

Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe

Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated

Overview of Trends
January - September 2017



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Over
25,300
children

arrived in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain between January and September 2017, of whom more than 14,800 (58%) were unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Arrivals in the third quarter of 2017 increased by 33% compared to Q2 2017 (14,800 vs. 11,100).



More than
13,800
unaccompanied and separated children

92% of all children who arrived to Italy through the Central Mediterranean Route were UASC.



Over
9,800
children

benefited from the EU relocation scheme in Greece and Italy by the end of September 2017, which is more than the total number of children relocated last year. Among them, 329 were UASC.



Over
60%
of all child claims in Europe

were recorded in Germany (67,400), Italy (16,000) and France (14,000) in the first nine months of 2017.

Arrivals to Europe between January and September 2017¹

Between January and September 2017, 25,379 children arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, of whom 14,839 (58%) were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC)². Arrival of UASC increased by 25% compared to the first half of 2017 (11,918).

Greece

Between January and September 2017, 7,257³ children arrived to Greece by sea, including 838 (11%) UASC.⁴ While this is 88% decrease compared to the same period in 2016 (62,136), the number of children arrived in the third quarter of 2017 (4,237) exceeded that of children who arrived in the first half of the year (3,020). This also included a sharp spike in the number of UASC registered in the third quarter (two-fold increase compared to the first half of 2017, when 411 UASC were registered).

The majority of children arriving to Greece by sea were from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait.

Italy

Among the 15,140 children who arrived to Italy between January and September 2017, 92% (13,867) were unaccompanied or separated. This is a 27% decrease compared to the same period in 2016 (19,000). The smaller numbers of UASC arriving this year is mainly due to the overall drop in the number of people crossing the Central Mediterranean since July 2017. Most of them originated from

Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia and Bangladesh.

Bulgaria

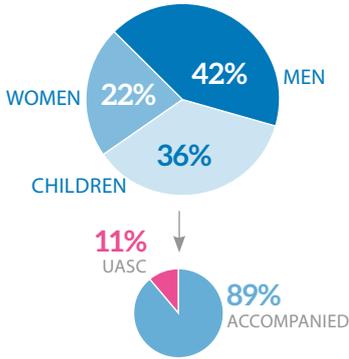
Between January and September 2017, 552 children were intercepted at border crossing points and within the territory of the country.⁵ Among those, 28% were unaccompanied or separated children (154) which is 91% decrease compared to the same period in 2016. Most children were from Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan.

Spain

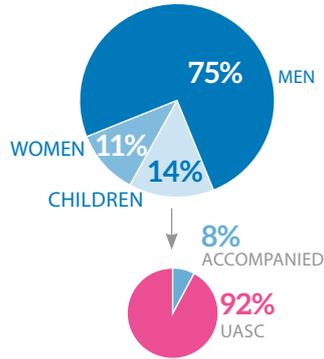
Between January and September 2017, 2,430 children arrived to Spain by sea and land, most commonly from Morocco (962), Syrian Arab Republic (740) and Algeria (218). Due to the increase in arrivals to Spain in the third quarter of 2017, the number of child arrivals also increased by 44% compared to the first half of 2017 (995). Data on unaccompanied and separated children is not available from the Spanish Ministry of Interior.

Demographic of Arrivals, Including Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children

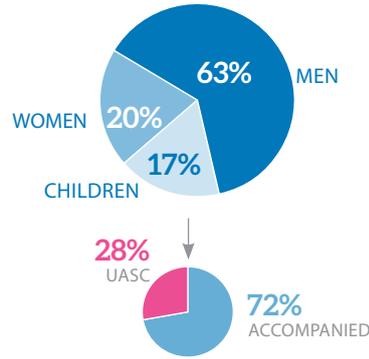
Greece



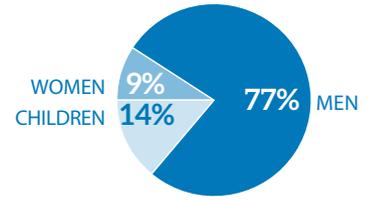
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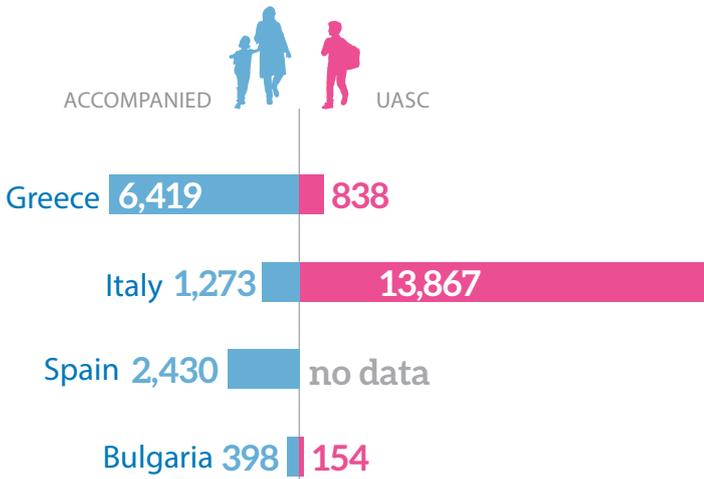
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Spain



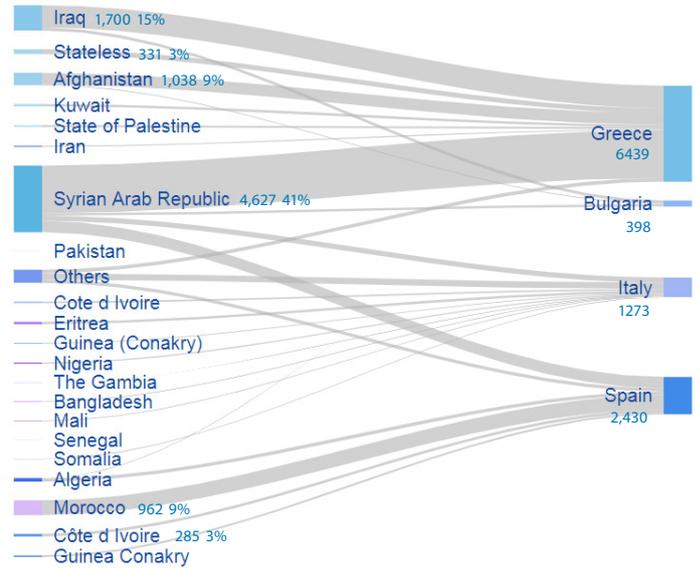
Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival



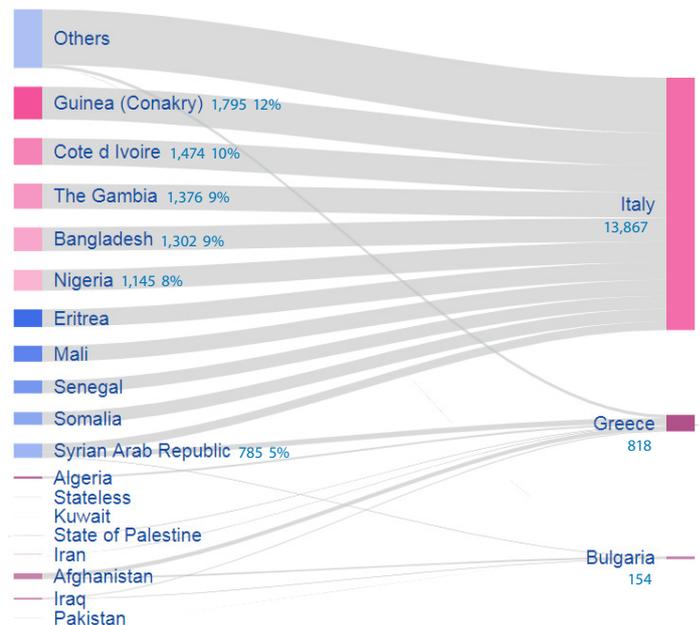
Source: Hellenic Police, EKKA, Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria State Agency for Refugees, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Spanish Ministry of Interior.

Nationality of Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

Accompanied Children by Country of Origin and Arrival

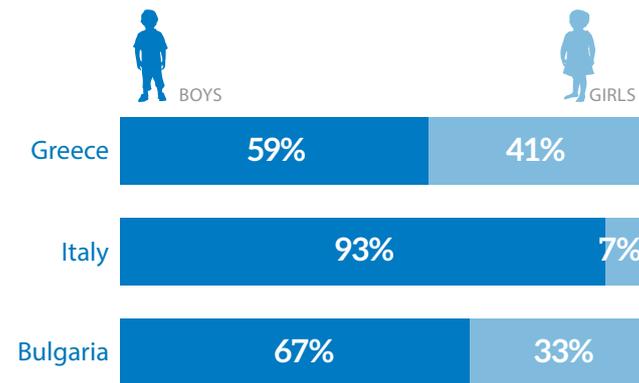


UASC by Country of Origin and Arrival



Gender Breakdown of All Children by Country of Arrival

In all countries of arrival, the proportion of boys compared to girls remains higher (on average 7 boys for every 3 girl).



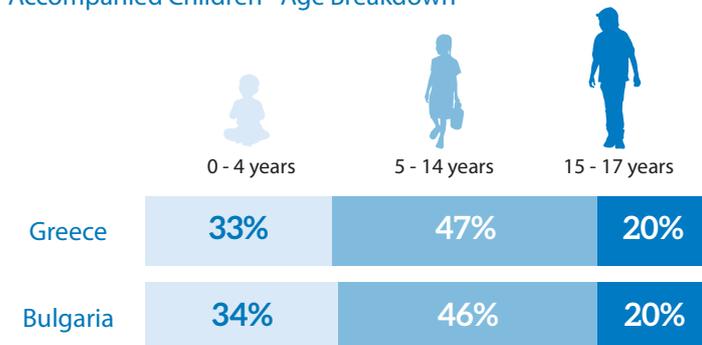
For Italy, the calculation is based on the estimated 18,491 UASC accommodated in the government shelters according to the Ministry of Labour and not the total number of UASC who arrived in between January and September 2017.

Source: [Hellenic Police, EKKA, Italian Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee](#)

Age Breakdown of Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

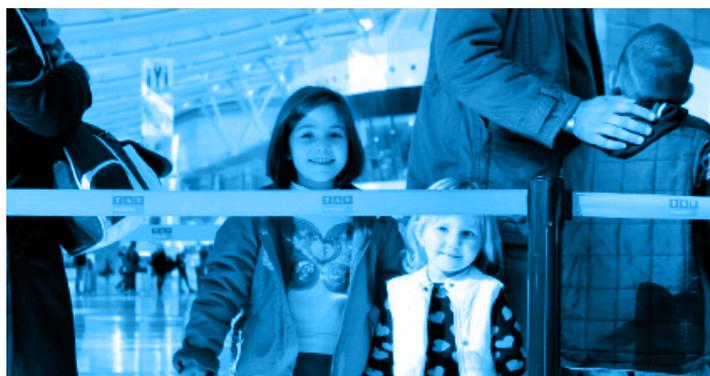
Among the 6,837 accompanied children who arrived to Greece and Bulgaria, 34% were between 0 and 4 years old, 47% were between 5 and 14 years old and 20% were between 15 and 17 years old. An age breakdown for accompanied children in Italy is not available, but their proportion is very low, representing only 8% of children arriving through the Central Mediterranean Route between January and September 2017.

Accompanied Children - Age Breakdown



Source: [Hellenic Police, EKKA, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees](#)

The majority of UASC who arrived to Italy, Greece and Bulgaria between January and September 2017 were boys between 15 and 17 years old (92% overall).



Reception on Arrival in 2017*

Greece

- An estimated 19,000 children are in Greece. Of them, 55% are in urban areas (apartments, hotels, shelters for UASC, etc.), comparable to June 2017; 27% are in accommodation sites and 1% are in safe zones for UASC. A further 17% are in Reception and Identification Centres - a 70% increase since June 2017.
- In total, 228 unaccompanied children are in Reception and Identification Centres and 106 are in protective custody/detention (a slight increase since June 2017).
- 1,096 UASC are in shelters for UASC, with an additional 1,652 on the waiting list for shelter (a 36% increase since June).

Italy

- 18,491 UASC are present in shelters for UASC, run by State authorities and nonprofit entities. This is only 4% more compared to first half of 2017 (17,864), although the number includes UASC who arrived in Italy both prior to and during 2017. 75% of the UASC in the shelters are between 15 and 17 years old.

Bulgaria

- 482 children, including UASC, are accommodated in reception centres in Sofia and southern Bulgaria, a 35 % decrease since June 2017 and almost three times less compared to the same period in 2016.
- All persons intercepted, including children and UASC, continue to be routinely detained until they claim asylum. During the third quarter of 2017, children spent an average of 7 days in detention before being transferred to a reception centre (down from 10 days during the second quarter of the year).

Serbia

- A total of 1,570 children are present in the country, almost 987 less than in June 2017. Children comprise 41% of the total number of refugees/migrants in the country, 92% of whom are accommodated in state reception and accommodation centres, including 240 unaccompanied and separated children.

Hungary

- Between January and September, Hungarian authorities admitted 2,160 asylum seekers from Serbia through Röske and Tompa transit zones. More than a half of all asylum seekers were children (54%).
- On average, admitted asylum seekers stay for 35 days in these closed type premises until they receive a decision on their claim or decide to return voluntarily to Serbia.

The reception systems still vary greatly in quality across and within countries, sometimes even posing protection risks. The large number of children who are not in shelters have either moved onwards or found themselves destitute on the streets or in informal accommodation.

* Figures reflect the situation as of end of September 2017
Sources: [EKKA-Greece, UNICEF, Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee](#)

Asylum Applications and Decisions

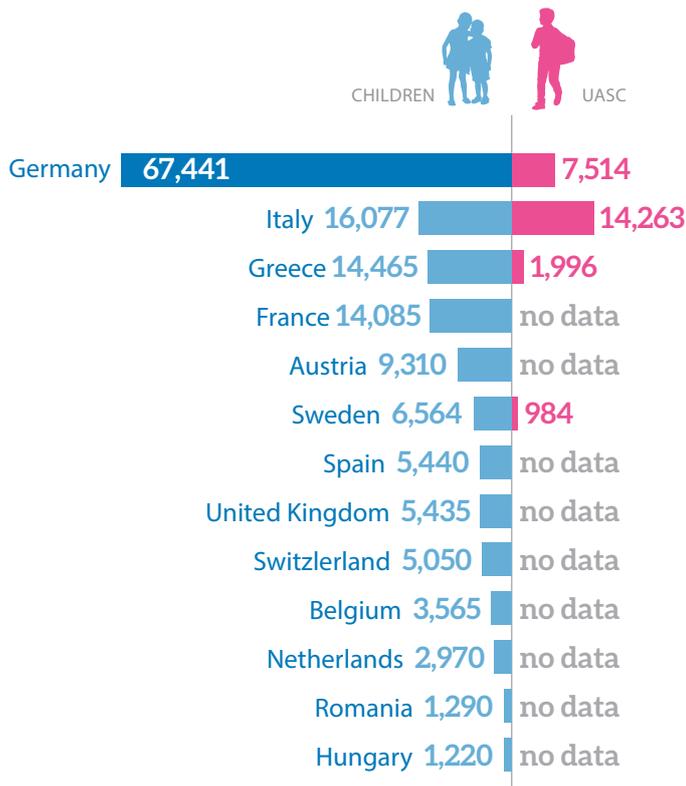
Between January and September 2017, European countries recorded 161,087 asylum claims by children, including 56,717 newly registered asylum claims in Q3 2017. Children still make up a third of all asylum seekers across Europe. Nationalities of child asylum seekers remain consistent with previous reports, as half of them came from just four countries: Syria (26%), Afghanistan (11%), Iraq (10%) and Eritrea (5%). Slightly over 40% of all asylum-seeking children are girls.

Germany continues to be the top destination for refugee and migrant children, registering over 40% of all child asylum applications in 2017 (67,441 children). Almost 60% of them are young children between 0 and 5 years old and another 11% (7,514) are UASC.

Other countries that received large numbers of child asylum seekers in 2017 include Italy (16,077), Greece (14,465), France (14,085), Austria (9,310), Sweden (6,564), Spain (5,440), the United Kingdom (5,435) and Switzerland (5,050).

Compared to the same period in 2016, however, the number of children applying for asylum in the top receiving destination countries (Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom and Switzerland) is decreasing. At the same time, the number of asylum seeking children in Spain, Italy, France and Greece has marked a notable increase. For example, the number of children seeking asylum in Spain during the third quarter of 2017 rose almost four times compared to the same period in 2016, while Italy, France and Greece marked 60%, 12% and 5% increase respectively.

Asylum Applications Lodged by Children, including Unaccompanied and Separated Children between January and September 2017 – by Country of Asylum*



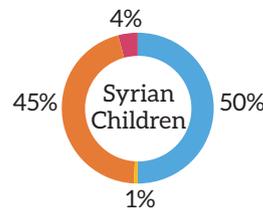
Between January and September 2017, a total of 226,510 decisions on asylum claims by children have been issued. Of them, 65% were positive and 35% rejected (proportion of type of decisions for Q3 is consistent with the first two quarters of the 2017). Among children with positive decisions, 51% received refugee status, 32% were granted subsidiary protection and 17% received humanitarian status.

The trend of granting subsidiary protection and humanitarian status continued in Q3 2017, particularly for children from Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Bangladesh.

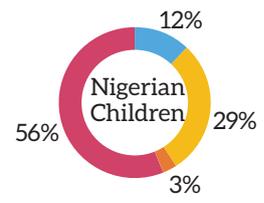
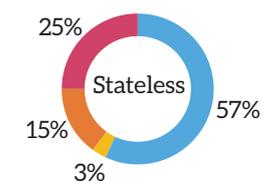
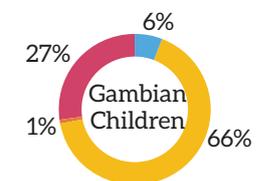
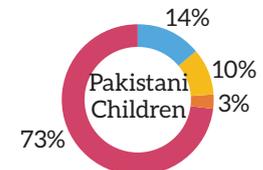
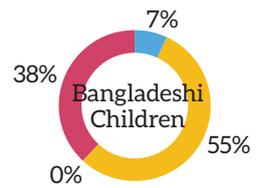
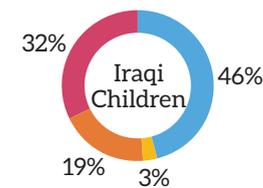
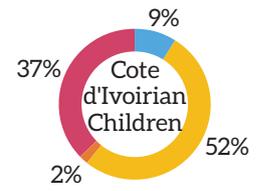
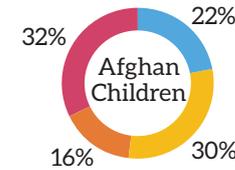
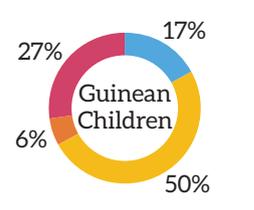
Moreover, many children saw their asylum claims rejected, particularly Pakistanis (73%), Nigerians (56%), Bangladeshis (38%), Afghans (32%), Iraqis (32%) and Syrians (4%) and Eritreans (5%).

Decisions on Child Asylum Applications

Main nationalities of arrivals in Greece



Main nationalities of arrivals in Italy



* The difference in numbers of arrivals and asylum applications can be explained by the long waiting times before people can claim asylum, backlogs in national asylum systems, as well as the fact that applications can be submitted by persons who have arrived previously or did not necessarily come through the Mediterranean Routes.

Relocation

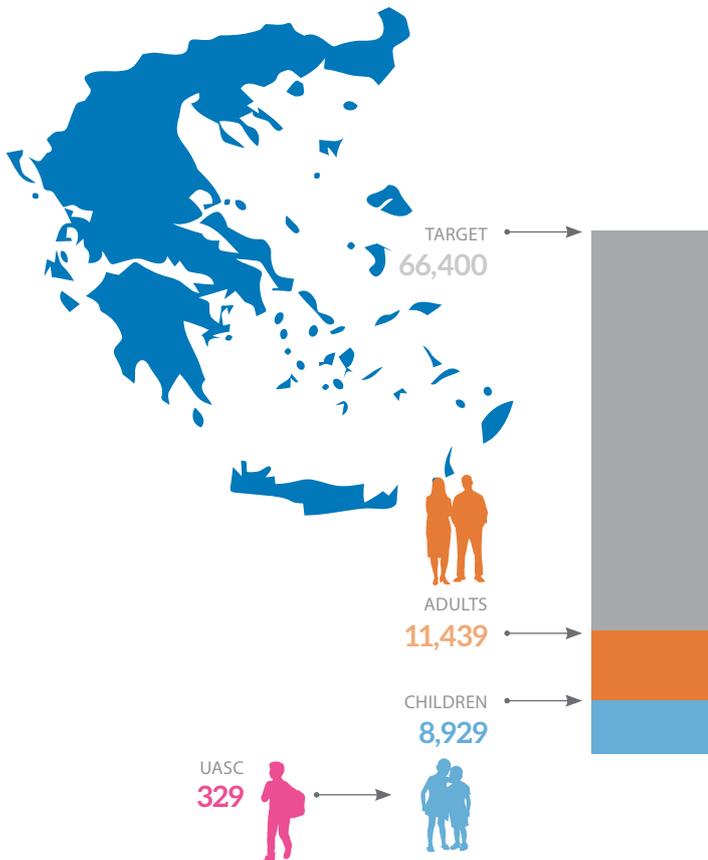
Since the launch of the Emergency Relocation Scheme, a total of 29,635 refugees and migrants, including 9,840 children, benefited from relocation arrangements in Greece and Italy. Among them there were only 380 UASC (329 from Greece and 51 from Italy).

Most children relocated this year from Greece were transferred to Germany (23%), France (20%) and Sweden (8%) while children relocated from Italy were transferred mainly to Germany (31%), the Netherlands (14%), Switzerland (12%) and Sweden (11%).

Although the number of relocated UASC remains low with just 213 UASC benefitting from the scheme between January and September 2017, this is 29% increase compared to the 166 UASC relocated in the whole of 2016. During Q3 2017, most of UASC were relocated to the Netherlands (86), Finland (30), Norway (22), Belgium (17), Switzerland (14) and Germany (10).

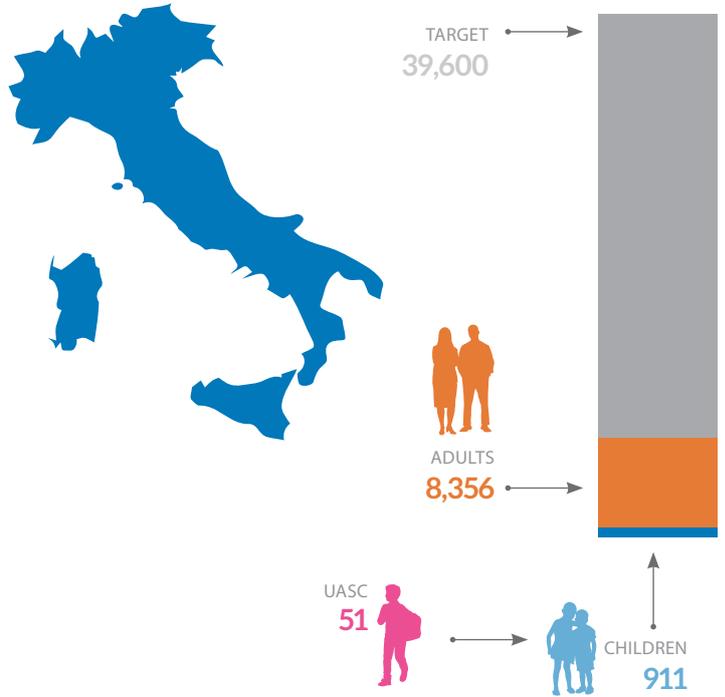
Greece

Out of the 20,368⁶ people, who were relocated from Greece to other EU Member States since October 2015, 8,929 (44%) were children, including 329 UASC. When looking at the dynamic of relocations in 2017, the majority of transfers happened in the third quarter with 2,019 relocations taking place between July and September this year. This represents a 9% increase compared to the second quarter, when 1,872 children were relocated, and 15% increase compared to the period between January and March (1,761 relocations).



Italy

As of September 2017, only 9,267 refugees and migrants were relocated from Italy, including 911 children, out of whom 51 were UASC. In the third quarter of 2017, 238 children benefited from the relocation scheme in Italy, which is more than the number of children relocated in 2015 and 2016 all together.



Returns from Greece to Turkey

Of the total returnees (1,360) from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement since the start of 2016 until end of October 2017, 76 (5%) were children. All of them were returned with their families.

Assisted with Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) to Children and UASC⁷

Between January and September 2017, IOM provided AVRR support to 55,577 migrants (25% less than the same period in 2016). 25% of migrants availing AVRR support were children, including 4% UASC. Nearly 73% of the AVRR beneficiaries returned from the European Economic Area and Switzerland. Among these, more than 60% returned from Germany.

Within the same period, almost 12,900 migrants received assistance to return voluntarily from the European Economic Area and Switzerland. More than 27% of them were children, among whom 2.5% were UASC.

Source: Europe Resettlement 2016, UNHCR

Protection risks for children arriving to Europe

Central Mediterranean Route: children are at higher risk of being exploited during the journey compared to adults- 88% children vs. 75% adults responded positively to at least one human trafficking and other exploitative practices indicators from the DTM's Flow Monitoring Surveys conducted in Italy between April and July 2017.

- Average age of children who responded positively is 16,5 and they have spent more than 6 months in transit before landing in Italy.
- 93% of children who engaged in secondary migration, after spending more than a year in country different than their origin country, said they have experienced at least one situation which can indicate exposure to human trafficking and other exploitative practices.
- 88% of interviewed children reported having experienced physical violence of any sort during their journey, and another 32% reported witnessing instances during their journey when someone travelling with them has been threatened with sexual violence.

Eastern Mediterranean Route: 8,5% interviewed children who arrived through this route responded positively to at least one of the indicators related to human trafficking and other exploitative practices

- Children reported travelling alone more often than adults, (56% vs. 37%), very often with scarce financial resources, which puts them at particularly high risk hidden behind the cheaper but more dangerous deals with mediators, often involving violent behavior by smugglers or other travel companions.
- Survey shows that travelling with a group of non-family members is associated with a higher share of positive responses among children (12% compared to 8% of those who travelled alone)
- 11% of interviewed children reported being forcibly returned at least once after having tried to move on from the country where survey was conducted (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)

Source: IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys Analysis (FMS)

Limitation of available data on Children and UASC:

There is no comprehensive data on arrivals (both adults and children) in Europe, especially by land and air, as such movements are largely irregular and involve smuggling networks, which are difficult to track. If collected, data is rarely disaggregated by nationalities, risk category, gender or age.

Reliable data on the number of UASC either arriving to, or currently residing in, different European countries is often unavailable. The number of asylum applications filed by UASC is used to provide an indication of trends but does not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the caseload due to backlogs in national asylum systems, onward irregular movements or not applying for asylum at all. In addition, due to different definitions and national procedures and practices, collecting accurate data on separated children specifically is very challenging (e.g. separated children being registered as either accompanied or unaccompanied). It should also be noted that complete data for the period January to September 2017 on children and UASC asylum applications for all EU member states was not available on the Eurostat website at the time when this factsheet was released.

Sources: Hellenic Police, Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Spanish Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, BAMF-Germany, IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF

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Endnotes:

1. Data on arrivals is partial due to the large scale of irregular movements and reflects only sea arrivals for Greece and Italy. Data for Spain include both sea and land arrivals.
2. Separated children are children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. Unaccompanied children are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. (IASC)
3. Arrival figures for Greece are collected in the framework of UNHCR border activities and are provided by Hellenic Coastguard and Hellenic Police.
4. During the same period of time, a total of 8,987 referrals were made to the Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) based on children identified on islands and mainland Greece, including near the land border with Turkey between Jan 2016 and Sept 2017. source
5. During the same period of time, 905 children applied for asylum in Bulgaria, of which 370 were UASC. The higher number of asylum applications is due mainly to the fact that there is no systematic registration of people arriving in the country, and some children may have claimed asylum in reception centres without being intercepted or identified by national law enforcement authorities at border crossing points or within the territory of the country.
6. This number reflects all relocations since the launch of the EU relocation scheme in late 2015.
7. The data provided here is provisional and should therefore be considered as an estimation.

About the factsheet

This factsheet is jointly produced by UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM with the aim to support evidence-based decision-making and advocacy on issues related to refugee and migrant children.

The document provides an overview of the situation in Europe with regards to refugee and migrant children (accompanied and UASC). It compiles key child-related data based on available official sources: arrival, asylum applications, asylum decisions, profiling of arrivals, relocation from Greece and Italy under the EU relocation scheme, as well as returns from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement.

The present factsheet covers the period January to September 2017 and is produced on quarterly basis to provide up-to-date information on refugee and migrant children, including unaccompanied and separated children.

Jointly compiled and produced by: