

Italy

December 2020

In 2020, more than **34,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea** while **over 4,100 arrived by land** across the Italy-Slovenia border having travelled through South-East Europe.

Law 173/2020 was approved by the Senate on 18 December, introducing several changes that will **positively affect the Italian asylum system**, facilitating the integration of refugees in Italy.

UNHCR worked to improve the identification and services for persons with specific needs, in particular **violence survivors**, at arrival points and in the context of asylum procedures.

KEY INDICATORS (DECEMBER 2020)

621

Sea arrivals assisted and informed about asylum procedures by UNHCR staff following disembarkation (Source: UNHCR)

4,210

Inquiries received and followed-up through UNHCR partner **ARCI toll-free number** (Source: ARCI)

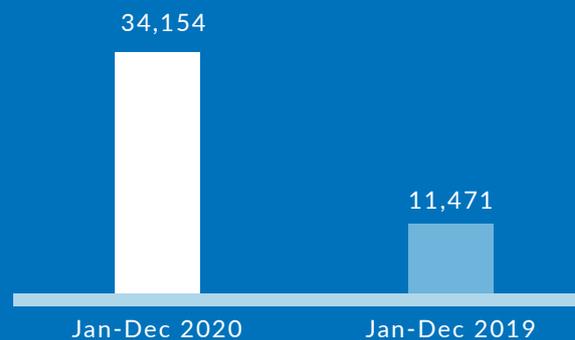
47

Individuals received **medical assistance and psychosocial counselling** by UNHCR partners (Source: MEDU and LILA)

Sea arrivals in 2020 by disembarkation site

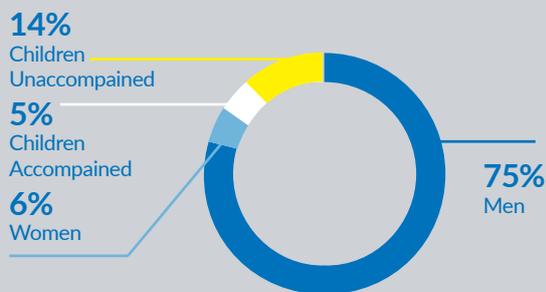


Sea arrivals POPULATION OF CONCERN



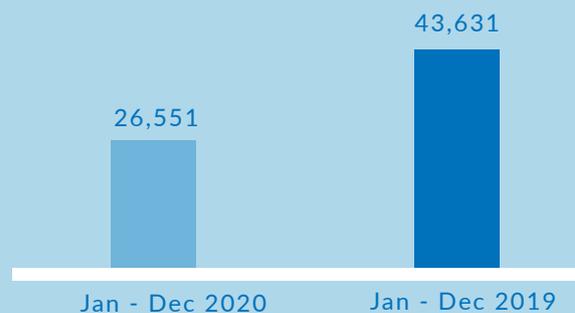
Source: Ministry of Interior. In addition to sea arrivals, Italy also receives land arrivals and air arrivals. This chart focuses on sea arrivals, as per official figures provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior.

Sea arrivals by gender and age POPULATION OF CONCERN



Source: Ministry of Interior. In addition to sea arrivals, Italy also receives land arrivals and air arrivals. This chart focuses on sea arrivals, as per official figures provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior. Gender breakdown for children is not available.

Asylum applications POPULATION OF CONCERN



Source: Ministry of Interior. Please note that the chart refers to the latest available data.

Operational context

- **Sea arrivals.** In December, **1,591 refugees and migrants arrived by sea** in Italy's southern regions, the majority originating from Tunisia and to a lesser extent, Iraq, Iran, Côte d'Ivoire and Egypt. Almost half departed from Tunisia, while about a third left from Turkey. Departures from Libya, Algeria and Greece accounted respectively for 10%, 5% and 4% of the arrivals. **As of the end of 2020, despite the COVID-19 emergency, 34,154 sea arrivals** had been registered in Italy. This represents a significant increase compared to the 11,471 recorded in 2019: departures from Tunisia were up four-fold and Tunisians were the most common national group among arrivals, accounting for 38% of the total. Bangladeshis were the next largest nationality, most commonly arriving from Libya (12%), followed by Ivorians (6%). Only approximately 4,500 of those arriving by sea in 2020 had been rescued by authorities or NGOs on the high seas: the others were intercepted by the authorities close to shore or arrived undetected. There was a **limited presence of NGOs conducting Search and Rescue operations** in the Central Mediterranean throughout 2020. As of the end of the year, only the Open Arms NGO rescue vessel was operating in the area.¹
- **Northern borders.** Arrivals through the **Italy-Slovenia border** in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region continued in December. Through the course of 2020, more than 4,100 refugees and migrants were apprehended crossing the border, often following extenuating journeys across South-East Europe.² As previously reported, refugees and vulnerable migrants apprehended in Italy continued to be readmitted to Slovenia through swift procedures preventing them from seeking protection in Italy.³ In the first half of December, before more restrictive COVID-19 measures came into effect, an increased number of refugees and migrants reached Ventimiglia, near the **Italy-France border** in the hope of entering France. As many as 200 individuals were estimated to be sleeping rough in the town owing to a lack of accommodation facilities. Civil society organizations struggled to respond and called for the authorities to open a transit facility.
- **Asylum procedures.** As of 31 December, 79,938 persons were accommodated in reception facilities across the country, including 54,343 in first-line reception centres and 25,574 in second-line facilities.⁴ Between 1 January and 31 December, Italy received 26,551 asylum applications, a sharp decline from the year before. In the January-September period, it examined 29,547 claims for protection, recognizing **refugee status or subsidiary protection to 21% of applicants**.⁵
- **Legislative developments.** On 18 December, the Italian Senate approved the conversion of law decree 130/2020 into **law 173/2020**. The new law remedies many of the critical aspects of the security decrees introduced by the previous Government and restores rights to refugees and asylum-seekers to facilitate their integration in Italy. New provisions guarantee private life, family unity, physical and mental health as well as specific measures for persons with specific needs in first-line reception centres. The new law ensures that vulnerable individuals are exempted from accelerated asylum procedures and restores previous legislation ensuring access to residence registration for asylum-seekers.⁶
- **Statelessness.** According to a recent [report](#) by NGO Associazione 21 luglio, approximately **1,715 persons**, including 950 children, are **stateless or at risk of statelessness** in Italy among Roma communities originating from the former Yugoslavia. Approximately 480 such individuals are estimated to live in Rome.

¹ For further information on sea arrivals in Italy, please refer to the Italy page of the UNHCR data portal, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205> (last access 8 January 2021)

² See, *inter alia*, Avvenire, *Abusi sui migranti della rotta balcanica, scende in campo l'UE*, 20 December 2020, including also a UNHCR video in English, available at <https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/a-trieste-tra-chi-cura-le-ferite-reportage-migranti> (last access 8 January 2021)

³ For further information please refer to the October 2020 and November 2020 issues of the Italy factsheet, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205> (last access 8 January 2021)

⁴ Ministry of Interior, *Cruscotto statistico*, available at http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2020_0.pdf (last access 14 January 2021)

⁵ Source: Ministry of Interior

⁶ See also UNHCR *L'UNHCR accoglie con favore le nuove norme su immigrazione e asilo: un positivo cambio di paradigma*, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/lunhcr-accoglie-con-favore-le-nuove-norme-su-immigrazione-e-asilo-un-positivo-cambio-di-paradigma/> (last access 8 January 2021)

Main activities

- **Access to territory.** In early December, the first phase of the pilot project developed by UNHCR in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF to **support the authorities in establishing a system to adequately identify persons with specific needs** was concluded in Lampedusa. The island alone received over 60% of sea arrivals in 2020. The project entails the use of an ad hoc tool to strengthen the identification of vulnerable new arrivals, such as children travelling alone, survivors of torture or gender-based violence, or shipwreck survivors. Persons identified are referred to appropriate services for follow-up. A **working group comprising representatives of UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, the Ministry of Interior and the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty (INMP)** was set up to discuss the possible introduction of a standardized methodology to improve the identification and referral of new arrivals with specific needs. This is an important step towards a wider collaboration with the authorities and other international organizations to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals receive adequate support following their arrival in Italy. UNHCR also stepped up its **cooperation with the Red Cross**, which currently manages the five ferries made available by the authorities for the COVID-19 offshore quarantine of refugees and migrants arriving by sea. Enhanced cooperation will include providing training to Red Cross staff aboard quarantine ferries to ensure that new arrivals are provided with appropriate information on international protection and asylum procedures in Italy. Also in December, UNHCR launched a new [page](#) on its website with materials, such as **videos and leaflets on international protection in multiple languages for refugees** arriving in Italy. Materials are available in Italian, Arabic, Bengali, English, Farsi, French, Somali, Sorani Kurdish, Spanish, Tigrinya and Urdu.
- **Asylum procedures.** COVID-19 prevention measures continued to impact the work of the more than 40 Territorial Commissions in Italy responsible for assessing asylum applications. Fewer than usual refugee status determination interviews were scheduled in most locations in order to limit the risk of infection. Case assessments, on the other hand, progressed normally, with UNHCR staff attending decision-making sessions together with Ministry of Interior staff. UNHCR's collaboration with the National Commission for Asylum to create standard operating procedures for the **identification and referral of survivors of gender-based violence in the context of asylum procedures** resulted in the development in December of multi-lingual information materials for both survivors and persons at risk of gender-based violence, including trafficking. Indicators to support interviewers in identifying people in need of specific attention and support were also developed.
- **Gender-based violence.** On 15 December, UNHCR and partner [D.i.RE.](#) presented [strategic proposals to improve Italy's response to the specific needs of refugee and migrant women who have survived violence](#). This was the result of the three-year project entitled "Leaving violence. Living safe" implemented by D.i.RE. with support from UNHCR. The project aimed at facilitating access by refugee and migrant women to anti-violence centres run by the D.i.RE. network. It provided refuge for more than 300 women and specialized training for 230 staff and cultural mediators. The strategic proposals focus not only on the adequacy of support for survivors, but also on their individual autonomy, including access to employment.⁷



Umar from Pakistan receives treatment from volunteers in Trieste for wounds sustained as a result of torture at the hands of Croatian police during his journey along the Balkan Route. [Click here to watch UNHCR video.](#)

⁷See also UNHCR, *UNHCR-D.i.Re: Leaving violence. Living safe. Ieri Oggi Domani*, 16 December 2020, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/leaving-violence-living-safe-ieri-oggi-domani/> (last access 11 January 2021)

- Resettlement and complementary pathways.** With the aim of strengthening safe pathways for refugees, UNHCR, together with the Embassy of Canada, organized three workshops on **community sponsorships** allowing individuals or organizations to sponsor refugees entering a third country and support them after their arrival, helping with their integration. The sessions, facilitated by the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub in close cooperation with Canada’s Department for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, served to exchange experiences and good practices and advance peer learning among civil society organizations and community stakeholders in both Italy and Canada. They were attended by a wide audience, including representatives from the Italian Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs. UNHCR is continually working to expand opportunities for refugees to safely reach Italy, avoiding dangerous and irregular journeys by sea or land. UNHCR is also working towards the launch of the third edition of the **University Corridors for Refugees** – [UNICORE](#) programme, with more than 20 Italian universities having confirmed their willingness to offer an additional 30 to 35 scholarships for refugees in 2021-2022.
- Integration.** On 17 December, the results of the [Design Thinking Talent for Refugees](#) project, aimed to **better include refugees in the labour market**, were presented at a public event. The project, run by [Fondazione Adecco per le Pari Opportunità](#) with support from UNHCR and in collaboration with SIPROIMI, saw 21 reception centre staff trained as expert coaches on labour inclusion. It also developed guidelines to support reception staff and private companies to foster the labour inclusion of refugees as well as the implementation of an **employability tool** to standardize methodologies to assess refugees’ skills and competencies
- Refugee and community engagement.** The third edition of the UNHCR-[Intersos Partecipazione](#) programme ended in December, with eight refugee associations in Italy benefiting from small grants to further develop their capacities. Over the last three years, 33 refugee associations in eleven Italian regions have accessed the programme, increasing their visibility and **ensuring an enhanced audience for refugee voices**. Two thirds of participating associations found that, thanks to the programme, they strengthened their collaboration with institutional and decision-making fora.⁸



Yodit, a refugee from Eritrea, reunites with her son after 8 years. UNHCR helped process her application for family reunification. [Click here to watch UNHCR video.](#)

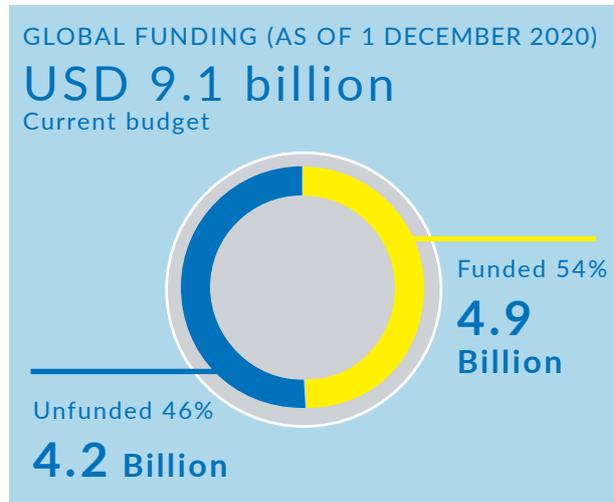
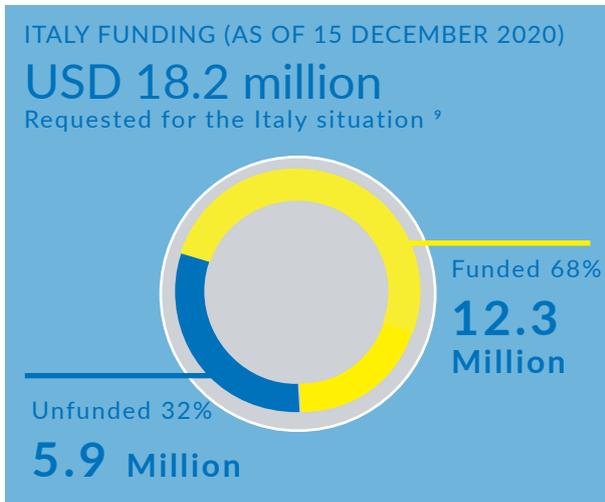


**BOURE prize 2020:
Report on the transition to adulthood of unaccompanied children in Italy**

In December, the report [At a crossroads. Unaccompanied and separated children in their transition to adulthood in Italy](#), published by UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF in November 2019, was awarded the Best of UNICEF Research and Evaluation (BOURE) prize in recognition of its original topic and innovative approach, amplifying children’s voices in a participatory manner. The report, commissioned by the three UN agencies and produced by Fondazione ISMU in collaboration with Universities in Catania and Rome, collects testimonies from 185 refugee and migrant children and young persons in Italy, highlighting challenges hindering their transition to adulthood as well as factors supporting it. [Click here](#) to read the joint IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF press release.

⁸See also UNHCR, *Evento finale Partecipazione. La rete, i progetti, i risultati*, 3 December 2020, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/evento-finale-partecipazione-la-rete-i-progetti-i-risultati/> (last access 11 January 2021)

Financial information



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Mol Italy 4.8 M | Private donors France 112 K | Private donors United Kingdom 19 K | Private donors Italy 5.6 K ¹⁰

(Please note that this does not include additional projected contributions by the Italian Ministry of the Interior)

BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of broadly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

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CONTACTS

Elisabetta Dolzan, Senior Reporting Assistant, dolzan@unhcr.org

Cristina Franchini, External Relations Associate, franchin@unhcr.org

LINKS

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⁹ Unearmarked funding is allocated and reallocated multiple times during the year to allow UNHCR to fund prioritised activities. The contributions earmarked for Italy shown above are combined with an indicative allocation of the softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions. This allocation respects different levels of earmarking.

¹⁰ In addition to 5.6 K USD earmarked contributions for the Italy operations, the following major private donors in Italy contributed to UNHCR operations worldwide: Acea, Calzedonia, Cucinelli, Fondo di Beneficenza di Intesa Sanpaolo, Moncler, MYCIS, Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation, Prosolidar Foundation, Unicredit Foundation.