14% of total arrivals, compared to 6% in 2014. Sea arrivals of Bangladeshis dropped to almost zero arrivals in the last three months. Whilst numbers remain small, a year-long peak in Ivoirians, and Guineans was noticed, constituting the majority of the "other" nationalities arriving in December.

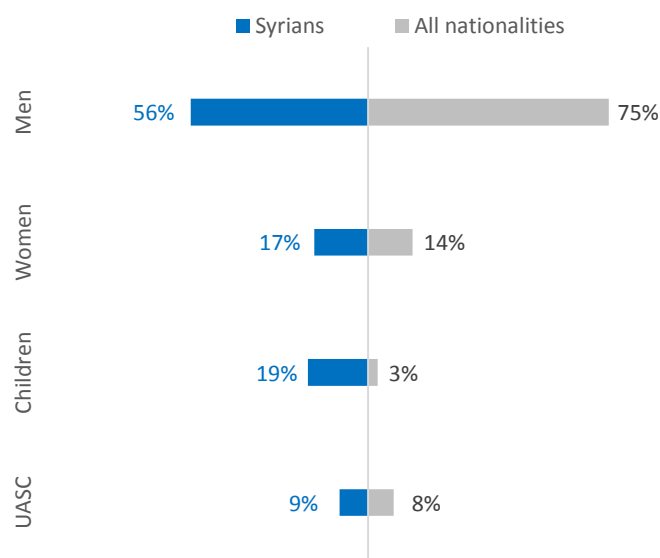
SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 3. Countries of departure of sea arrivals | 2015 compared to Dec 2014



The majority of sea arrivals still leave from Libya, with main departure points being Garabulli, Misurata and Subratha. In 2015, the number of people departing from Turkey and Egypt dropped by 4% and 2% respectively. This relatively modest decrease can be partly attributed to a halving in the number of Syrians asylum-seekers taking the Eastern Mediterranean Route. **Abuse and ill treatment during transit in Libya** continue to be reported, committed by smugglers, security forces and armed groups. The limited safe and legal pathways for refugees to reach Europe, drives population movements underground, leading to high risks of abuses during the journey. **Whereas the number of boats departing from Libya remained stable during December, whilst the number of persons arriving from Libya increased**, which may indicate the continuation of trend of use of larger boats. At the same time, **December observed a further increase of boat arrivals departing from Algeria**, whilst the number of refugees and migrants on board of the boats remained limited (4-16 persons). 11 out of the total of 30 boats departing from Algeria arrived in the last month. In view of the changing dynamics along the Western Balkan route, UNHCR is monitoring possible trends of sea arrivals to Italy from Albania, Greece and Turkey. In December no arrivals were registered on such countries.

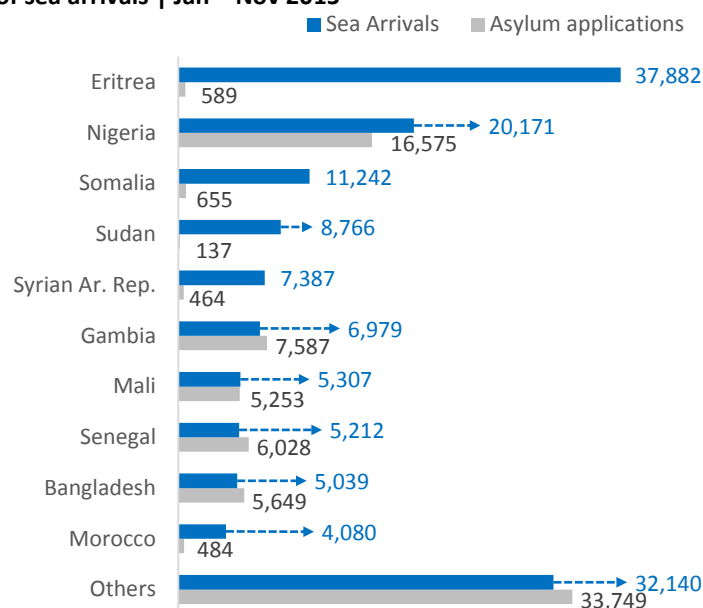
Figure 4. Demographic profile of Syrians compared to all nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Dec 2015



More than two thirds of all persons arriving by sea are male adults, a trend that appears to be relatively unchanged compared to 2014. These averages, however, hide significant variations across countries of origin. The demographic profile of Syrian sea arrivals more regularly includes large families with young children and elderly family members. The percentage of women and unaccompanied children from Eritrea and Somalia remained above the average and exceeded the 60% mark of Egyptians. During post disembarkation procedures, 16 UNHCR staff support authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, particularly persons with medical conditions, pregnant women and UASC. UNHCR continues to strengthen capacity to identify other persons with specific needs, such as persons suffering from trauma, victims of torture or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). The number of UASC increased in December with **around 1,206 UASC arriving, amounting to 13% of the arrivals, the two main countries of origin being Somalia and Gambia**. Approximately 90% of UASC are male and 15 years or older. Despite the high degree of protection offered in Italian legislation to children, reportedly large groups of **Eritrean, Syrian and Somali UASC continue to consider Italy as a transit country** with the intention to travel onwards to other European countries. This onward movement exposes them to risks of violence and abuses. Six UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in

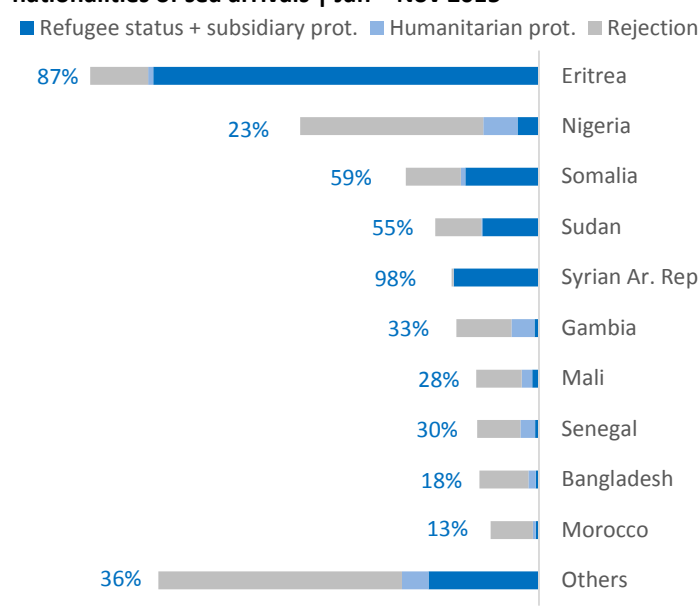
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN ITALY

Figure 5. Asylum applications in comparison to top nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Nov 2015*



*Asylum application figures also include asylum seekers who do not arrive by sea. Furthermore, applications are usually recorded at different periods after arrival, varying from a few weeks to over a month. Therefore, the chart merely provides an **indicative comparison**.

Figure 6. Average first instance recognition rate in EU of top nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Nov 2015*

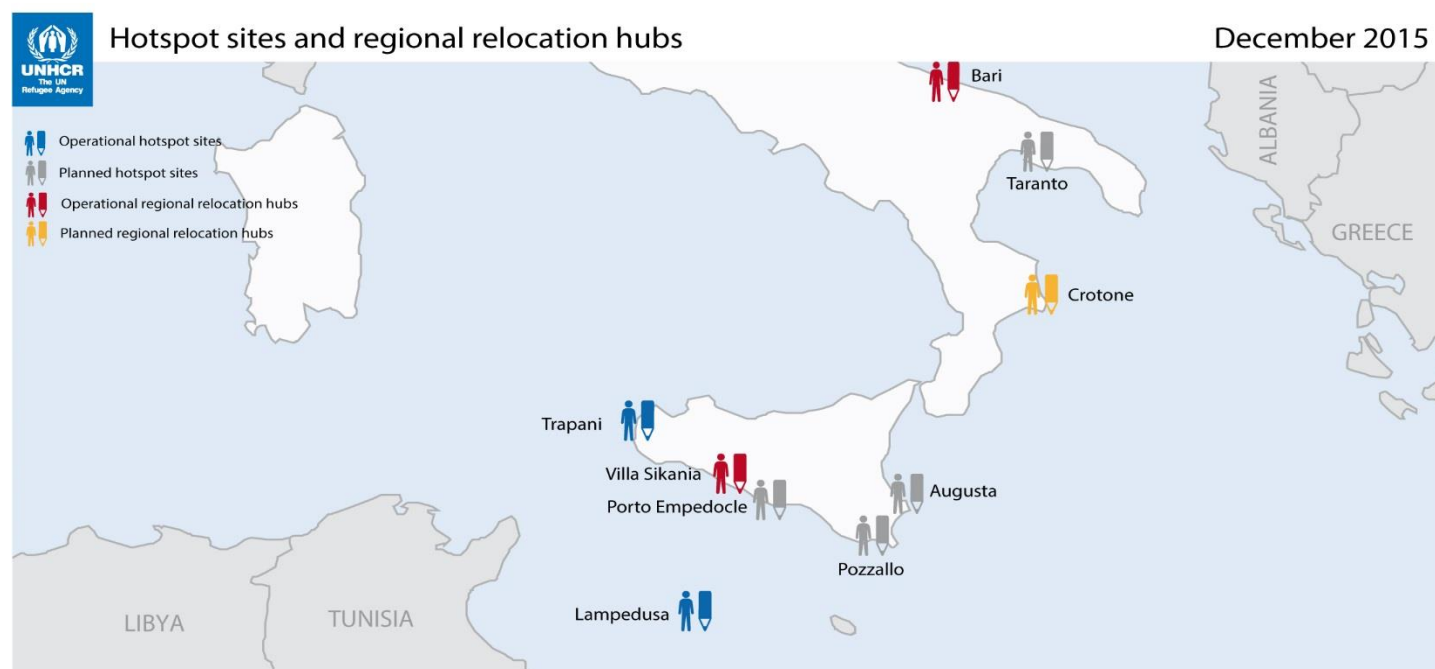


*Percentages reflect the total number of persons granted refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection in first instance processes, in the [EU in the third quarter of 2015](#).

From January to November 2015, Italy received around 77,200 asylum applications. The main countries of origin of asylum-seekers are Nigeria (21%), Pakistan (12%), Gambia (10%), Senegal (8%), Bangladesh (7%), Mali (7%), Ukraine (6%) and Afghanistan (5%) – thus differing largely from the main countries of origin of sea arrivals (see figure 5). **Asylum applications increased around 33% during the first eleven months of 2015**, compared to the same period in 2014. November observes the continuous proportional increase of asylum applications by persons from Nigeria and Pakistan and the slight decrease of asylum applications from Bangladeshi nationals. This latter trend appears to be partially related to the sharp drop of sea arrivals registered in the last three months. After an unusual peak in October, the number of applications from persons originating from Eritrea and Syria, went down, in line with previous months. On average in first instance procedures, of the sea arrivals in Italy **52% would be entitled to refugee status, subsidiary and humanitarian protection in the EU**, highlighting the mixed migratory nature of sea arrivals into Italy (see figure 6).

UNHCR participates in first instance Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, as members of the Territorial Eligibility Commissions and by providing support with regards to eligibility criteria, procedural standards and country of origin information. Up to November, **the Territorial Commissions examined around 61,400 asylum applications indicating an increase of some 92%** compared to the same period in 2014. Of these asylum applicants, 5% received refugee status, 15% subsidiary protection and 23% humanitarian protection. Humanitarian protection is based on national legislation and is granted in consideration of serious humanitarian concerns, as well as constitutional and international obligations such as Article 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. During 2015, the National Commission for the Right of Asylum in cooperation with UNHCR, developed a mechanism to monitor the quality of RSD procedures. In October the Civil Liberties and Immigration Department established a working group with the aim to prepare proposals for a reform of the asylum procedures in Italy, consisting of UNHCR, Ministry of Interior and the National Commission for the Right of Asylum.

HOTSPOTS AND RELOCATION



In December, **60 Eritrean and Syrian asylum-seekers were relocated to Finland, Portugal, Belgium and Spain**, bringing the **total number of asylum-seekers relocated from Italy to 190 in 2015**. The hotspot in Lampedusa and Trapani are currently operational, with Villa Sikania and Bari serving as regional relocation hubs. In these hotspots, Frontex, EASO and Europol and Eurojust are providing operational support. As foreseen in the Roadmap developed by the Italian Ministry of Interior (Moi), UNHCR supports in close cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) information provision and targeted individual counselling in the hotspots procedure and relocation on Lampedusa, Trapani and in the regional relocation hubs. In view of the low number of arrivals in the hotspot of Lampedusa, Moi intensified efforts to identify asylum-seekers to participate in the EU relocation scheme nationwide. At the same time, Moi is working to operationalize additional hotspots and regional relocation hubs early in 2016. Delays in transfers under the relocation scheme are due to a variety of reasons including the limited processing capacity by Moi and the lack of concrete/immediate availability of relocation places in member states. The modest pace of relocations demotivated asylum-seekers who may be eligible for the relocation scheme.

On 24 November, Moi established a working group with the objective to draft a Relocation Operational Manual and an information package including a common narrative on relocation for all actors involved in information activities. Participants in the working group include Moi, EC, EASO, border police and UNHCR.

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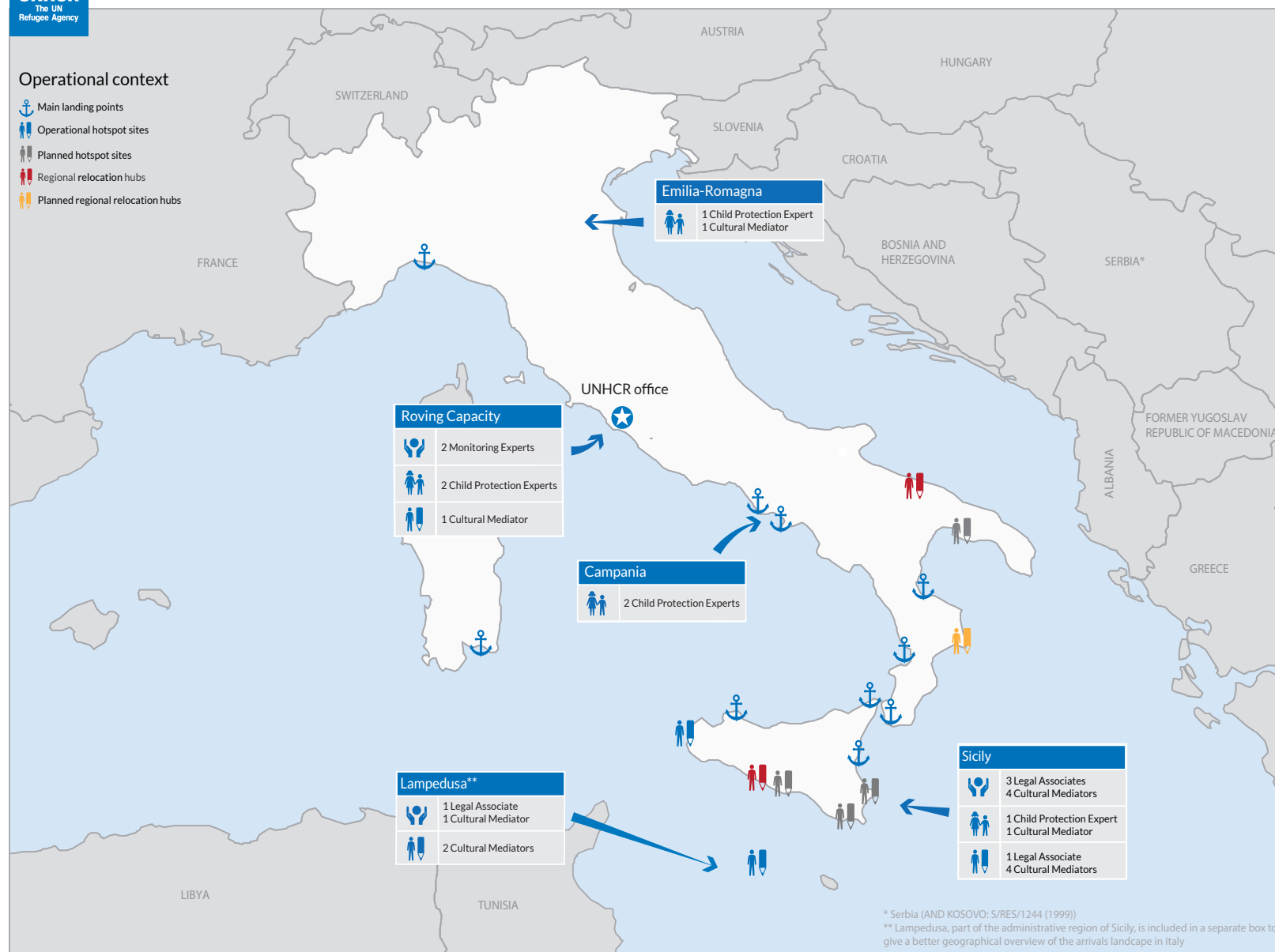
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Links: [Regional web portal](#) [UNHCR Italy webpage](#) [Twitter: @UNHCRItalia](#) [Facebook UNHCRItalia](#)

Sources: UNHCR, Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, EC - **unless indicated otherwise, figures included reflect the period up to 31 December.**

Operational context

-  Main landing points
-  Operational hotspot sites
-  Planned hotspot sites
-  Regional relocation hubs
-  Planned regional relocation hubs



UNHCR response to sea arrivals

UNHCR advises key governmental counterparts on policy formulations and legislative developments, through its participation in the National Coordination Group. UNHCR participates in first instance refugee status determination procedures, which are conducted by the the decentralised Territorial Eligibility Commissions. Direct participation of more than 40 staff allows UNHCR to continue to monitor the asylum-procedure and to contribute to ensuring adequate protection levels and pursue efforts to improve procedural standards. Additionally, UNHCR provides technical support to the authorities in ensuring the quality, fairness and efficiency of the procedure.

Access to Territory

UNHCR has nine staff positioned at key arrival points to support authorities with the provision of information on international protection and to identify persons with specific needs and refer them to specialised services. This is conducted in partnership with IOM. UNHCR also monitors conditions in first and second line reception facilities.

Relocation

UNHCR carries out information activities in hotspot sites and regional relocation hubs as well as in reception facilities and informal transit sites nationwide. UNHCR operates in close cooperation with EU Agencies, under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Interior.

Child Protection

Six UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support legal information services for UASC in first reception structures.



Co-funded by the European Union

349 landings assisted in 2015

98,987 sea arrivals benefitted from information session on international protection and asylum in 2015

780 sea arrivals with specific needs referred to specialised services in 2015

2,838 information sessions on relocations supported from September 2015

810 monitoring visits to reception facilities conducted in 2015

1,688* unaccompanied and separated children impacted by technical support of UNHCR child protection experts by December 2015