UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT

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"I'm happy to reduce the chances of death." Tetiana Nikoforva explains as she searches for landmines with a team from the HALO Trust, near Ozerne, Donbas, Ukraine. Her brother-in-law was killed during the conflict when a shell exploded next to him. Ukraine is one of the most mine-affected countries in the world. Almost 2,000 people have been killed or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnances since the beginning of the conflict in 2014.

TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

In April, almost 4,700 refugees and migrants entered Europe, primarily via Greece, Spain and Italy. Overall arrivals to Greece decreased compared with the previous month (2,887 versus 3,159), while arrivals to Spain (1,540 versus 1,000) increased by 55% and those to Italy remained consistent (273 versus 262). So far this year almost 20,600 refugees and migrants arrived to Europe via the three Mediterranean routes compared to over 30,900 that arrived in the same period last year, marking a 33% decrease.

GREECE: In April, almost 2,900 refugees and migrants arrived by sea (64%) and land (36%) to Greece, 58% less than the nearly 6,850 arrivals during the same month in 2018. As of the end of April, the 11,000 arrivals to Greece are 25% fewer than the same period last year (14,760). They mainly originated from Afghanistan (47%), Iraq (14%), the Syrian Arab Republic (12%) and the State of Palestine (10%). In addition, the number of persons rescued or intercepted by the Turkish Coast Guards after departing from the Turkish coastline is almost 7,100 since the beginning of the year, consistent with the same period in 2018 (6,600 individuals). At the land border, 1,030 people arrived to Evros in April, a decrease in comparison with the previous

Mediterranean
20,600
arrivals in 2019 [1]

400
estimated dead/missing in 2019 [1]

Greece[2]	Italy
11,014	**779**

2,316 Feb	3,159 Mar	2,887 Apr	60 Feb	262 Mar	255 Apr

Spain[2]	Cyprus
8,512	**124**

1,366 Feb	995 Mar	1,539 Apr	39 Feb	0 Mar	0 Apr

New asylum applications in Europe [3]

Jan-Apr 2019	155,000
Jan-Dec 2018	702,000
Jan-Dec 2017	819,000
Jan-Dec 2016	1,322,000
Jan-Dec 2015	1,471,000

34,705

Relocated in total [4]

[4] Source: European Commission, as of 30 October 2018.

from **Greece**

21,999

(33% of 66,400)

from **Italy**

12,706

(32% of 39,600)

1,853

Returns EU-Turkey statement [12]

[12] Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Greece as of 30 April 2019.

month (1,300) and also to the 3,800 arrivals in the same period in 2018.

SPAIN: over 1,500 people crossed the sea (72%) and land (28%) borders from North Africa in April, a decrease of 9% compared to April 2018 (1,609). So far this year, over 8,500 people have arrived to Spain a 27% increase compared to the same period in 2018 (6,700). Their primary countries of origin are Guinea (19%), Morocco (17%), Mali (16%) and Cote d'Ivoire (12%).

ITALY: the number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea in April (273) while still very low in comparison to the same period last year (3,171), is at par with the number of arrivals by sea via the Central Mediterranean route in March and is the highest number of monthly sea arrivals in 2019 so far. As of 30 April, almost 800 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea, a 92% decrease compared to sea arrivals in the same period last year. Of those, 40% departed from Libya, 29% departed from Tunisia, 14% departed from Algeria, 10% departed from Turkey, and 7% departed from Greece. The primary nationalities that have arrived by sea in 2019 so far are Tunisians (28%), Algerians (16%) and Iraqi (13%).

Western Balkans: Movement through the region continued with some 2,630 new arrivals recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina in April. Some 6,000

were believed to be in Bosnia and Herzegovina as of the end of April along with some 3,600 in Serbia.

