

EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



In the middle of the French Region of Puy-de-Dôme, Alfatih, a Sudanese resettled refugee from Chad, attends class level 3 in Pessat-Villeneuve to improve his French.

TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

As of 31 January, over 7,500 people arrived via the Mediterranean to Europe, an 11% decrease compared to the same month in 2018, when over 8,000 arrived. Consistent with trends in the latter half of 2018, the largest number of arrivals was recorded in Spain, followed by land and sea arrivals to Greece.

ITALY: the number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea in January (202) dropped by 95% compared to last January (4,180). Most of them had departed from Libya, including a group of 68 rescued by Italian authorities close to Lampedusa, a group of 47 rescued by the NGO Sea Watch off the Libyan coast, and three survivors of a shipwreck in which 117 people are believed to have drowned. In Malta, the 49 people who been rescued in December by the NGOs Sea Watch and Sea Eye were eventually able to disembark, a decision [welcomed](#) by UNHCR.

GREECE: 1,851 refugees and migrants arrived by sea to the islands, a 13% increase compared to last January but a 37% decrease compared to December. In [January](#), 42% of arrivals were from Afghanistan, 18% from the State of Palestine, and 9% each from Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Iraq. A further 801 people arrived in the Evros region, including some who arrived by sea, a 51% increase compared to last January.

Mediterranean
7,551
arrivals in 2019 ¹

207

estimated dead/missing in 2019 ¹

Greece²

2,652

3,203	3,970	2,652
Nov	Dec	Jan

Italy

202

980	359	202
Nov	Dec	Jan

Spain²

4,612

5,666	5,558	4,612
Nov	Dec	Jan

Cyprus

85

83	224	85
Nov	Dec	Jan

New asylum applications in Europe ³

Jan-Dec 2018: **675,000**

Jan-Dec 2017: **819,000**

Jan-Dec 2016: **1,322,000**

Jan-Dec 2015: **1,471,000**

¹ data.unhcr.org/mediterranean as of 31 January 2019.

² Greece and Spain both include sea and land arrivals; Spain includes sea arrivals in the Mediterranean and to the Canary Islands.

³ Sources: Eurostats for EU+ countries (Only partial data for December 2018. All data is provisional and last updated 26 February 2019); UNHCR for Eastern Europe (as of 30 June 2018), Turkey (as of 30 September 2018) and South Eastern Europe (as of 31 December 2018).

34,705

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

 from **Greece**

21,999

(33% of 66,400)

 from **Italy**

12,706

(32% of 39,600)

1,825

Returns EU-Turkey statement ¹²
¹²Source: [Ministry of Citizen Protection](#), Greece as of 31 January 2019.

SPAIN: over 4,600 people crossed the land and sea borders from North Africa in January, an increase of 111% compared to January 2018 (2,200). As in 2018, most people crossed the sea. People [arriving in January](#) were mostly from Guinea (21%), Mali (17%) and Morocco (14%). At the two enclaves, the most common nationalities were Syrians, Algerians and Palestinians. Some 61 people were believed to have died at sea in January, including 53 in a [single incident](#).

WESTERN BALKANS: Movement through the region continued with some 600 new arrivals recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina in January with a similar number in Serbia. Some 5,400 were believed to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina as of the

end of January along with some 4,500 in [Serbia](#).

Dead and missing: In January, an estimated 207 persons died or were presumed dead while trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, of which 144 while crossing from Libya to Italy. This means that the number of presumed deaths at sea in January is higher than the numbers of arrivals from Libya in January (118). On 18 January, a shipwreck occurred in the Central Mediterranean, some 50 miles north of Garabulli, Libya, reportedly resulting in 117 deaths at sea. Italian authorities are conducting investigations into reported smugglers and circumstances of the rescue. (UNHCR 18 January and 22 January press releases; [High Commissioner's interview](#)).



OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey

4.0 million

Refugees and asylum seekers ⁵

 Syrian Arab Republic **3,637,000**

 Afghanistan **172,000**

 Iraq **143,000**

 Other nationalities **57,000**
⁵ Source: UNHCR as of 28 February 2019

Ukraine

1.6 million

Internally Displaced Persons ⁶ and **Conflict Affected Persons** ⁷

 Refugees: ⁸ **3,225**

 Asylum seekers: ⁹ **6,152**

 Stateless persons: ¹⁰ **35,574**
⁶ Residing more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).

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

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

⁹ UNHCR as of 30/11/2018

¹⁰ State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/01/2019

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The United Kingdom: The Home Secretary and the French Minister of Interior agreed a joint action plan that aims to strengthen efforts to respond to Channel crossings.

5

Switzerland: The new Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, entered into force in January, will improve the professional and social integration of foreign nationals living in Switzerland.

3

The Russian Federation: The President of the Russian Federation signed the new Amendment to the Federal Law on Citizenship, facilitating citizens of the former USSR in the acquisition of Russian citizenship.

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Ukraine: The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine published new figures on casualties in eastern Ukraine. Between 12,800 and 13,000 people have been killed in hostilities since the outbreak of the conflict in spring 2014.

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Greece: UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Interior on Greek nationality acquisition and the prevention of statelessness.

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.

Austria: On 8 January, UNHCR Austria issued its [comments](#) on the new draft social aid scheme. According to the legal amendments announced, refugees and subsidiary protection holders risk falling far below the poverty line. The draft law foresees only granting to recognized refugees full access to social aid when they have completed a prescribed language level. However, language training is not offered during the asylum procedure but only after recognition. As a result, UNHCR is concerned that this would constitute a hidden waiting period for refugees' access to full social aid. UNHCR is also very concerned about draft changes that, if implemented, would completely bar subsidiary protection holders from access to social aid.

Greece: UNHCR signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) 1 with the Ministry of Interior on Greek nationality acquisition and the prevention of statelessness. Under the MoC, UNHCR provides experts and trainings to the Ministry to build their expertise and procedures on nationality acquisition. The Government confirmed it has initiated procedures for Greece to accede to the 1961 Convention on Statelessness. This latest MoC is one of many areas in which UNHCR provides technical support and experts to the State to build the institutions' systems and staff expertise. Other areas include the Ministry of Migration Policy's Asylum Service, the Reception and Identification Service, the Department for the Protection of asylum-seekers, as well as the Ministry of Labour's EKKA – the agency responsible for unaccompanied children in Greece. Chancellor

Merkel met with Prime Minister Tsipras in Athens on 9 – 10 January. As per their [joint press conference](#) they discussed about a comprehensive EU policy on asylum and migration, including revision of the current framework and enhanced support mechanisms to the border countries, a solid returns mechanism and reinforced relations between the EU and countries of origin and transit.

Italy: After rescuing 47 refugees and migrants, including 15 unaccompanied children, off the Libyan coast on 19 January, NGO vessel Sea Watch 3 waited until 31 January to be allocated a port of safety. Disembarkation in Catania, Italy, was allowed only once seven Member States (France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, and Romania) agreed to subsequently receive rescued individuals. New arrivals originated from the following countries: the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. (UNHCR-IOM-UNICEF 26 January [press release](#)).

Norway: On 28 - 29 January, High Commissioner Filippo Grandi met with key government stakeholders, parliamentarians, young politicians, refugees and civil society in Norway, including participation at a key public event with the Foreign Minister Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide and Secretary General for the Norwegian Refugee Council, Mr. Jan Egeland. He stressed key UNHCR priorities and concerns, reaffirming the strategic cooperation between Norway and UNHCR and recognising Norway's role vis-a-vis the Global Compact on Refugees.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has issued new Country Guidance on [Afghanistan](#), [Eritrea](#) and [Somalia](#), taking into account UNHCR's recommendations and recent legal developments in countries that Norway has with comparable systems to its own.

The Russian Federation: The President of the Russian Federation signed the new Amendment to the Federal Law on Citizenship. This new Amendment will facilitate citizens of the former USSR, in the acquisition of Russian citizenship with a Temporary Residence permit, without obtaining Permanent Residency and without any requirements for the length of their residency. Beneficiaries of the state programme, known as "Return of Compatriots", do not have to establish a source of income or pass a Russian language exam. The requirement of abandoning former citizenship has also been simplified, on the basis of a signed statement of intention to relinquish citizenship certified by a notary.

Switzerland: the new Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, entered into force in January, will improve the professional and social integration of foreign nationals living in Switzerland, including refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. It removes administrative hurdles for recognized refugees and provisionally admitted persons to the Swiss labour market. UNHCR welcomed the new Act while drawing attention to the specific situation of refugees, particularly those with special needs.

Ukraine: On 21 January, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine published new figures on casualties in eastern Ukraine. Between 12,800 and 13,000 people have been killed in hostilities since the outbreak of the conflict in spring 2014. Entering the fifth year of the conflict, there is an increasing need for psychosocial support for people residing along the 'contact line' who are recently exposed to shelling and risk of mines. As a response, during January, UNHCR partner Proliska organized 253 individual psychosocial consultations to help those affected by the conflict to deal with symptoms of psychological trauma, domestic violence, grief, depression, anxiety and continuous tension. UNHCR was particularly concerned about the escalation of shelling in the last days of the month, affecting villages along the 'contact line' not only at night, but also during the day. Four apartments in a multi-story building were damaged by shelling in Khutir Vilnyi of Zolote-4 with three houses being damaged in the village of Katerynivka, on the 'contact line'. UNHCR partner's Proliska responded and provided seven families with emergency repair kits. UNHCR also advocated in favor of greater support, protection and humanitarian aid for the families located in Zolote-4 during UNHCR's Local Protection Meeting (LPM) held on 23 January. The families in Zolote-4 have been experiencing regular shelling for the last four years.

The United Kingdom: On 24 January, the Home Secretary and the French Minister of Interior agreed a [joint action plan](#) that aims to strengthen efforts to respond to Channel crossings. The plan includes 1) increased coordination and information sharing between authorities; 2) £3.2 million (€3.6 million) in new funding for "reinforced preventive security measures," and 3) a strategic communication campaign to prevent the crossings, along with expeditious return of migrants from the UK to France, including under the Dublin Regulation. The action plan also mentions that the two countries will continue to uphold their tradition of offering asylum to people in need of international protection.

Judicial Engagement: On 15 January, UNHCR [submitted](#) its third-party intervention before the European Court of Human Rights in the case of M.A. v. Denmark (6697/18) concerning the difference in treatment, in regard to family reunification, of persons granted refugee status and persons granted subsidiary protection status.

Study on Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund: In January, UNHCR and ECRE launched the joint report [Follow the Money II: Assessing the use of EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds at the National Level 2014-2018](#) together with the European Commission and the European Parliament. Whilst the first report looked at the designing and programming of AMIF funds at national level, this second report included a critical comparative analysis of the use of AMIF funding at national level during 2014-17, drawing on the outcomes of national and European interim evaluations of the Fund and the perspectives of civil society and other actors involved in national AMIF implementation. The report also features a critical overview of the use of AMIF emergency assistance to implement actions in Member States during 2014-17. This 60 page document is thus both an analytical and critical piece on the midterm spending of AMIF money at national level. It includes an executive summary; a set of findings and recommendations and four case studies: Spain, Bulgaria, Germany and Estonia, plus some good practices.

The High Commissioner held meetings with the EU in Brussels on 30 January to promote UNHCR's approach to responding to refugees, mixed migration and forced displacement within the EU framework with the European Commission counterparts. He also held a press conference to launch the Desperate Journeys report. The extensive coverage of the event highlighted media interest in analytical and data-based reporting on migration and asylum issues.

FEATURED STORIES AND REFUGEE STORIES

POLAND: Mr. Paweł Adamowicz, Mayor of Gdansk died on 14 January after being stabbed at a public charity concert. He was a vigorous defender of migrant, refugee and LGBTI rights and active in integration efforts. Memorial services and silent demonstrations in solidarity with the mayor are taking place across Poland. [UNHCR issued a press release](#) expressing shock and sadness at his death.

UNITED KINGDOM: On 28 January, UNHCR hosted a gala screening of the film [Capernaum](#), together with the film's distributor Picturehouse Entertainment. Whilst not primarily about refugees, the film's main actor Zain Al Rafeea is a Syrian refugee, who was living in Lebanon at the time of filming. Together with his family, he was resettled to Norway with UNHCR support. The powerful film, about the life of the poor and marginalised in Lebanon, was awarded the Jury Prize at Cannes by UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Cate Blanchett, and is now nominated for best foreign language film at the BAFTAs and Oscars.



[Syrian farmers get back to the land in Ireland](#)

By Jody Clarke in County Mayo, Ireland



“Trees are like humans, they need to breathe,” says Abdul, tending to a branch. “So we prune them and let the air blow through, just like with olive trees in Syria.”

Abdul is taking part in a ten-week ‘social farming’ initiative on Ahena Farm in County Mayo, after being resettled to Ireland under a programme run by the Government in partnership with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. The scheme offers resettled refugees a chance to work and exchange skills with local farmers.

His placement is one of several funded by Social Farming Ireland and organized by the South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDC), which supports communities and individuals across the west of Ireland.

[Syrian refugee makes an impression at Croatian printer](#)

By Helen Womack in Zagreb, Croatia

For 15 years, Anass Mousa worked as a printer in Damascus, Syria. Now safe from war, the 40-year-old is putting his skills to good use at Croatia’s oldest printing company. Grafički Zavod Hrvatske (GZH) prints textbooks for schools. It is employing refugees like Anass in a win-win arrangement that could be a blueprint for social integration and a partial solution to Croatia’s labour shortage.

