

# ITALY – SEA ARRIVALS

## UNHCR UPDATE #6

August 2016

### KEY FIGURES<sup>1</sup>

**21,294**

Persons arriving by sea in August 2016.

**115,068**

Persons arriving by sea in 2016 (as of 31 August).

**16,863**

Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) arrived by sea in 2016 (as of 31 August).

**72,470**

Asylum applications in 2016, including from sea and other arrivals (as of 31 August).

**40%**

Average EU protection rate of top nationalities arriving by sea in Italy between January and August 2016.

**19,998**

Potential relocation candidates who arrived since September 2015<sup>2</sup>.

**1,020**

Asylum-seekers relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme (as of 31 August 2016).

**25**

UNHCR staff posted at key arrival points.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 21,294 refugees and migrants arrived to Italy by sea in August 2016. This number is almost on a par with sea arrivals in the same period of 2015, when 22,610 reached the Italian shores. Main nationalities among sea arrivals are Nigerian, Eritrean, Sudanese, Gambian, Ivorian and Guinean.
- At the end of August 2016, the total number of sea arrivals stood at 115,068, compared to 116,149 in the first eight months of 2015. This corresponds to a 0.93% decrease compared to last year.
- Between 01 January and 31 August 2016, 16,863 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived to Italy by sea. This corresponds to 15% of all sea arrivals in the first eight months of the year, a significant increase compared to 2015, when 7% of all registered arrivals were UASC.
- At the end of August 2016, 72,470 asylum applications were lodged in Italy. Since the beginning of the year, over 60,000 cases were determined by the 47 Territorial Eligibility Commissions in Italy.
- In August 2016, 3,733 potential relocation candidates arrived by sea, while 68 asylum-seekers were relocated to the Netherlands, Slovenia and Malta under the EU relocation scheme. Since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council decisions on relocation, 1,020 persons (2.6% of the 39,600 target) have been relocated from Italy.

Sea Arrivals 2016 to Italy per region of disembarkation

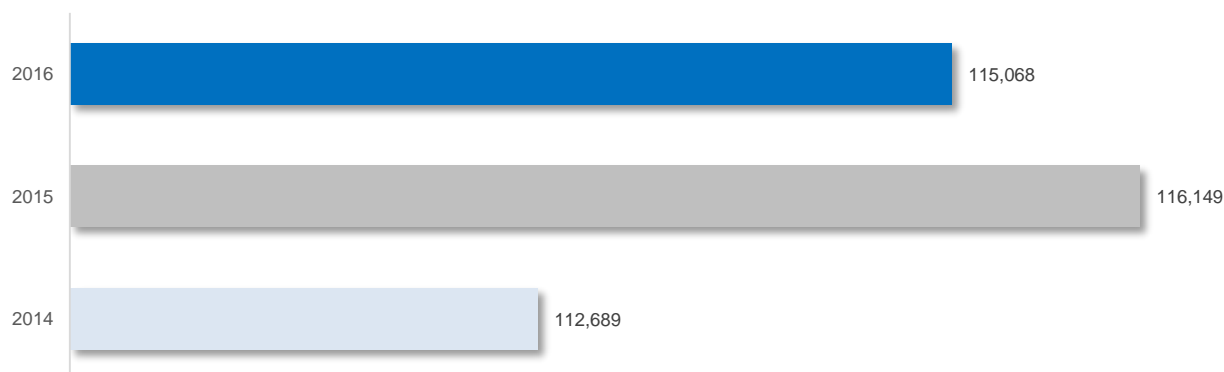


<sup>1</sup> Sources: UNHCR, Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, EC. Unless stated otherwise, figures reflect the period up to 31 August.

<sup>2</sup> Figures include Eritrean, Syrian and the Central African Republic nationals as of 31 August 2016 and Iraqi nationals as of 8 July 2016

# SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

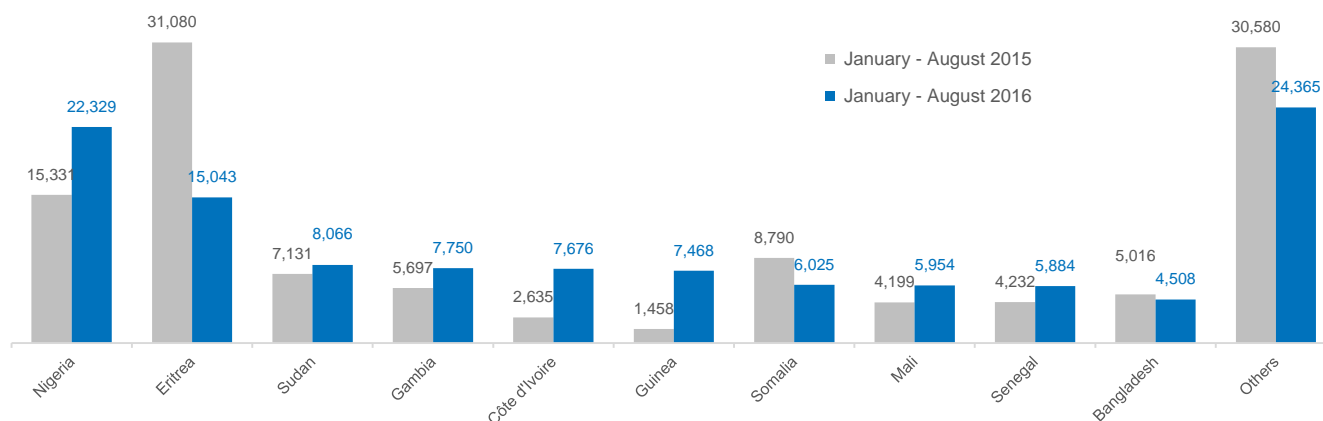
Figure 1. Sea arrivals | Jan 2014 – Jan 2016



In August 2016, 21,294 persons arrived to Italy by sea. Numbers of monthly sea arrivals are slightly lower, but consistent with those registered in June (22,731) and July (23,552). They also remain almost equal to the arrivals by sea in the same period last year (22,610 in August 2015). **Between 01 January and 31 August 2016, the total number of refugees and migrants arrived by sea is 115,068**, corresponding to a 0.93% decrease compared to the same period of 2015. Therefore, the decrease in persons using the Eastern Mediterranean route has no impact on the arrival numbers in the Central Mediterranean region that can be observed presently. New arrivals were disembarked in the main ports of southern Italy: approximately 30% of them were disembarked in the four operational hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto and Trapani), while some 70% arrived in other sea ports. UNHCR staff is present during all phases of disembarkation procedures, both at hotspots and at non-hotspot sites. UNHCR field teams (25 staff) are present in various locations in southern Italy and provide support to the authorities, delivering information on international protection and the EU relocation scheme as well as identifying people with specific needs. Upon disembarkation, UNHCR staff provide new arrivals with leaflets on international protection and later conduct face-to-face informative sessions: preliminary information is delivered immediately after new arrivals are pre-identified, while in-depth information is provided once persons have been fingerprinted.

Between January and August 2016, 3,169 refugees and migrants are estimated to have died or were reported missing whilst trying to reach European shores. Last year was the deadliest on record, with 3,771 persons losing their lives or going missing in the Mediterranean.

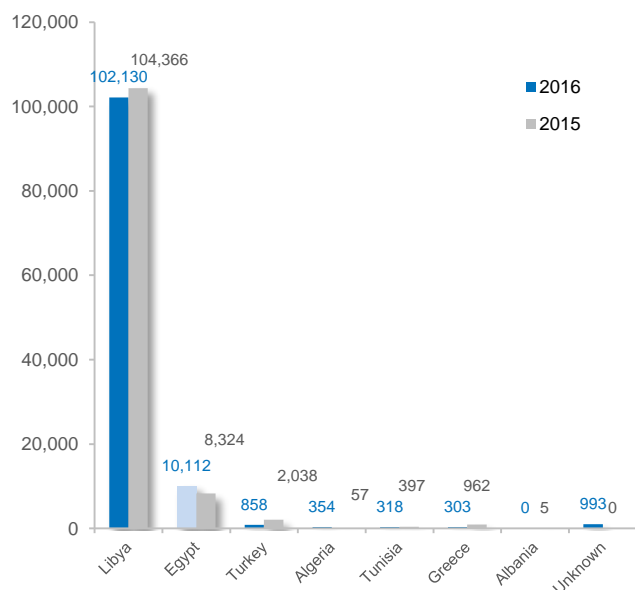
Figure 2. Top 10 nationalities of sea arrivals | January-August, 2015 and 2016



Between 01 January and 31 August 2016 **persons originating from over 60 different countries arrived to Italy** by sea. During the first eight months of the year nearly 80% of sea arrivals came from just ten countries: Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan, the Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Somalia, Mali, Senegal and Bangladesh. Compared to last year, there is a considerable **increase in the number of Nigerians** reaching Italian shores, now accounting for 19% of all sea arrivals. The numbers of Ivoirians and Guineans also increased considerably (plus 191% and 412%, respectively). On the other hand, a decreasing trend concerns Eritreans, Somalis and Syrians. The number of Eritrean nationals arrived by sea by the end of August 2016 (15,043) has almost halved compared to the first eight months of 2015 (31,080), while Somali arrivals decreased by 31% this year. Only 577 Syrians reached Italy between January and August 2016: almost half of these (249) arrived in the month of August. This is far below the 6,710 Syrians disembarked in the first eight months of 2015. According to 1Q 2016 EUROSTAT, around 40% of all sea arrivals to Italy would be entitled to a form of protection if the average EU recognitions rates are applied.

# ASYLUM PROCEDURES IN ITALY

**Figure 3. Sea arrivals by country of departure | January – August, 2015 and 2016**



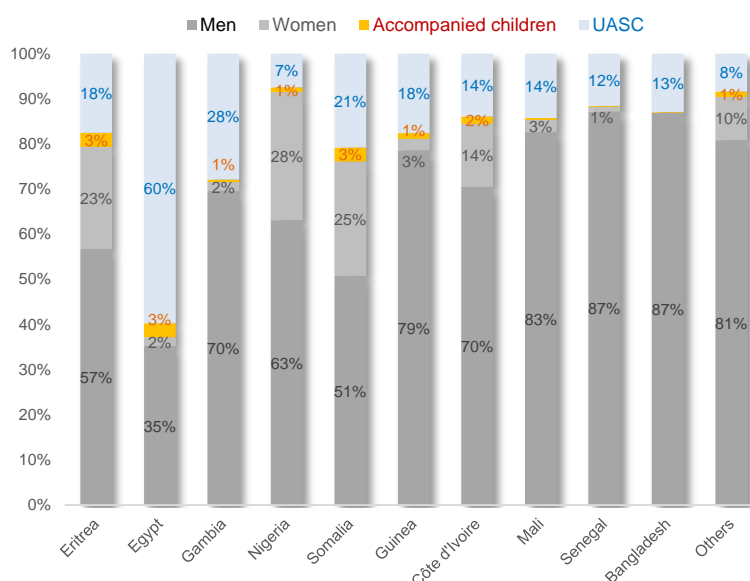
The vast **majority of sea arrivals still leave from Libya** (88%): while Sabratha was the main departure point in the earlier part of the year, a shift has been noted more recently towards routes previously in use, namely Zwara and Tripoli. Abuse and ill treatment during transit in Libya continue to be reported, committed by smugglers, security forces and armed groups.

Approximately 9% of those arrived by sea so far this year departed instead from Egypt. Although persons report that the Egypt route is considered safer than coming via Libya, the total number of persons crossing from Egypt to Italy does not indicate a new trend.

During the month of August 2016, an increasing recourse to small boats carrying relatively low numbers of passengers was noted: persons reported that this is considered safer when crossing at sea. Numerous SAR operations were conducted in the Central Mediterranean in August, with a peak towards the end of the month: 40% (8,601 persons) of all August sea arrivals were rescued at the end of the month and disembarked on 30 and 31 August.

In August 2016, a number of autonomous sea arrivals was also observed with small groups reaching southern Italy having departed from Algeria, Greece, Tunisia and Turkey.

**Figure 4. Top 10 nationalities of UASC sea arrivals: breakdown by age and gender | January-August 2016\***



Men continue to represent the vast majority (70%) among sea arrivals, in line with trends registered in past years. Between January and August 2016, adult women account for 13.7% of the total. This is equal to last year's trend, when women were 13.5% of all sea arrivals during the first eight months of the year. However, gender and age profiles vary significantly among different national groups. Higher proportions of women are observed among Nigerian arrivals (women account for 28% of the total), as well as among nationals of Somalia (25%), Cameroon (25%), Ethiopia (24%), Democratic Republic of Congo (24%), Eritrea (22%) and Iraq (21%).

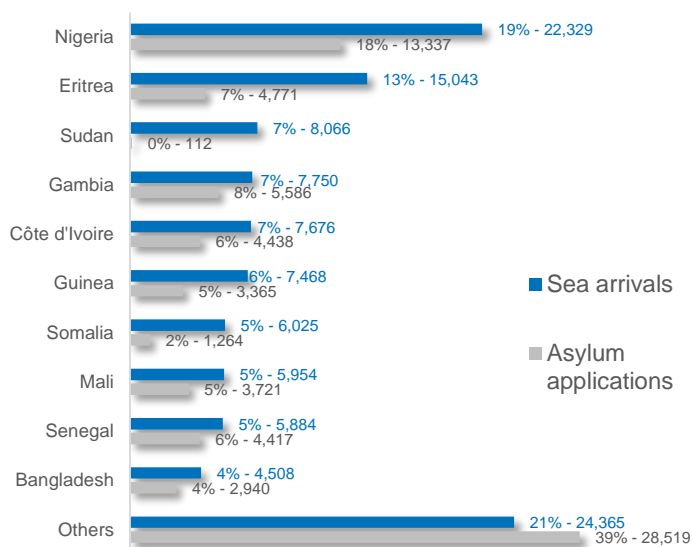
During post disembarkation procedures, UNHCR staff support authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, particularly persons with medical conditions, pregnant women and unaccompanied children. UNHCR continues to work to strengthen the authorities' capacity to identify other persons with specific needs, such as victims of trauma and survivors of torture or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

A significant number of sea arrivals this year were UASC: between January and August 2016, **15%** (16,863 individuals) of those arrived by sea **were UASC**, a sharp increase compared to 7% in the whole of 2015. In August, of 21,294 total sea arrivals, 3,158 (14%) were UASC. The three main countries of origin of UASC arrived in 2016 are Eritrea, Egypt and the Gambia. The total number of Eritrean UASC arrived so far this year is comparable to last year's, but the UASC proportion among Eritrean arrivals rose considerably (from 7.8% in January-August 2015 to 17% in January – August 2016). The numbers of both Gambian and Egyptian UASC increased significantly compared to the same period of 2015. Notably, 59.7% of all Egyptian sea arrivals this year are UASC.

Two UNHCR child protection experts currently work with the authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception facilities.

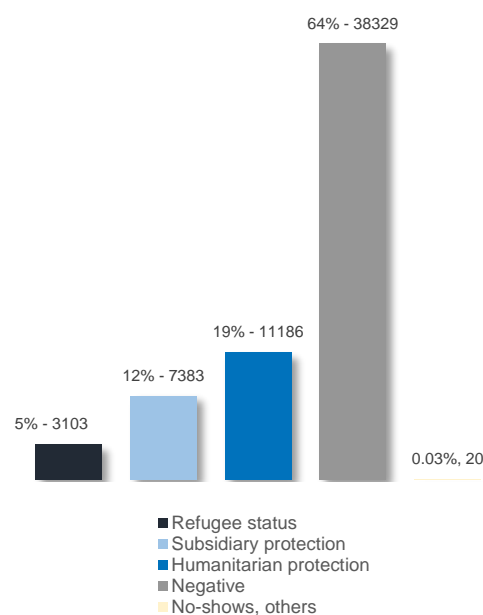
# ASYLUM PROCEDURES IN ITALY

**Figure 5. Asylum applications in comparison to top nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Aug 2016\***



\*Asylum application figures also include asylum-seekers who do not arrive by sea. Furthermore, application processing times can vary. Therefore, the chart merely provides an **indicative comparison**.

**Figure 6. Outcome of RSD decisions in Italy | Jan – Aug 2016**

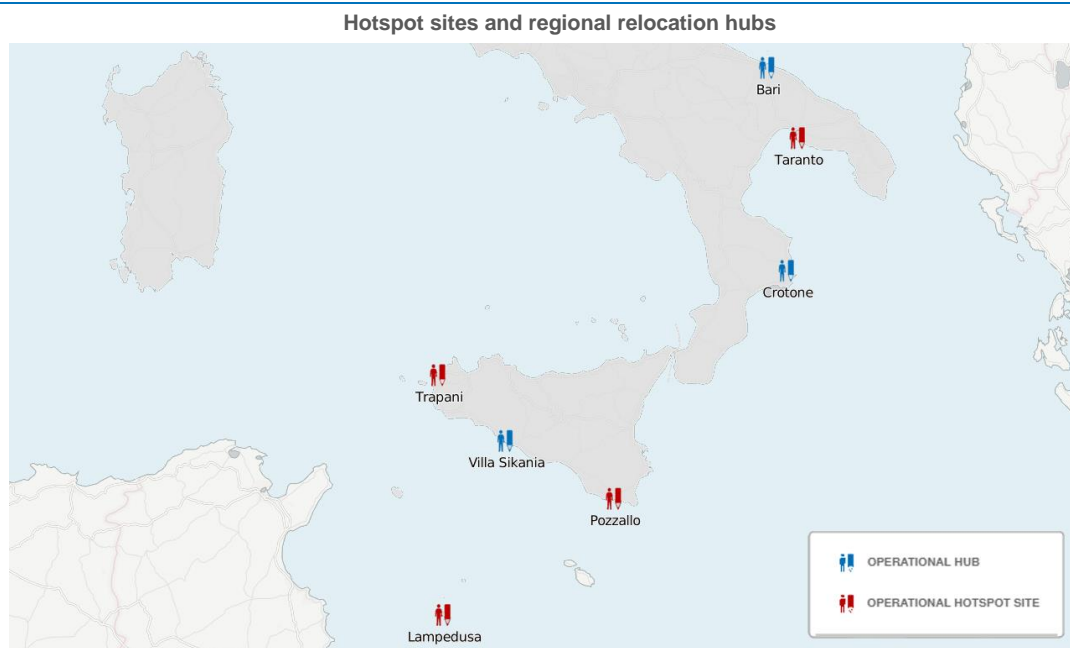


**So far in 2016, over 72,000 persons lodged an asylum application in Italy.** Among the main countries of origin of asylum-seekers are Nigeria, Pakistan, The Gambia, Senegal, Eritrea and Côte d'Ivoire. Top nationalities of asylum-seekers do not necessarily coincide with main sea arrival nationalities: Pakistani nationals, in particular, constitute the second largest group among asylum-seekers currently in Italy but are not numerous among sea arrivals, as the vast majority of them enter Italy via land, most likely through the northern borders with Austria and Slovenia. According to the latest information available (22 July), **asylum applications rose by some 60% in 2016**, compared to last year. A number of factors might have caused the increase in asylum applications this year. Onward departures across Italy's northern borders appear increasingly difficult due to tighter controls by both Italy and neighbouring countries. Therefore, the majority of those arriving by sea now remain and register their applications in Italy. This is supported also by the hotspot approach, which strengthens identification and fingerprinting. UNHCR monitors admission procedures at border crossing points, focusing in particular on vulnerable groups such as UASC.

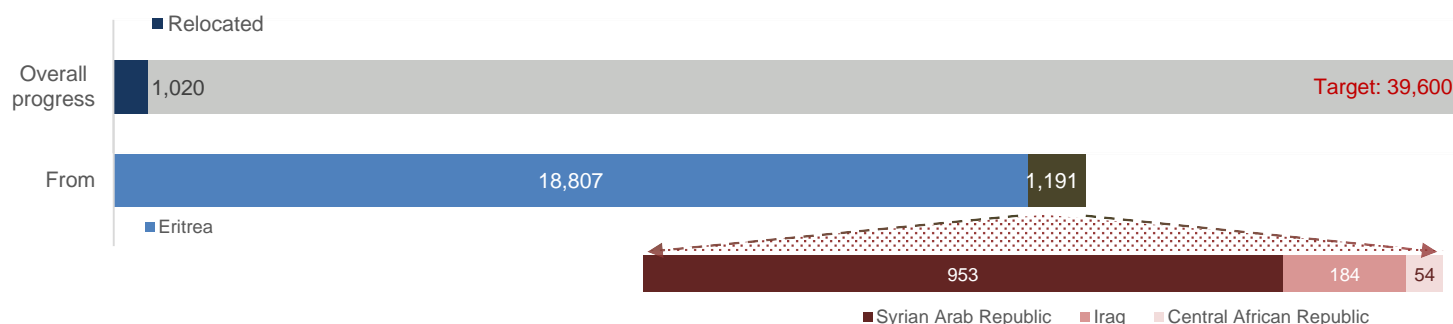
UNHCR participates in first instance Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, with staff members posted in the 47 operational decentralized Territorial Eligibility Commissions and providing advice on the use of eligibility criteria, procedural standards and country of origin information. Between 01 January and 22 July 2016, **the Territorial Commissions determined over 60,000 asylum applications**, reflecting a considerable increase compared to last year, as 71,117 first instance decisions were taken in the whole of 2015. According to the latest data (22 July) 5% among asylum applicants were recognized as refugees, while 13% were granted subsidiary protection. Humanitarian protection was given to 18% of all applicants: this is based on national legislation and is granted when serious humanitarian grounds or constitutional and international obligations arise, such as those in Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. 64 % of all asylum application were rejected.

The quality monitoring project developed by the National Commission on the Right of Asylum, in cooperation with UNHCR, continues in 2016, with a view to develop recommendations to strengthen the quality of RSD procedures in Italy. Furthermore, in 2016 the National Commission, in cooperation with UNHCR, developed a project on trafficking in the context of asylum and RSD, with the aim of developing Standard Operating Procedures for the early identification and adequate protection of potential victims of trafficking. Together with the Ministry of Interior and the National Commission for the Right of Asylum, UNHCR continues to be involved in the working group on the reform of the asylum procedure, which was set up in October 2015.

# HOTSPOT AND RELOCATION



**Figure 7. Overall progress on relocation and nationality of potential candidates for relocation arrived by sea| Oct 2015 – Aug 2016**



The hotspot approach foresees that new arrivals are identified and fingerprinted, with a view to strengthen the authorities' capacity to identify all persons reaching Italian shores. Out of the six hotspots originally foreseen in the Road Map developed by the Italian Ministry of Interior, four (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto and Trapani) are currently operational, with a total official capacity of over 1,400 places. Furthermore three regional hubs (Bari, Crotona and Villa Sikania) have been set up and host relocation candidates: they have a total official capacity of over 2,200 places. Representatives of European border agency Frontex, EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Europol and Eurojust are providing operational support to the Italian authorities inside these hotspots.

In 2016, UNHCR participated in an ad hoc Ministry of Interior's working group supporting the Italian authorities in the drafting of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be applied by competent authorities in the hotspots with the aim to ensure that access to the territory and to the asylum procedure are granted in accordance with national and international standards. The SOPs were published in May 2016: UNHCR monitors their implementation in the hotspots and advocates for their application also in other disembarkation sites.

In close cooperation with EASO, UNHCR provides potential relocation candidates with counselling service and information. As of August 2016, candidates eligible for relocation include citizens of Syria, Eritrea, the Central African Republic, Seychelles, Dominica, Bahrain, Laos and Saudi Arabia. Iraqi nationals were eligible for relocation until 8 July 2016, but have since been excluded from the scheme as they no longer meet the 75% recognition rate threshold provided for by the September 2015 EU Council Decisions. Based on the latest available EU data, the average recognition rate for Iraqis has fallen to 73%. UNHCR calls upon the EU and Member States to revisit the eligibility criteria by lowering the threshold for relocation candidates to include additional nationalities likely in need of protection. While 3,733 new potential relocation candidates arrived in the month of August, only 68 persons were relocated to the Netherlands, Slovenia and Malta, bringing the total of relocations from Italy since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council Decisions to 1,020 (2.6% of the 39,600 target to be met by the end of September 2017). Since September 2015, some 20,000 potential candidates reached Italian shores, while Italy received 2,809 pledges from European countries committed to the relocation scheme.

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