

# EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



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Sumy, Ukraine- Teacher and psychologist Olena Abayeva, 38, plays with her son at the centre, World of Happy Children she opened with support from UNHCR.

## TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

Between 1 January and 31 October, 104,300 refugees and migrants arrived via the three Mediterranean routes to Europe compared to almost 157,700 arrivals in the same period in 2017. This marks a 34% reduction from the previous year's arrival figures, showing a continued declining trend of the overall arrivals numbers to Europe. So far in 2018, October has seen the most arrivals in a single month with over 16,310 people reaching Europe. Figures from previous years show that arrivals in October tend to peak in comparison with other autumn months. Most confirmed arrivals so far this year have been to Spain, with some 55,340 arriving by land and sea compared to almost over 40,500 in Greece and some 21,960 in Italy. Primary nationalities amongst arrivals in 2018 so far were Syrians, Guineans, and Moroccans.

**CYPRUS:** Some 460 people arrived to Cyprus by sea thus far in 2018. Syrians make up the majority of those arriving to Cyprus.

**GREECE:** Nearly 41,300 refugees and migrants have arrived by land and sea in Greece with 67% arriving by sea so far in 2018. Arrivals by land and sea this year have increased by around 44% compared to those who arrived in the same period in 2017. Arrivals in October increased slightly with some 4,100 people reaching Greek shores compared to 4,000 from the previous month, keeping a consistent average daily number of 130 sea arrivals. Some 2,650 people were intercepted or rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard in the Aegean in October with an average daily rate of 95. At the Greek land border in Evros, a total of over 13,700 people have crossed into Greece this year. Some 1,500 crossing during October are on par with the 1,400 whom arrived through Evros the previous month.

Mediterranean  
**104,300**  
 arrivals in 2018 <sup>1</sup>

**1,987**  
 estimated dead/missing in 2018 <sup>1</sup>

**Greece<sup>2</sup>**  
**41,300**  
 3,197 3,960 4,073  
 Aug Sep Oct

**Italy**  
**21,900**  
 1,491 947 1,007  
 Aug Sep Oct

**Spain<sup>2</sup>**  
**53,100**  
 7,022 8,568 10,912  
 Aug Sep Oct

**Cyprus**  
**460**  
 103 216 67  
 Aug Sep Oct

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

Jan-Oct 2018: **496,300**  
 Jan-Dec 2017: **819,000**  
 Jan-Dec 2016: **1,323,000**  
 Jan-Dec 2015: **1,471,000**

<sup>1</sup> [data.unhcr.org/mediterranean](http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean) as of 31 October 2018.

<sup>2</sup> 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 September and October 2018. All data is provisional and last updated in November 2018); UNHCR for Eastern Europe (as of 30 June 2018), Turkey (as of 31 May 2018) and South Eastern Europe (as of 30 September 2018).

# 34,705

**Relocated in total** <sup>4</sup>
<sup>4</sup> Source: [European Commission](#), as of 30 October 2018.

 from **Greece**  

## 21,999

(33% of 66,400)

 from **Italy**  

## 12,706

(32% of 39,600)

# 1,755

**Returns EU-Turkey statement** <sup>12</sup>
<sup>12</sup> Source: [Ministry of Citizen Protection](#), Greece as of 30 October 2018.

The three top countries of origin of arrivals by sea so far during 2018 were Syrians (27%), Afghans (25%) and Iraqis (19%).

**ITALY:** Almost 21,960 refugees and migrants have arrived in Italy by sea in 2018 by the end of October. Continuing the downwards trend of arrivals compared to the same period in 2017 (over 111,390), just over 1,000 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores in October, an 83% decrease compared to the 5,980 arrivals in October last year. The low numbers in September (950) and October (1,000) are comparable with the just over 1,000 arrivals in both February and March this year. These are the lowest numbers since 1,100 in May 2013. In October, 34% of arrivals by sea to Italy departed from Tunisia and 30% from Turkey. Only two groups from Libya of 9 and 69 have arrived by sea in Italy in October. Among the various nationalities arriving by sea in Italy in October the majority were from Tunisia (22%), followed by Eritrea (14%), and Sudan (7%). As of 31 October, over 3,330 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) reached Italian shores.

**SPAIN:** A total of 53,100 refugees and migrants have reached Spain both by land and sea so far in 2018, representing an increase of 150% compared to the same period in 2017 (over 21,200). Arrivals by land and sea to Spain in October were the highest so far this year (10,650) with an average daily arrival number of 340. This is an increase by 160% compared to the 4,000 refugees and migrants who arrived to Spain in October last year. The five most common nationalities of sea arrivals in Spain are Moroccans (21%), Guineans (21%), Malians (16%), Ivorians (8%) and Algerians (7%).

**WESTERN BALKANS:** As of 31 October, some 20,500 refugees and migrants were reported to have entered Bosnia and Herzegovina including some 4,300 who arrived this month – the increasing arrivals trend continues with a 16% increase from arrival figures in September

(3,710). Among those, 30% were from Pakistan followed by Iranians (21%), Afghans (19%), Syrians (8%) and Iraqis (8%). It is estimated that there are approximately 6,800 asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants currently in the country. Many attempt to move onwards through Croatia and presently there is an estimated 1,450 accommodated in shelters throughout the country. In October, of the estimated 3,820 refugees and migrants assisted in Serbia, according to Serbian authorities, 3,410 were accommodated in 15 different governmental Reception/ Transit or Asylum Centres, a slight decrease compared to over 3,900 accommodated in September.

**UKRAINE:** UNHCR in close coordination with NGO Partner Right to Protection (R2P) launched the eastern Ukraine Checkpoint Monitoring online dashboard. [The Online Dashboard](#) provides an overview of latest trends related to people crossing the contact line, their profile and related protection concerns. In east Ukraine, the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) recorded around 37,000 ceasefire violations, twice as much as the number reported the previous month. In October, UNHCR and its partner surveyed over 2,500 people mostly in the settlements along the 'Contact Line'.

**Dead and Missing:** So far 1,987 people have died or gone missing while trying to reach Europe by sea which is a 30% decrease compared to the number of deaths in the same period in 2017 (2,848). Most deaths occurred along the Central Mediterranean route (1,250 or 63%) followed by the route to Spain (560 or 28%). The number of deaths in the Western Med (560) and Eastern Med (170) have both more than doubled compared to those in the same period last year (140 and 40, respectively).

The death toll along land routes has increased, with at least 105 refugees or migrants known to have died so far this year at or near European borders, compared to the 75 deaths in the whole of 2017.

## OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey **4.0 million**

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

Syrian Arab Republic	<b>3,589,000</b>
Afghanistan	<b>170,000</b>
Iraq	<b>142,000</b>
Other nationalities	<b>56,000</b>

<sup>5</sup> Source: UNHCR as of 30 October 2018

Ukraine **1.8 million**

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

Refugees:	<b>3,225</b>
Asylum seekers:	<b>5,954</b>
Stateless persons:	<b>35,294</b>

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

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

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/07/2018

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR as of 25/10/2018

<sup>10</sup> State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/01/2018

# KEY DEVELOPMENTS



Includes Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** On 23 October, reportedly in response to rumours that the Croatian border would be opened, some 200-250 refugees-migrants (including families with small children) gathered at the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)-Croatia border at Maljevac. Protestors called for the opening of borders during their demonstration which lasted for about a week. The situation culminated on 24 October when some protestors managed to breach the first cordon of the BiH police in an attempt to reach Croatian territory- leading to a temporary shutdown of the border crossing point. Several migrants and refugees were injured during the incident. The BiH Croatian Border Police re-opened the Maljevac border crossing on 30 October, after the Una-Sana Canton police and BiH Border Police relocated the remaining people from the area.

**DENMARK:** UNHCR [regrets](#) Denmark's decision not to restart the resettlement program which the government announced on 04 October it would be discontinuing. The Danish decision comes at a time, when the international community is being urged to provide more complementary legal pathways, such as resettlement, as part of a developing a more comprehensive response to forced displacement. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has earlier made appeals to the Danish Government, including during his visit to Denmark in June this year, to consider resuming its long-standing place among the group of resettlement countries playing such a vital role for international refugee protection.

**1** **GREECE:** In October, 14 people were killed in two separate incidents in northern Greece. UNHCR was [dis-](#)

[mayed](#) to hear of the news on 13 October that 11 people were killed in a car accident suspected of people smuggling just days after two women and one teenage girl were found dead near Evros River at the Greek-Turkish border. More than 13,700 refugees and migrants have crossed to Greece's north-east so far in 2018, according to data compiled by UNHCR, more than double the number that crossed in 2017. At least 40 deaths have been recorded in the region in 2018, nearly half having drowned in the fast-flowing Evros River. These horrific deaths are part of the broader dangers faced by people who find themselves at the mercy of human smugglers, who exploit their vulnerability. UNHCR once again calls for alternatives to these dangerous crossings for people in need of international protection through safe and legal channels to reach the European Union, including family reunification and resettlement.

**GEORGIA:** Following the non-extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia in June 2009, the United Nations has continued to support the Geneva International Discussions (GID) on security, stability and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The GID commenced on 15 October 2008 in Geneva and was co-chaired by the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations. The 45th round of the GID marked the tenth anniversary of the forum. In their [press communique](#), the GID co-chairs stressed that the GID format has contributed to improved stability and accountability on the ground. Incident Prevention and Response

Mechanism (IPRMs) have recently been suspended and challenges remain regarding the needs and rights of conflict-affected communities.

**HUNGARY:** UNHCR's partner the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) has filed complaints with the Hungarian Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) against the new criminal law provision threatening imprisonment of those assisting asylum-seekers.

Following the submission of appeals by the HHC, the Administrative and Labour Court of Budapest has annulled the first instance rejection of 20 Afghan asylum-seekers and has ruled that the Immigration and Asylum Office should designate a place of accommodation other than the transit zone for children who have spent several months in them. UNHCR has [previously expressed concern](#) that asylum-seekers, including children, were being kept in the "transit zones" during their asylum process.

**2 ITALY:** On 04 October, the President of the Republic signed a new law decree on asylum and security in Italy. The President then wrote to the Prime Minister saying that Italy's constitutional and international obligations in relation to asylum still stand. The new decree came into force the following day. UNHCR [expressed](#) concerns that the decree concurrently deals with asylum and security, and the fact that some provisions of the decree risk weakening protection guarantees especially for people with specific needs.

As of 12 October UNHCR [commenced](#) an agreement with Caritas to carry out the "Family first" project, aiming at expanding family reunification opportunities in Italy by improving and facilitating procedures. During the first phase of the project, a consultation will be carried out with Prefectures, NGOs and Italian representations abroad. In addition, there will be focus group discussions with refugees who submitted a family reunification application, and for Prefectures and Embassies. Together with Caritas, this project will help families find each other and stay together in safety to help them rebuild their lives.

**NORWAY:** On 29 October 2018, the Government published its new Integration Strategy. The strategy includes several measures focused on education, employment and every-day integration, inter alia to settle refugees proportionately throughout the country. Positive integration practices contribute to the long-term wellbeing of refugees and the people hosting them.

**3 PORTUGAL:** The Portuguese Ministry of Internal Administration has announced a bilateral agreement for a pilot relocation of 100 refugees from Greece to Portugal. Following its pilot phase, the bilateral relocation scheme would be extended to cover 1,000 refugees in the course of 2019. UNHCR welcomes the announcement.

**SERBIA:** The Government issued a Decision to abolish visa-free entry for nationals of Iran on 08 October. The decision came into effect from 17 October.

Later in the month, some 300 mainly male residents of Adasevci and Principovac Reception/Transit Centres peacefully gathered at Batrovci border crossing demanding to cross into Croatia. After realizing that the border opening between Serbia and Croatia was a rumour and being counselled by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), UNHCR and partners, the group accepted the offer of the SCRM to be transported back to their respective centres the same day.

**UKRAINE:** The Ukrainian President signed a law on 4 October which extends the 'special status' of the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions until 31 December 2019, which had been requested by the OSCE to the Ukrainian Parliament as a pre-requisite for possible deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission. On 10 October, the Ukrainian Government amended its Regulation on "affordable housing", under which the state would reimburse 50% of housing expenses afforded by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ATO (Anti-terrorist operation) participants and provide a 30% reimbursement for home improvement projects for conflict-affected persons.

During the reporting period, OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) recorded a significant increase in cease-fire violations as compared to the previous month. UNHCR has been visiting villages affected by intense shelling throughout the month, among them, the village of Khutir Vilnyi of Zolote-4, which experienced regular fighting and displacement. In the village, UNHCR supported displaced families with non-food-item (NFI) kits and individual protection assistance (IPA) in the form of cash support which helps people meet their needs in dignity, provides a sense of protection and can allow them to be more resilient. A small group of mainly elderly people remain in Khutir Vilnyi because of lack of other options, while some have sought assistance from local authorities to be relocated. Since the start of the IPA programme in July 2018, over 2,280 vulnerable individuals have benefitted from the cash based intervention. Another shelling incident damaged a water pipeline that delivers clean water from Horlivka (Donetsk NGCA) to the settlements of Toretsk district (GCA) cutting water supply to 70,000 people. A state of emergency was announced and UNHCR partner NGO Proliska distributed UNHCR jerry cans and more than two tons of water to elderly people and persons with disabilities.

On 22 October 2018, UNHCR facilitated a visit of the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, to the checkpoints and a community center that had been renovated as a Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). The USA, being UNHCR Ukraine's largest earmarked donor, support projects along the "contact line" including QIPs, which deliver a range of impacts such as promoting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion between IDPs and host communities, supporting access to education, inclusiveness of disabled persons, and psychological relief.

## EU RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

On 18 October, EU Leaders gathered for a [European Council meeting](#) in Brussels, discussing migration and asylum to assess related progress since the 28 June European Council [conclusions](#). Ahead of the meeting, UNHCR and IOM released a [statement](#) urging EU Leaders to focus on measures that save lives. In the statement, UN High Commissioner Filippo Grandi recalled that “the current tenor of the political debate – painting a picture of Europe under siege – is not only unhelpful but completely out of touch with reality”.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe (CoE) Commissioner for Human Rights issued a [statement](#) on 11 October aimed at improving the protection of LGBTI asylum-seekers in Europe. She denounced the way international standards are interpreted and applied in different CoE Member States that may prevent LGBTI asylum-seekers from being granted protection.

On 11 October the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a Resolution and a Recommendation on family reunification of refugees and migrants in CoE Member States based on the report by Ulla Sandbæk (Denmark, UEL). The Assembly called on Member States to develop common guidelines to implement the right to family reunification, as well as mutual legal assistance and administrative co-operation between member States and with third countries. Several areas of key importance to UNHCR were incorporated into the recommendations.

## 69TH SESSION OF THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY'S EXCOM

On 1-5 October the 69th session of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the High Commissioner's Programme took place in Geneva. The UN Refugee Agency's ExCom meets annually to review and approve programmes and budget, advise on international protection and discuss issues with partner organisations. At the 2018 meeting, High Commissioner Filippo Grandi [called](#) for the reinvigoration of multilateralism to curb conflicts and crises that have displaced record numbers. Poverty, exclusion and climate change were among causes of rising displacement, Grandi said, while political narratives are “giving licence to discrimination, racism and xenophobia.” As well as ongoing humanitarian crises in Syria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Yemen, Grandi also spoke about new crises emerging over the past year in Myanmar and Venezuela. The global compact on refugees, to be validated by the UN General Assembly later this year, charts, he said, “a clear way forward, through a stronger, fairer, better response model.”

“Norms that preserve human dignity must prevail – for our survival and development. These are not just about words, but about human life.

Based in law and rooted in respect for humanity, they provide a vanguard against chaos and anarchy, and a healthy check on unhealthy dynamics of power. Despite our daily despair, let us not forget the progress we have made and honour the many, often unsung achievements.” said Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection [addressing](#) the Executive Committee.



©UNHCR/Jean Marc Ferré Members of the Excom, and invited delegates, gather for the 69th session of UNHCR's Executive Committee in Geneva

## UNHCR AND IOM APPEAL TO EUROPEAN LEADERS TO TACKLE MEDITERRANEAN DEATHS

Ahead of the meeting of European Union (EU) Heads of State and Government on 17-18 October, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and IOM, the UN Migration Agency, together [appealed](#) to European leaders to urgently take steps to address this year's record rate of drownings on the Mediterranean Sea.

The leaders of the two organizations warned that political discourse concerning refugees and migrants, particularly those arriving by boat, has become dangerously toxic in some countries, even at a time when arrivals to Europe are declining. This narrative is stoking unnecessary fears, making it harder for countries to work together and blocking progress towards solutions.

“The current tenor of the political debate – painting a picture of Europe under siege – is not only unhelpful but completely out of touch with reality,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. “Arrival numbers are falling but the rate at which people are losing their lives is on the rise. We cannot forget that we are talking about human lives. Debate is welcome – scape-

goating refugees and migrants for political gain is not.” UNHCR and IOM urged European leaders to focus on the practical solutions that are urgently needed and ensuring responsibilities are properly being shared among European States.



©UNHCR/Markel Redondo Spain. Rescue ship docks in Malaga with refugees and migrants

## REFUGEES BEAR COST OF MASSIVE UNDERFUNDING

Funding for the world's forcibly displaced and stateless people is becoming increasingly squeezed, with barely more than half of needs being met, and worsening hardship and risks for many refugees, other displaced people and the communities they live among. Six refugee and displacement situations globally are particularly badly hit. These include Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria and Somalia situations.

The costs of inaction are high. Needs worsen, become more compounded. Emergencies become protracted. Solutions are put off. Crises become forgotten. People suffer. But timely support by donors may still avert the worst. UNHCR [urges](#) contributions in as generous, timely and flexible a manner as possible—either unearmarked, or broadly earmarked to situational

or regional levels. This is according to a [report](#) released by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.



© UNHCR/Hector Perez UNHCR High profile supporter, model and photographer Helena Christensen, who travelled to refugee camps in Rwanda with UNHCR, called for urgent funding and global attention to refugees.



## Addressing statelessness in Europe Partnership with the European Youth Parliament

UNHCR continues close cooperation with the European Youth Parliament. In the framework of its partnership with the European Youth Parliament UNHCR supported the participation of two young refugees and stateless persons at the 88th International Session of the European Youth Parliament in Rotterdam, the Netherlands during 13-21 October. The event gathered 300 young persons from around 40 countries to debate the pressing issues of today's Europe, including the current refugee situation.



## UNHCR-OSCE cooperation to address statelessness in Europe

The 2nd OSCE-UNHCR Seminar on Sharing Good Practices on Statelessness among OSCE participating States took place in Vienna on 31 October 2018. This seminar was co-organized by UNHCR, ODIHR and HCNM as follow-up to the launch of the joint [OSCE-UNHCR Handbook on Statelessness](#) in March 2017 and a successful 1st Practical Seminar in October 2017. In the seminar, participating countries discussed concerns and presented good practice examples of tackling statelessness in their respective countries, while ODIHR shared a background paper on lack of civil registration and identity documents among Roma in Georgia. Also, OSCE launched a [video](#) on working together with UNHCR in Addressing Statelessness among Roma in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

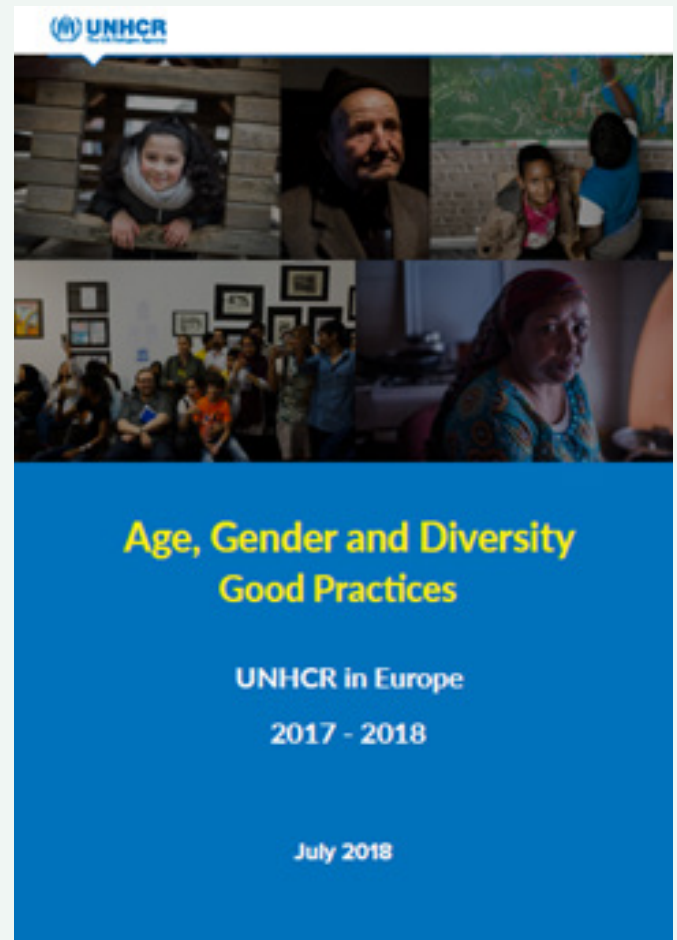


11 October - the Parliament of Albania adopted legal amendments to the country's civil status law, which removes barriers to birth registration, thereby reducing the risk of childhood statelessness in Albania, particularly for children of Albanian parents born outside the country and for children of the Roma and Egyptian communities. The amendments followed a baseline study by UNHCR and the Tirana Legal Aid Society.



## Age, Gender and Diversity - Good Practices in Europe Report

UNHCR has long upheld age, gender and diversity (AGD) mainstreaming as an essential approach to understand and respond to the needs of all persons of concern. UNHCR makes considerable efforts in Europe to integrate AGD considerations both in operational planning, programme implementation and while engaging with governments and partners in protection, advocacy and legal interventions. The report issued in 2018 highlights a range of initiatives across the region in 2017 and 2018 to illustrate this. Meaning that women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds are able to engage meaningfully, have access to information, equal access to opportunities and are consulted on protection, assistance, and solutions. An exemplary AGD initiative in 2017 was the participatory research undertaken by UNHCR targeting education activities. Research found that teachers in western European countries face multiple challenges including the inclusion of asylum-seeking and refugee students in classrooms, psycho-social support needs, language and cultural barriers. To address these challenges, the Regional Representation for Western Europe developed a set of [teacher training toolkit](#) on the topic of refugees, asylum and migration, currently available in French and English and soon to be published in Dutch and German.



### Integration Spotlight

Between 1-2 October UNHCR Bulgaria and its partner KATRO held the first job fair for asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Harmanli, where the largest reception facility is located. Five local companies expressed interest in hiring asylum-seekers and refugees, and some interviewed about 25 people of diverse nationalities including Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, and Pakistanis.





## REFUGEE STORIES

### Centre proves a haven for special needs children uprooted by conflict

By Victoria Andrievska in Sumy, Ukraine

Forced to flee eastern Ukraine, one woman decided to open her own treatment centre for internally displaced children with special needs. She knew her autistic son would struggle after they fled their conflict-torn home in eastern Ukraine. With treatment facilities limited, the teacher and psychologist decided to take action herself. By the end of 2014, Olena, 38, had opened a treatment centre to help children to learn, communicate with peers and independently manage their everyday lives. By June 2017, six child psychologists, speech therapists and other health professionals were working at the centre. Demand was high and a new, bigger location became necessary. Olena turned to Sumy's local council for help. To her relief, they provided a new site, but it was in poor condition and needed renovation. Work went ahead with the help of the NGO CrimeaSOS, a partner of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. "At UNHCR, we often see that social integration projects are only possible when there is close

cooperation between local authorities, donors, NGOs and civil society," says Pablo Mateu, UNHCR representative in Ukraine. "One of the principles underpinning the work of the United Nations is that of leaving no one behind. This ensures better integration and protection of affected populations, and works towards a more inclusive society." Al-



most 65,000 IDPs in Ukraine live with disabilities.

### Syrian lifeguard helps save others in peril on the Greek coast

By Leo Dobbs in Athens, Greece

Among the rescuers who converged on the Greek coastal resort of Mati in July as hundreds fled deadly wildfires was a 23-year-old Syrian refugee, himself saved from a watery grave last year. When he was crossing to Lesbos, it was only the intervention of a naval ship that saved him when his dinghy began breaking up. Obada "Ibo" Al-Nassar trained as a lifeguard after arriving in Greece and is a volunteer with the Lifeguard Hellas (LH) organization, was among the first on the scene on the day of the fire when hundreds were ferried to safety in other parts of the mainland. In the following days, the LH team, including Ibo, continued the offshore search for the missing and dead. "Ibo was involved in the Mati operation. He was an active member," says Spiros Mitritsakis, who runs LH with his wife Mania Bikof. "He's an exceptional lifeguard," adds the veteran. As for Ibo, he says he is glad to be doing something constructive with people that have come to be like a family. He has just been recognized

as a refugee, more than a year after applying for asylum. He shares an apartment with other young men, provided under UNHCR's [ES-TIA accommodation](#) and cash assistance programme, which is funded by the European Union.

