

ITALY – SEA ARRIVALS

UNHCR UPDATE #7

September 2016

KEY FIGURES¹

16,975

Persons arriving by sea in September 2016.

132,043

Persons arriving by sea in 2016 (as of 30 September).

19,001

Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) arrived by sea in 2016 (as of 30 September).

83,930

Asylum applications in 2016, including from sea and other arrivals (as of 30 September).

46%

Average EU protection rate of top nationalities arriving by sea in Italy between January and September 2016.

159,419

Persons accommodated in reception centres on 30 September 2016.

1,259

Asylum-seekers relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme (as of 30 September 2016).

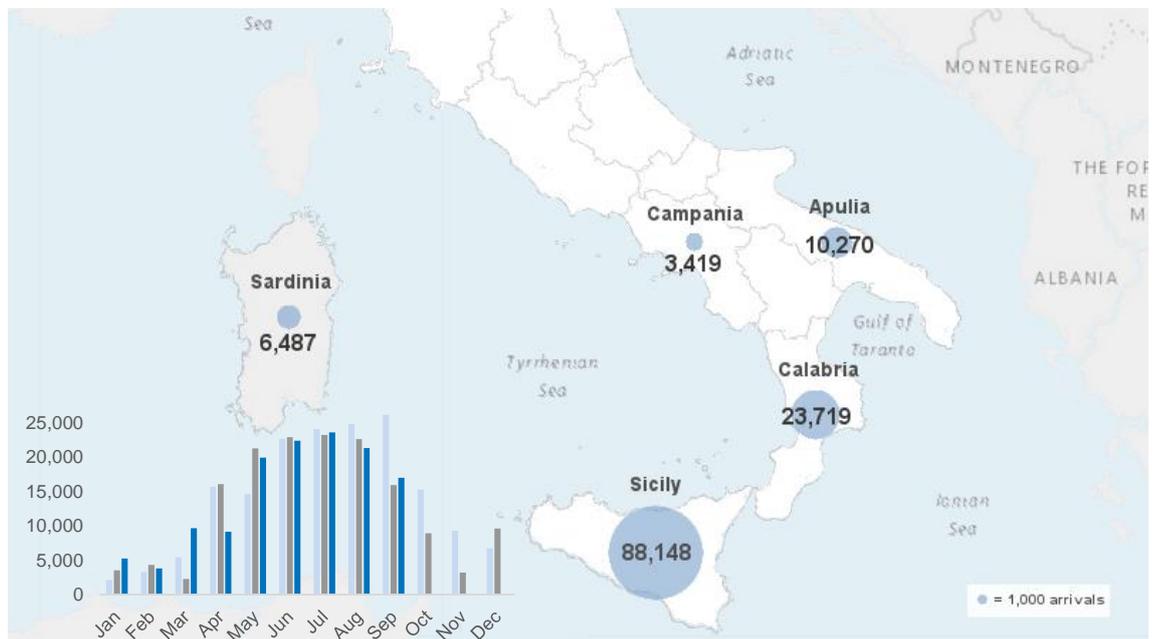
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UNHCR staff posted at key arrival points.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 16,975 refugees and migrants arrived to Italy by sea in September 2016. This number is slightly higher than sea arrivals in the same period of 2015, when 15,922 reached the Italian shores. Monthly trends remain, however, comparable to last year. Main nationalities among sea arrivals are Nigerian, Eritrean, Gambian, Ivoirian and Guinean.
- At the end of September 2016, the total number of sea arrivals stood at 132,043, compared to 132,071 during the first nine months of 2015. Total sea arrivals are thus almost equal to last year.
- Between 01 January and 30 September, 19,001 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived to Italy by sea. This corresponds to 14% of all sea arrivals in the first nine months of the year, a significant increase compared to 2015, when 7% of all registered arrivals were UASC.
- At the end of September 2016, 159,419 asylum-seekers were accommodated in reception centres across Italy, 77% among them were accommodated in temporary facilities.
- In September 2016, 238 asylum-seekers were relocated to Finland, Portugal, Romania and Switzerland, under the EU relocation scheme. Since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council decisions on relocation, 1,259 persons (3.2% of the 39,600 target) have been relocated from Italy.

Sea Arrivals 2016 to Italy per region of disembarkation



¹ Sources: UNHCR, Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, EC. Unless stated otherwise, figures reflect the period up to 30 September.

SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 1. Sea arrivals | January – September, 2014, 2015 and 2016



In September 2016, 16,975 persons arrived to Italy by sea. Numbers of monthly sea arrivals decreased compared to those recorded during the summer (21,294 in August and 23,552 in July). This is consistent with trends in previous years. September sea arrivals increased by 7% if compared to the same period last year (15,922). However, **between 01 January and 30 September 2016, the total number of refugees and migrants arrived by sea is 132,041, which is almost equal to sea arrivals in the first nine months of 2015 (132,071).** Therefore, the decrease in persons using the Eastern Mediterranean route had so far no impact on the arrival numbers in the Central Mediterranean region. New arrivals were disembarked in the main ports of southern Italy, approximately 30% of them were disembarked in the four operational hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto and Trapani), while some 70% arrived in other sea ports.

UNHCR staff is present during all phases of disembarkation procedures, both at hotspots and at non-hotspot sites in various locations in southern Italy. UNHCR field teams (25 staff) render support to the authorities, delivering information on international protection and the EU relocation scheme, as well as identifying people with specific needs. Upon disembarkation, UNHCR staff provide new arrivals with leaflets on international protection and later conduct face-to-face informative sessions. Preliminary information is delivered immediately after new arrivals are pre-identified, while in-depth information is provided once persons have been registered.

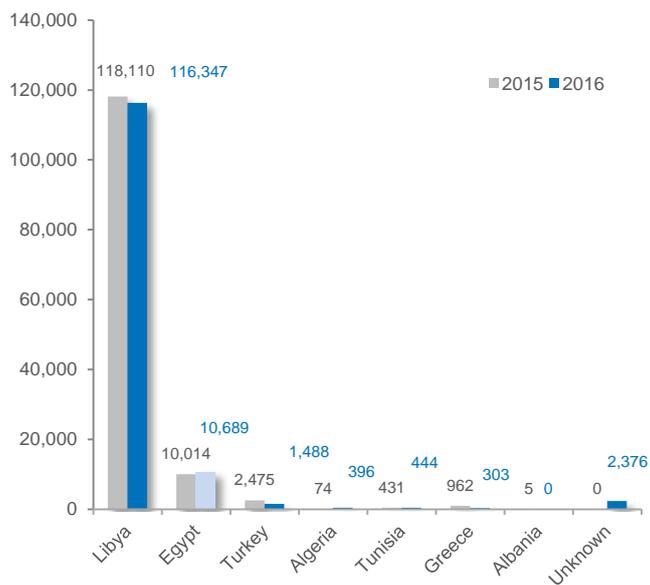
Figure 2. Top 10 nationalities of sea arrivals | January-September, 2015 and 2016



Between 01 January and 30 September 2016, **persons originating from over 60 different countries arrived to Italy** by sea. Nearly 80% of sea arrivals came from just ten countries: Nigeria (21%), Eritrea (12%), The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea (7% each), Sudan (6%), Mali, Senegal, Somalia (5% each) and Bangladesh (4%). Nigerian arrivals in January-September 2016 have increased by 5% compared to the first nine months of last year and they now represent the top nationality among sea arrivals to Italy. During the month of September, 28% of all persons arrived by sea originated from Nigeria. Eritreans accounted for 4% of the monthly sea arrivals, but are still ranked second most represented nationality of sea arrivals in 2016. Between 01 January and 30 September, arrivals of nationals from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, The Gambia, Senegal and Mali increased if compared to the same period of last year, while Somalis decreased by 38%. Out of 784 Syrians who arrived to Italy by sea since the beginning of the year, 207 reached Italian shores in the month of September. This is a considerable decrease compared to 2015, when Syrians were the fifth most represented nationality among all arrivals. According to 2Q 2016 EUROSTAT, around 46% of all sea arrivals to Italy would be entitled to a form of protection if the average EU recognition rates were applied.

SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

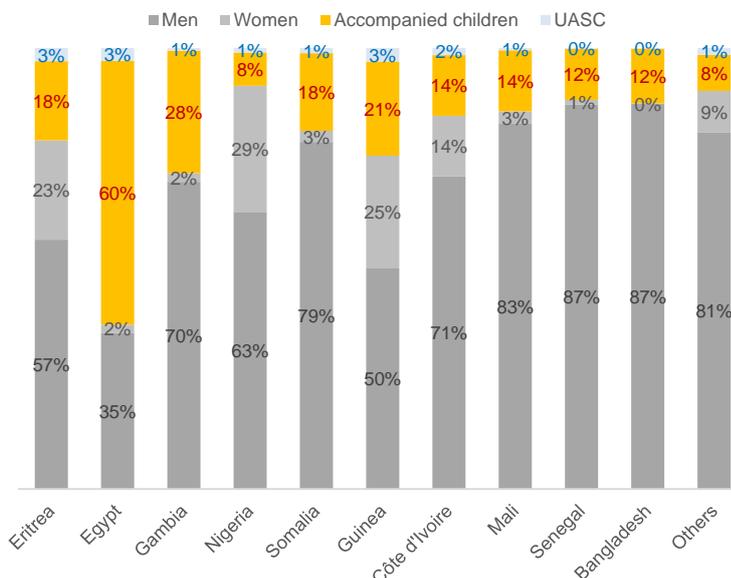
Figure 3. Sea arrivals by country of departure | January – September, 2015 and 2016



The vast **majority of sea arrivals continue to leave from Libya** (88%). Consistently with such trend, Libya remained the main country of departure in September. During the month, Sabratha was reported as the most common departure point. Only approximately 8% of persons reaching Italian shores in September departed instead from Egypt. Most new arrivals were disembarked following SAR operations conducted at high sea by various actors, including the Italian Navy, the Italian Coast Guard, vessels by other countries and NGOs. In the vast majority of cases, rescue operations involved persons travelling on board rubber dinghies or wooden boats each carrying an average of over 100 persons. A number of autonomous sea arrivals were also observed during the month, with relatively smaller groups of persons reaching southern Italy having departed mainly from Turkey, but also from Algeria, Greece and Tunisia. Persons were intercepted by the authorities off the Italian coast and transferred to port sites where they underwent disembarkation procedures. During the month of September, most autonomous sea arrivals from Turkey involved nationals of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Groups departing from Turkey tend to be smaller in number (between 20 and 50 persons) and normally travel on board of sailing boats. However, during the month of September, a larger group comprising over 290 persons reached Italy from the Turkish coastal town of Izmir, travelling on a three-deck metal fishing boat.

Crossing the Mediterranean Sea continues to entail particularly perilous journeys. Between January and September 2016, 3,543 refugees and migrants are reported to have died or went missing whilst trying to reach European shores. In September alone, more than 370 persons lost their lives in the Mediterranean.

Figure 4. Top 10 nationalities of UASC sea arrivals: breakdown by age and gender | January - September 2016*



Like in previous years, men continue to represent the vast majority (70%) among sea arrivals, while adult women account for 14% of the total. UASC also represent 14% of all persons arriving by sea since the beginning of the year. This is a sharp increase from the 7% share they accounted for in 2015. Their numbers almost doubled when compared to the first nine months of last year (10,133 in January-September 2015 vs 19,001 so far in 2016). Over 2,100 UASC were disembarked in the month of September alone. Gender and age profiles vary significantly among different national groups. Higher proportions of women are observed among Nigerian arrivals (women account for 29% of the total), as well as among nationals of Somalia (25%), Cameroon (25%), Ethiopia (24%) and Eritrea (22%). An increase can be noted with regard to Nigerian women: 7,768 have reached Italian shores this year, while 4,408 had arrived in the first nine months of 2015 (24% of the total). The three main countries of origin of UASC arriving in 2016 are Eritrea, Egypt and The Gambia. The total number of Eritrean UASC arrived so far this year is comparable to last year's, but the UASC proportion among Eritrean arrivals continues to rise considerably (from 8% in January-September 2015 to 18% in January-September 2016). The numbers of both Gambian and Egyptian UASC increased significantly compared to the same period of 2015. Notably, 60% of all Egyptian sea arrivals are UASC. Gambians UASC account instead for 28% of all Gambians arrived by sea in 2016.

During post disembarkation procedures, UNHCR staff support authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, particularly persons with medical conditions, pregnant women and unaccompanied children, victims of trauma and survivors of torture or sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). UNHCR continues to work to strengthen the authorities' capacity to identify these persons with specific needs. Two UNHCR child protection experts currently work with the authorities to promote good practices on best interest assessment and determination. UNHCR staff also support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception facilities.

HOTSPOTS AND RELOCATION

Figure 5. Monthly sea arrivals to Italy. Relocation nationalities January 2014 - September 2016

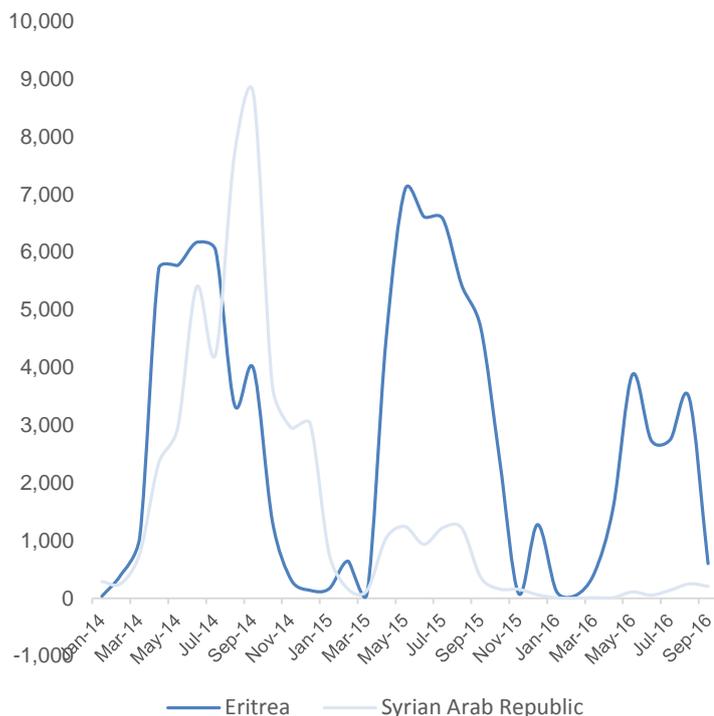
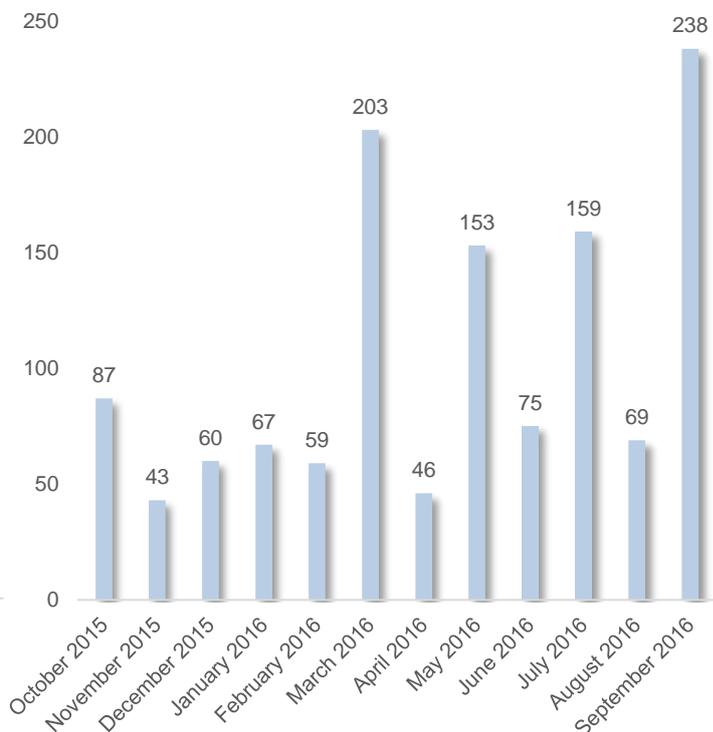


Figure 6. Persons relocated in Italy under the EU relocation scheme October 2015 - September 2016



The hotspot approach foresees that new arrivals are identified and fingerprinted, with a view to strengthen the authorities’ capacity to identify all persons reaching Italian shores. Four hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto and Trapani) are currently operational in Italy, with a total official capacity of over 1,400 places. Furthermore three regional hubs (Bari, Crotona and Villa Sikania) have been set up and host relocation candidates, with a total official capacity of over 2,200 places. Representatives of the European border agency Frontex, EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Europol and Eurojust are providing operational support to the Italian authorities in the hotspots. In 2016, UNHCR participated in an ad hoc Ministry of Interior’s working group supporting the Italian authorities in the drafting of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be applied by competent authorities in the hotspots with the aim to ensure that access to the territory and to the asylum procedure are granted in accordance with national and international standards. The SOPs were published in May 2016: UNHCR monitors their implementation in the hotspots and advocates for their application also in other disembarkation sites.

In close cooperation with EASO, UNHCR provides potential relocation candidates with counselling service and information. As of 22 September 2016, candidates eligible for relocation include citizens of Syria, Eritrea, Burundi, Mozambique, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar and Yemen. Nationals of the Central African Republic (CAR) no longer meet the 75% recognition rate threshold provided for by the September 2015 EU Council Decisions. Iraqi citizens were also eligible for relocation until 8 July 2016, but no longer meet the eligibility threshold. Based on the latest available EU data, the average recognition rate for CAR nationals has fallen to 69%, while 61% of Iraqis are now recognized international protection across the EU. Since the adoption of the EU Council Decisions on relocation, September 2016 was the month with the highest number of relocation transfers from Italy, 238 persons were relocated to Finland, Portugal, Romania and Switzerland, bringing the total of relocations from Italy at the end of September to 1,259. However, this is still only 3.2% of the 39,600 target to be met by the end of September 2017. Since the adoption of the relocation scheme, Italy received 3,599 pledges from participating European countries, while over 20,000 potential candidates reached Italian shores in the same period. UNHCR is calling on States to increase pledges, including for unaccompanied and separated children, speed up the registration and transfers of candidates, and for more nationalities fleeing war and persecution to have access to the scheme. Effective relocation is key to increasing solidarity and responsibility sharing in Europe, ensuring the better management of population movements and helping to address irregular secondary movement and reliance on smuggler networks. This is particularly vital given the increasing number of people staying in Italy than in previous years, which is due to the implementation of the hotspot approach and increased controls at the borders to France, Switzerland and Austria. This has impacted on the capacity of Italy’s reception and asylum systems, and requires a strong gesture of solidarity from other Member States.

ASYLUM PROCEDURES

Figure 7. Asylum seekers by nationality | January – September 2016*

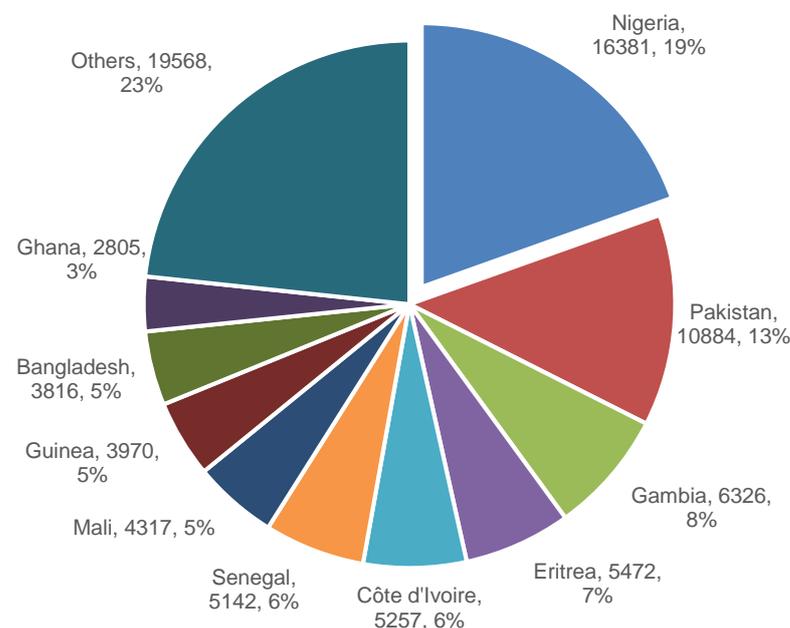
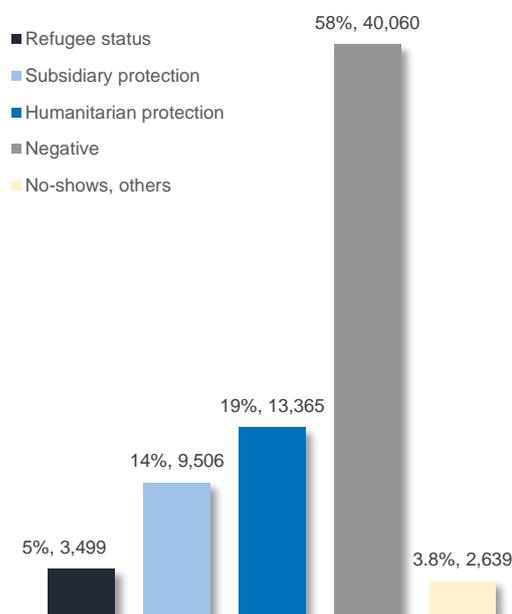


Figure 8. Outcome of RSD decisions in Italy | January – September 2016



So far in 2016, over 83,930 persons lodged an asylum application in Italy (plus 43% compared to January-September 2015). Among the main countries of origin of asylum-seekers are Nigeria, Pakistan, The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Eritrea, Mali, Guinea, Bangladesh and Ghana. Top nationalities of asylum-seekers do not necessarily coincide with main sea arrival nationalities: Pakistani nationals constitute the second largest group among asylum-seekers currently in Italy but hardly any arrive by sea, as the vast majority of them enter Italy via land, most likely through the northern borders with Austria and Slovenia. Two factors might have caused the increase in asylum applications this year. Firstly, onward departures across Italy's northern borders became more difficult due to tighter controls by both Italy and neighbouring countries. Therefore, the majority of those arriving by sea now remain and register their applications in Italy. Secondly, the hotspot approach, which strengthens identification and fingerprinting, makes secondary movements to other European countries less likely. UNHCR monitors admission procedures at border crossing points, focusing in particular on people with specific needs, such as UASC.

UNHCR participates in first instance Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, with staff members posted in the 47 operational decentralized Territorial Eligibility Commissions and providing advice on the use of eligibility criteria, procedural standards and country of origin information. Between 01 January and 30 September 2016, **the Territorial Commissions determined over 69,000 asylum applications**, reflecting a considerable increase compared to last year, when 71,117 first instance decisions were taken in the whole of 2015. So far in 2016, 5% were recognized as refugees, while 14% were granted subsidiary protection. Humanitarian protection was given to 19% of all applicants. This is based on national legislation and is granted when serious humanitarian grounds or constitutional and international obligations arise, such as those in Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. 58% of all asylum application were rejected.

The quality monitoring project developed, in cooperation with UNHCR, by the National Commission on the Right of Asylum, continues in 2016, with a view to develop recommendations to strengthen the quality of RSD procedures in Italy. The National Commission also developed with the help of UNHCR a project on trafficking in the context of asylum and RSD, aiming to draft Standard Operating Procedures for the early identification and adequate protection of potential victims of trafficking. Together with the Ministry of Interior and the National Commission for the Right of Asylum, UNHCR continues to be involved in the working group on the reform of the asylum procedure, which was set up in October 2015.

RECEPTION

Figure 9. Trends in reception | 2013 – 30 September 2016

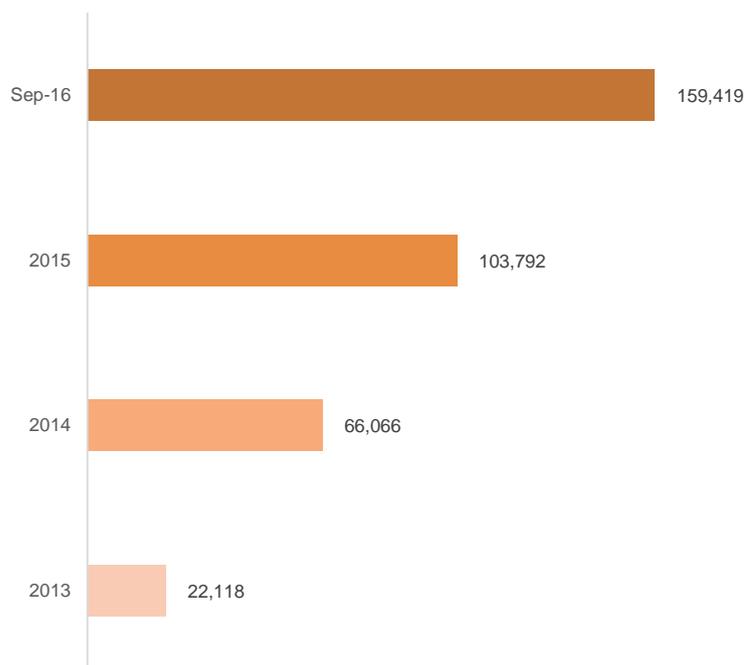
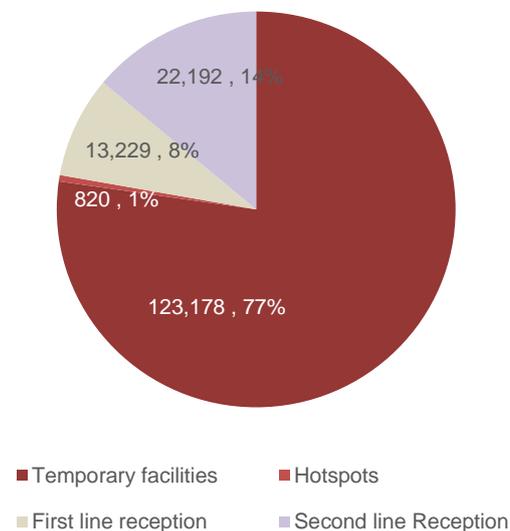


Figure 10. People accommodated in Italy by type of facility on 30 September 2016



On 30 September 2016, 159,419 persons were accommodated in reception centres across Italy.

Italian law provides for a 3-tier reception system, composed of: (1) first assistance facilities (so called CPSA) and hotspots; (2) first-line reception facilities, including first reception centres (so called CPA) and regional hubs; (3) second-line reception facilities (so called SPRAR centres, run by the National Association of Italian Municipalities). If no places are available in first-line or second-line reception centres, the law stipulates for persons to be accommodated in temporary facilities, also known as extraordinary reception centres, or CAS.

Persons remain in first assistance centres and hotspots only for the purposes of undergoing identification and fingerprinting procedures, before being transferred to first-line or second-line reception centres.

On 30 September 2016, 123,178 persons (77% of the total) were accommodated in temporary facilities, while 13,229 (8%) were in first line reception centres. Furthermore, 22,192 persons (14%) were in second line reception facilities (latest available data, as of 12 September 2016). Finally, 820 persons (0.5%) were in the four operational hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto and Trapani). These figures reflect the situation on 30 September 2016 and are subject to constant change.

Statistical data reflect how **the vast majority of persons are currently accommodated in extraordinary reception centres**. The government is reportedly working on a plan to gradually move to a system favouring ordinary reception over extraordinary reception, providing financial incentives to municipalities willing to adhere to SPRAR.

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