SAR operations: The Alan Kurdi (Sea Eye) and the Mare Jonio (Mediterranea) were the only two NGO rescue vessels operational in the Central Mediterranean in the second half of April. The Mare Jonio went back at sea with a view to conduct SAR operations in mid-April. During a technical stop in Marsala, the vessel underwent an inspection by the Italian Coast Guard. On 24 April, it was cautioned against carrying out SAR operations in a stable and organized manner until the vessel complied with relevant legislation and was certified to carry out SAR activities. However, on 30 April, the Mare Jonio resumed its activities in the Central Mediterranean.

Dead and Missing: As of 30 April, over 400 people have died or gone missing while trying to reach Europe by sea, equivalent to 1 death for every 51 arrivals, consistent with the same period in 2018. The highest death toll is recorded among those who leave Libya trying to reach Italy. In addition, 18 refugees or migrants have died along land routes in Europe or at Europe's borders.

OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey	**4.0 million**
Refugees and asylum seekers [5]	
Syrian Arab Republic	**3,606,000**
Afghanistan	**172,000**
Iraq	**143,000**
Other nationalities	**57,000**

[5] Source: UNHCR as of 30 April 2019

Ukraine	**1.5 million**
Internally Displaced Persons [6] and Conflict Affected Persons[7]	
Refugees: [8]	**2,620**
Asylum seekers: [9]	**6,388**
Stateless persons: [10]	**35,650**

[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 31/12/2018
[9] UNHCR as of 31/03/2019
[10] State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/01/2019

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Ireland: Trinity College Dublin has joined Ireland's other 6 universities in issuing plans for refugee scholarships.

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European Youth Initiative Fund: UNHCR's European Youth Initiative Fund awards small grants to 12 youth-led projects in 9 countries in April.

1

Greece: Minister of Migration Policy Dimitris Vitsas announced concrete emergency measures to ease overcrowding at Samos reception centre.

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2

5

Spain: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain and UNHCR jointly organized the International Conference on Addressing Statelessness in Europe in Madrid.

Italy: 146 refugees were evacuated on 29 April from Libya to Italy in a joint operation between UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and Italian and Libyan authorities.

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 17 April the Austrian Ministry of Interior published its annual statistics for 2018. As in 2017, the decrease in asylum-applications continued, with a total of almost 13,750 asylum claims lodged. Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and Iraq were among the main countries of origin. Due to higher numbers of arrivals over the last years, recognition numbers stood at almost 14,700 persons receiving refugee status (with Afghans and Syrians ranking first) and 4,200 persons receiving subsidiary protection (the large majority Afghans, followed by Somalis); 6,900 persons were issued negative decisions and did not receive any protection status.

BELARUS: On 8-9 April 2019 the Youth Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was held in New York. This year the Forum was devoted to the issues of inclusion and equal rights and opportunities for all. UNHCR supported the participation of Soman Ahmad, a young Afghan refugee who delivered a speech on behalf of all people of concern residing in Belarus.

DENMARK: On 6 April 2019 UNHCR contributed the second op-ed in a two part series to the well-known media Altinget.dk on a debate named "Can Syrian refugees be returned", to which UNHCR was invited to contribute. The op-ed advocated for the need to continue and enhance the support to the neighbouring countries who carry the largest responsibility for Syrian refugees, and pointed to some of the legal and material obstacles regarding to safety that need to be addressed in order to reach more conducive conditions for returns.

European Youth Initiative Fund: UNHCR's European Youth Initiative Fund selected 12 projects in 9 countries in April. The EYIF awards small grants to youth-led projects aimed at enhancing social cohesion and skills building and to empower youth who are particularly affected by displacement. Projects were innovative and diverse, including journalism workshops, documentary film making and improving youth participation in politics. The projects will be completed in 2019 in Armenia, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Serbia, Spain and Ukraine.

FRANCE: On 24 April, Ofpra released its annual activity report for the year 2018. According to the report, 92,338 first applications for international protection were lodged by adults, while 9,106 applications for reconsideration were registered together with 2,188 fresh claims from minors, giving a total of 123,625 claims in 2018, all in all amounting to an increase of 22.7% compared to 2017. The recognition rate registered a slight decline with 26.6% (27.2% in 2017, 28.8% in 2016). Afghanistan (4,994, 65% recognition vs. 83% in 2017), Syria (3,423, i.e. 90%), Sudan (2,778, i.e. 62.4%) and China (1,285, i.e. 47.6%). %). The report can be consulted online.

GERMANY: On 15 April, the HC made a one day visit to

Berlin and met the German Chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss on refugee issues related to Syria, CEAS, secondary movements, and G5 Sahel region. The Chancellor confirmed Germany's role as a co-convenor of the Global Refugee Forum in December. The HC also met with Secretary of State of the German MFA, Antje Leendertse, who was recently appointed to the position and familiar with UNHCR from her time as Ambassador at the PM in Geneva.

GREECE: The Assistant High Commissioner for Operations (AHC-O) and the RBE Deputy Director visited Greece, and the reception centres on Evros at the Greek-Turkish land border, and on Samos island (7-10 April). During their visit, Minister of Migration Policy Dimitris Vitsas announced concrete emergency measures to ease overcrowding at Samos reception centre including deployment of naval ships to transfer individuals to the mainland, diversion of new arrivals to other islands for reception and identification procedures, and expedited asylum procedures, including vulnerability assessments. UNHCR has offered its support should additional urgent measures be required. Since the beginning of April, 713 persons have been transferred from Samos to the mainland.

The 2018 report of the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) found an increase in the reported number of violent attacks against minorities in Greece last year, in their majority against refugees and migrants. RVRN was established in 2011 by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and UNHCR, and is a network of 46 NGO and civil society actors, the Greek Ombudsman and the Migrants' Integration Council of the Municipality of Athens as observers.

IRELAND: Trinity College Dublin has joined Ireland's other 6 universities in issuing plans for refugee scholarships. The scholarships will support students with equipment, free meals and an annual stipend of €1,500 for each scholar. At present refugees do not qualify for the same fees as Irish students unless they are resident in Ireland for at least 3 years prior to university commencement.

ITALY: 146 refugees were evacuated on 29 April from Libya to Italy in a joint operation between UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and Italian and Libyan authorities. Italy is the first country to have stepped forward to receive evacuees from Libya since the recent violence began. The evacuation was carried out in collaboration with the Libyan Ministry of Interior. The group, including 46 children separated from their families, landed in Rome from Libya's Misrata airport, and will be hosted in emergency accommodation centres. "This evacuation is a vital lifeline for people who faced serious threats and dangers inside Libya," said Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "It's now

crucial that other States match this gesture and offer similar evacuation places for refugees caught up in the conflict.

UNHCR, is pleased with the funding of seven million euros provided by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its Africa Fund, for interventions supporting Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, refugees in Tunisia, and displaced persons and refugees in Libya. In Ethiopia, the funding will help local authorities in their commitment to support Eritrean refugees in the northern region of Tigray through health care, activities for refugee children and people with specific needs. The UNHCR project for Tunisia aims to support local authorities in welcoming migrants and asylum seekers, particularly in the areas of Sfax and Medenine. In Libya, the goal is to guarantee assistance to 750 refugee families, to distribute core relief items to some 20,000 displaced families and to start up to 17 rapid impact projects for the benefit of 8,500 people.

NETHERLANDS: On 8 April, UNHCR attended the first ever Refugee Business Summit, organized by Tent Foundation in Utrecht. During the summit, UNHCR and ten Dutch companies discussed their investment in refugees in and outside the Netherlands. The companies also pledged to support 3,500 refugees in the coming years. UNHCR Senior Private-Sector Advisor Jaime Bourbon de Parme participated in a panel with a Deputy Director from the Foreign Affairs Ministry along with the former CEO of Unilever, which highlighted the importance of companies who support refugees globally.

PORTUGAL: Thirteen refugees from Syria and Iraq, including six children, arrived safely in Lisbon on 3 April after leaving Istanbul, Turkey as part of a Portuguese refugee resettlement programme for 2018-2019, supported by UNHCR, and IOM, the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The new arrivals are the first to be resettled to Portugal from Turkey, where they have previously been hosted after fleeing conflict in their home countries. "UNHCR has been supporting Portugal strengthen its resettlement scheme, deploying a resettlement expert to Lisbon and working with Portuguese authorities to identify and refer at-risk refugees in Egypt and Turkey as part of the program," said UNHCR's Regional Spokesperson for Southern Europe, Carlotta Sami. "Through IOM's offices in Portugal and Turkey, we have been supporting the Government of Portugal towards its overall commitment to receive 1,010 refugees by October this year," said IOM Portugal's resettlement focal point Sónia Pereira.

SPAIN: On 25-26 April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain and UNHCR jointly organized the International Conference on Addressing Statelessness in Europe in Madrid. Participants included representatives from EU Member States, international and region-

al organizations, academia and civil society. The Conference, which was built upon UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-2024, was held in light of the upcoming High-Level Segment on Statelessness of UNHCR's Executive Committee that will convene in Geneva on 7 October to mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024. The joint AECID-UNHCR exhibition, "Statelessness, the labyrinth of the invisible" was on display at Casa Árabe of Madrid from 25 April to 5th of May. The artistic proposal aimed at conveying the feeling of invisibility through maze-like path with a structure of suspended images printed on fabric and mirrors, and audio-visual supporting, that invited visitors to put themselves in the shoes of stateless persons.

SWEDEN: On 12 April 2019 the SMA decided to stop making return decisions to Sudan and to halt the enforcement of return decisions to the country. The reason for this is the security situation in Sudan and the difficulties in foreseeing how the situation will develop.

SWITZERLAND: On 23 April, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) published this year's first quarterly asylum statistics. According to SEM, close to 3,700 asylum applications have been filed since the beginning of 2019, which is 9% less than in the same period in 2018. Despite the new accelerated asylum procedures implemented in March 2019, the number of applications submitted this March have remained practically the same as last year.

UKRAINE: The "Easter ceasefire" announced on 18 April was not respected and ceasefire violations continued. As a result of the continuous increase of shelling, the Shelter Cluster reported that 59 civilian homes were either damaged or destroyed on both sides of the 'contact line' in east Ukraine in April. This represents a slight increase as compared to March. Six civilians were killed, most victims of explosive remnants of war (ERW). UNHCR and its partners - Proliska, Right to Protection (R2P), Slavic Heart, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), MOST and the Donbas Development Center (DDC) – continue to be among the first responders for conflict-affected settlements along the 'contact line', providing impacted persons of concerns with non-food item kits, emergency repair materials as well as referrals to other protection services such as legal aid and psychosocial support. As part of its Accountability to Affected Population (AAP), UNHCR revamped its hotline, which will now also provide primary legal aid to IDPs in Ukraine.

On the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, 4 April, UNHCR called for increased efforts to address the dangers and legacy of landmines in eastern Ukraine, one of the most landmine-contaminated areas in the world and where mines continue to be laid in the ongoing conflict.

On 16 April, the US Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), spearheaded a Humanitarian Development Nexus (HDN) event together with USAID/OFDA and the US Embassy in Ukraine. The event aimed at bringing together US-funded humanitarian and development partners to find opportunities for cooperation and complementarity, thus paving the way for HDN type projects. During the event, UNHCR presented activities that could be eventually handed over to development actors such as legal aid (including capacity building of the state-funded Free Legal Aid Centers, FLACs), community based protection and empowerment as well as housing and shelter.

UNHCR's seven key calls to European Parliament candidates

Conflict, violence and persecution are forcing more and more people to flee their homes. Most of them stay in their own country or flee to neighbouring countries, not Europe. Even though fewer people now seek safety in Europe, too many are still tragically dying at sea in search of a new future. Pushbacks and abuses at land borders also continue and many people seeking protection cannot enter Europe.

The European Union (EU) can play a leading role in protecting refugees in Europe and abroad, including by supporting the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. This new global deal will help provide stronger support for the countries where most refugees live. It also encourages sharing more fairly the responsibility of helping those who are forced to flee their country and seek refuge elsewhere.

With a common response, EU countries can securely and humanely manage arrivals of people in a way that works for both refugees and the communities that host them. By supporting countries outside of Europe, the EU can also reduce dangerous journeys and help find long-term opportunities for refugees to thrive and not just survive.

UNHCR has been continuously interacting and sharing the "7 key calls to the next European Parliament" with stakeholders from all EU institutions, including with the lead candidates of the main political parties running for the next European Parliament.

REFUGEE STORIES

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Coder who fled Syria embarks on a new life in Serbia

By Helen Womack in Belgrade

Mawaheb Seraj came to Serbia as a refugee with a hope, a dream and a cat. Now he has fulfilled his hope of finding the right job, met the woman of his dreams and his cat has a new companion: a dog. Mawaheb studied programming at university in Aleppo, Syria, but war forced him to flee in 2012.

He sought protection in Serbia and once he got full refugee status he was eligible to apply for jobs. He soon found one with IPS Energy, a global company that finds digital solutions for the energy industry. "We scouted out some 20 candidates and chose Mawaheb," says Ivan Petkoski, who manages the firm's branch in Serbia. "He was the best fit because of his skills and previous work. Where he came from was irrelevant."

Petkoski was surprised at how well Mawaheb spoke Serbian, although it was not a requirement for the job.The secret to his fluency probably lay in Mawaheb's chance meeting with a woman in a park one winter day two years ago. She was walking her Jack Russell terrier when they met and the pair have been inseparable since. In June 2018 they had a Serbian civil wedding, followed by a Muslim ceremony. Success as a programmer has given Mawaheb a platform to settle in easily in Serbia and an opportunity to give back in a new land.

Clearing landmines in Ukraine, one careful step at a time

By Oksana Grytsenko in Toretsk, Ukraine

Ukraine is one of the most mine-affected countries in the world, limiting freedom of movement and posing a serious threat to civilians crossing the contact line. The story of Volodymyr Zayika, 71, captures how the risk of mines affect his everyday life. He recalls taking shelter in the basement

of his family home in eastern Ukraine from the shelling above ground. After the bombardment had calmed down, he ventured out to check on the electricity supply in an attempt to repair the power when he remembers feeling his foot snag on a wire."There was a flash," he recalls. "Something hissed on my right. Then there was a blast." Volodymyr came to on the ground, lying in a cloud of smoke and covered in blood. Later, he learned he had stepped on a trip wire and received wounds to his head, groin and chest, as well his leg and shoulder. Two local men put him on a vegetable cart and pulled him to the nearest checkpoint, where he was driven to hospital in Toretsk.

After a month at the hospital, Volodymyr and his wife Valentyna, 71, discovered they had nowhere to return home to. They say the fighting had forced all the residents of Pivdenne to flee. Now displaced, they live in a relative's flat in Toretsk, just 15 kilometres from the 'contact line', which separates Government controlled and non-Government controlled areas.

The family's experience is all-too common in Ukraine – one of the most mine-affected countries in the world, with over 1,000 mine-related casualties recorded since 2014. In 2018, 43 per cent of civilian casualties were attributed to mine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) incidents. Mine incidents remained the leading cause of child casualties in 2018.

Fortunately, help is at hand. Demining experts are risking life and limb to make the area safe for people. Among them is 37-year-old Ukrainian Tetiana Nikoforva. "I'm happy to be reducing the chance of deaths of both adults and children," she says. "I feel myself at the right place here. I wanted to be needed." Approximately 1.3 million people are displaced raine, and UNHCR believes it is essential that all children and adults are taught to identify landmines and ERW's. HALO Trust, a British demining charity, is helping to clear these landmines, as part of a broader humanitarian mine action response, coordinated under the Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR.