

ITALY

UNHCR UPDATE #13

March 2017

KEY FIGURES¹

24,292

People arrived by sea.

3,491

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived by sea.

31%

Sea arrivals disembarked in hotspots.

836

Dead and missing at sea.

37,915

Asylum applications, including from sea and other arrivals.²

22,106

Asylum decisions made by decentralized Territorial Commissions.

4,727

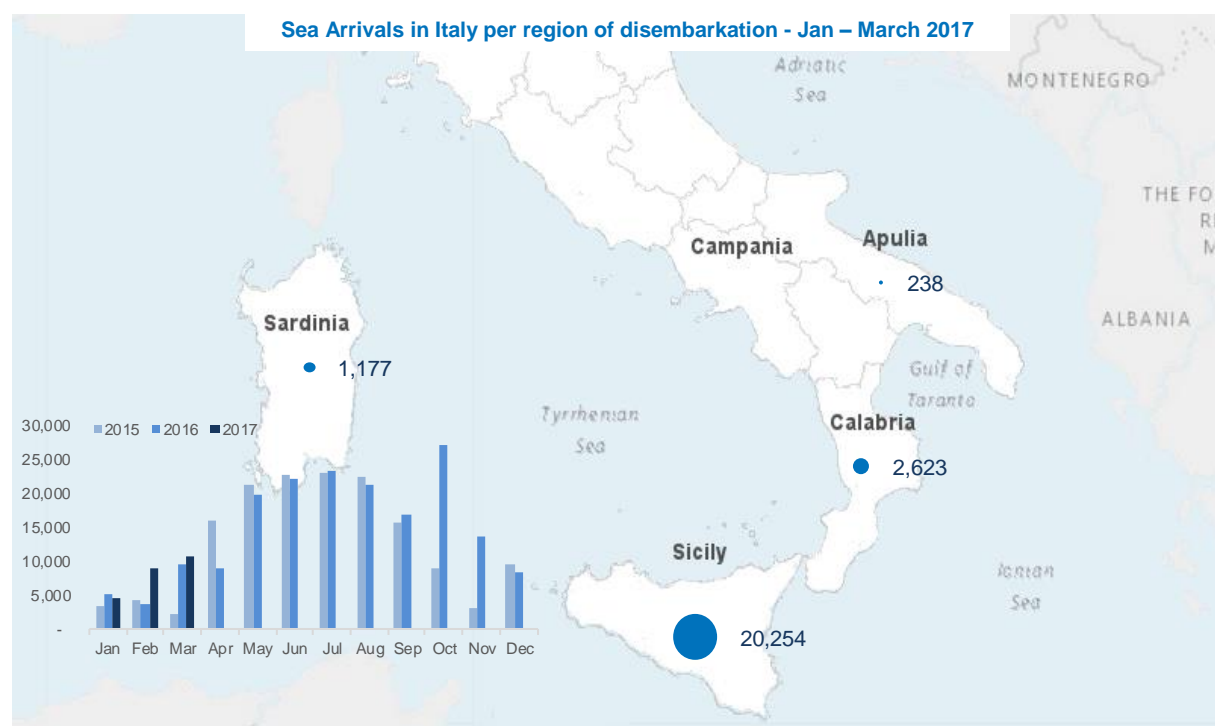
Total relocations from Italy under the EU relocation scheme.³

176,523

People accommodated in reception centres on 31 March 2017.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, a total of 24,292 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores. This is a 29% increase compared to sea arrivals in the same period last year (18,777). The main nationalities among sea arrivals are Guinean, Nigerian, Bangladeshi, and Ivorian.
- In 2017 so far, 3,491 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arrived in Italy by sea. This corresponds to 14% of all sea arrivals.
- Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, some 38,000 asylum applications were lodged in Italy, including both sea and other arrivals. In the same period, some 22,000 decisions were made by the Territorial Commissions.⁴
- Since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council decisions, 4,727 persons (12% of the 39,600 target)⁵ have been relocated from Italy.
- At the end of March 2017, 174,469 asylum-seekers were accommodated in reception centres across Italy, 78% of whom were in temporary facilities.



¹ Unless stated otherwise, figures reflect the period between 1 January and 31 March 2017. Sources: Ministry of Interior; Eurostat; European Commission (EC); UNHCR estimates.

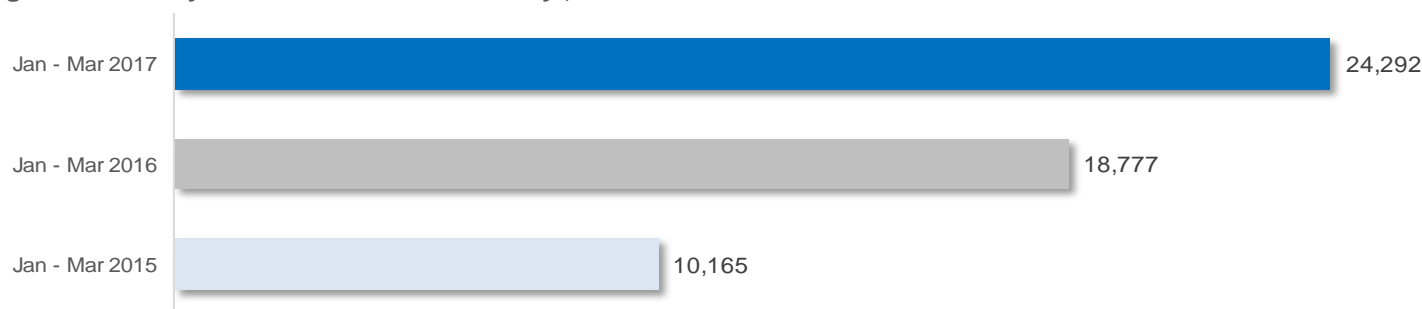
² Ministry of Interior, *I numeri dell'asilo*, http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/febbraio_2017.pdf and http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/marzo_2017.pdf (last updated on 19 April 2017; accessed on 27 April 2017).

³ This figure reflects total relocations from Italy since the adoption of the September 2015 EU Council decisions on relocations, as of 31 March 2017.

⁴ See footnote 2 above.

⁵ Out of 39,600 originally foreseen to be relocated from Italy, 34,953 commitments are legally binding according to EU Council Decisions (see also European Commission, *Member States' support to emergency relocation mechanism*, 25 April 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf).

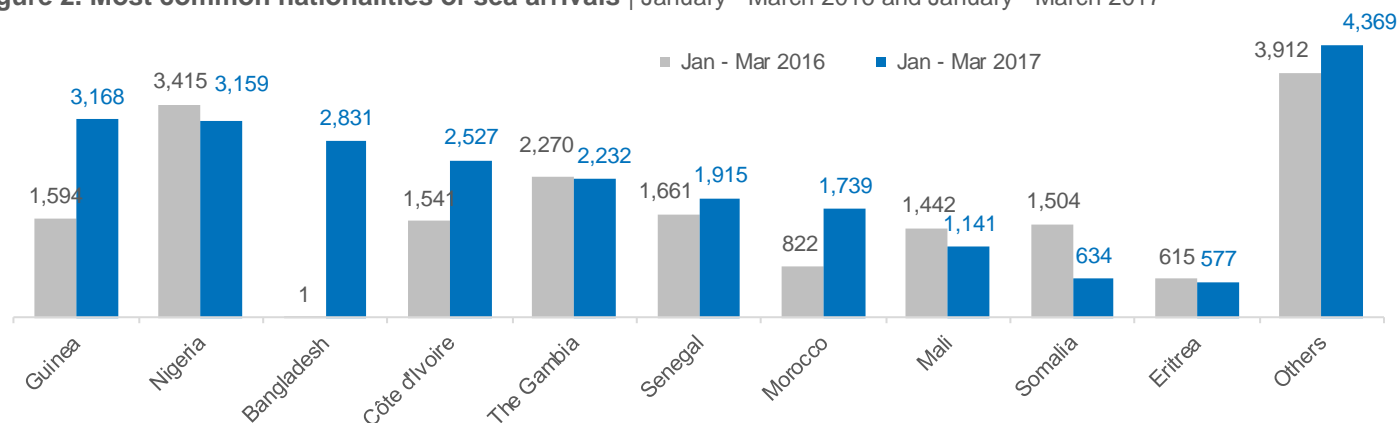
Figure 1. January – March sea arrivals in Italy | 2015, 2016, and 2017



Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, a total of 24,292 persons reached Italian shores. This is a 29% increase compared to sea arrivals in the same period last year (18,777). This year, sea arrival figures were slightly lower in January (4,467 in January 2017, compared to 5,273 in January 2016) and almost equal in March (10,853 in March 2017, compared to 9,676 in March 2016). However, the number of persons rescued at sea in February 2017 more than doubled (8,972 in February 2017, compared to 3,828 in February 2016). So far this year, most arrivals disembarked in the main ports of southern Italy. **31% of them disembarked in the operational hotspots** in Lampedusa, Pozzallo, and Trapani, while the others disembarked in non-hotspot sea ports. Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, no disembarkations occurred in Taranto, where there is a fourth operational hotspot.

UNHCR staff is present during all phases of disembarkation procedures, both at hotspots and non-hotspot sites in several locations in southern Italy. UNHCR field teams provide support to the authorities, delivering information on international protection and the EU relocation scheme. Upon disembarkation, UNHCR staff provide new arrivals with leaflets on international protection and conduct group information sessions. Preliminary information is delivered immediately after new arrivals are pre-identified⁶, while in-depth information is provided after registration. UNHCR also helps to identify people with specific needs, including persons with medical conditions, pregnant women, UASC, 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 persons with specific needs. UNHCR has also deployed experts on SGBV who are supporting the Office to draft a protection and response strategy.

Figure 2. Most common nationalities of sea arrivals | January - March 2016 and January - March 2017



Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, **individuals arriving by sea mainly originated from Guinea (13%), Nigeria (13%), Bangladesh (12%), Côte d'Ivoire (10%), The Gambia (9%), Senegal (8%), Morocco (7%), Mali (5%), Somalia (3%), and Eritrea (2%)**. This is comparable to the ten most common countries of origin of sea arrivals in the first three months of 2016, except for Bangladesh. While just one Bangladeshi national arrived by sea during the first three months of 2016, 2,831 reached Italian shores between January and March 2017. The numbers of Ivoirian and Guinean sea arrivals have also been on the rise. In the first three months of the year, arrivals increased by 64% and 99% respectively compared with the same period last year.

Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, increasing sea arrivals of Moroccan, Algerian, and Pakistani nationals were also observed, compared to the first three months of 2016. Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, 305 Algerians and 549 Pakistanis arrived by sea, compared to 124 and 72, respectively, in the same period last year. In the first three months of 2017, Syrian sea arrivals also increased considerably, with 294 reaching Italian shores, up from 16 in the same period last year. Similarly, an unusually high number of Iraqis (283) arrived by sea so far in 2017, whereas none had arrived in the first three months of 2016. Higher numbers of Libyans (88) were also recorded at landing points in southern Italy, compared to 17 arriving in the same period last year. On the other hand, while Eritrean sea arrivals in the first three months of 2017 are comparable to the same period last year, arrivals from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan dropped considerably, decreasing by 61%, 58%, and 40%, respectively.

According to Q4 2016 Eurostat data, around 40% of sea arrivals in Italy since the beginning of the year would be entitled to a form of protection if the average EU recognition rates were applied.

⁶ “Under the hotspot SOPs, pre-identification consists of initial screening interviews by State Police and Frontex of persons disembarked in order to collect statements related to the persons’ nationality. The information is collected in a specific form (foglio Notizie) and includes personal data and reasons for leaving his/her country. This self-declaration of nationality can be corrected later on and cannot lead to adverse legal consequences in relation to a request for international protection or relocation.” [para. B.5.5.1 of the Hotspot SOPs].

Figure 3. Sea arrivals by country of departure
January - March, 2016 and 2017

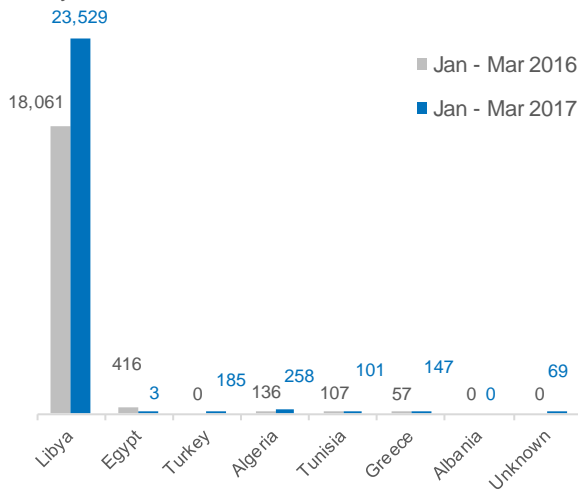
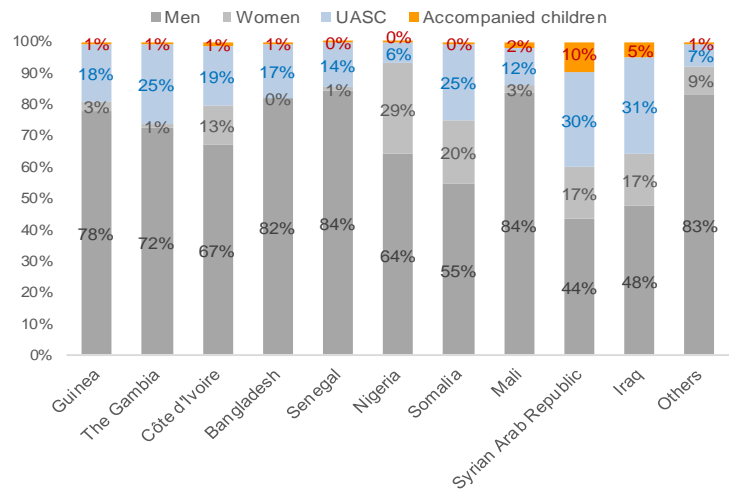


Figure 4. 10 most common nationalities of sea arrivals: breakdown by age and gender
January - March 2017



Libya is by far the main country of departure for persons arriving in Italy by sea. Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, 97% of sea arrivals crossed from Libya. Most of them reported leaving from the coastal town of Sabratha. New arrivals described the precarious security situation in Libya, as well as instances of abuse, including torture. Most new arrivals departing from Libya reached Italian shores following SAR operations conducted by various actors, including the Italian Navy, the Italian Coast Guard, vessels from other countries, and NGOs. Departures from Egypt have decreased compared to last year, with only three sea arrivals since the beginning of 2017.

Consistent with previous years, comparatively smaller groups of persons occasionally reach southern Italy directly after departing from Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, or Greece. Most of these autonomous arrivals involve vessels that were intercepted by the authorities just off the Italian coast and transferred to port sites, with persons then undergoing identification procedures. In a smaller number of cases, persons autonomously reached shore and were only subsequently intercepted and identified by the authorities. In March 2017, Algerian and Tunisian nationals reached Sardinian and Sicilian shores, while a small group of Somali, Sri Lankan, and Iranian nationals was intercepted close to Sicilian shores, having departed from Izmir, Turkey. Another group of persons from Pakistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Somalia reached Apulia, having departed from Turkey. Finally, two autonomous sea arrivals were reported at the Trieste port in March, consisting of one small group of Iraqi Kurdish and Afghan nationals and another of Iraqi and Syrian nationals, both of whom had travelled from Turkey.⁶

Voyage in unseaworthy boats and rough seas caused tragedies at sea in 2017, with 836 persons reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean Sea so far (779 in the Central Mediterranean). In March 2017 alone, 497 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the Mediterranean (479 in the Central Mediterranean).

During the first three months, 76% of arrivals were adult men, 9% women, 14% UASC, and 1% accompanied children. During the first three months of the year, the 223 accompanied children who arrived (1% of sea arrivals) represented a slight increase compared to 2016. Consistent with last year, the proportion of women is significantly higher

among Nigerian sea arrivals. 915 Nigerian women arrived in the first three months of 2017, accounting for 29% of all Nigerians reaching Italian shores since the beginning of the year, up from 25% in the same period last year. Similarly higher proportions of women were recorded among nationals of Côte d'Ivoire (13% women), Cameroon (21%), Somalia (20%), and Ethiopia (22%). Relatively higher proportions of women have also been registered among Eritreans, Syrians, and Iraqis, with women accounting for 17% of each national group.

A significant number of sea arrivals in Italy are UASC. Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, 3,491 UASC reached Italian shores (14% of sea arrivals). UASC arrivals have surged compared to the same period last year, when 2,680 UASC arrived. Between 1 January and 31 March 2017, the most common nationalities of UASC arriving by sea were Guinea (579), The Gambia (565), and Bangladesh (489). High numbers of UASC also originate from Côte d'Ivoire (476), Senegal (269), Nigeria (203), Somalia (133) and Mali (133). This year so far, UASC accounted for 30% of Syrian sea arrivals, 30% of Iraqi arrivals, 25% of Somali arrivals, 25% of Gambian arrivals, 18% of Guinean arrivals, 17% of Bangladeshi arrivals, and 12% of Eritrean arrivals. Consistent with increasing sea arrivals of Eritreans in March 2017, the number of Eritrean UASC arriving by sea also increased: 64 reached Italian shores in March (whereas one had arrived in January and 4 in February). In the first three months of 2017, relatively high numbers of Syrian (88) and Iraqi (87) UASC arrived.

Three UNHCR child protection experts currently work with the authorities to promote good practices on best interest assessment and determination. Training and capacity building activities, including with reception centre staff, are also carried out. Furthermore, UNHCR staff support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception facilities.

Figure 5. Monthly sea arrivals in Italy of Syrians and Eritreans (nationalities eligible for relocation) | January 2014 – February 2017

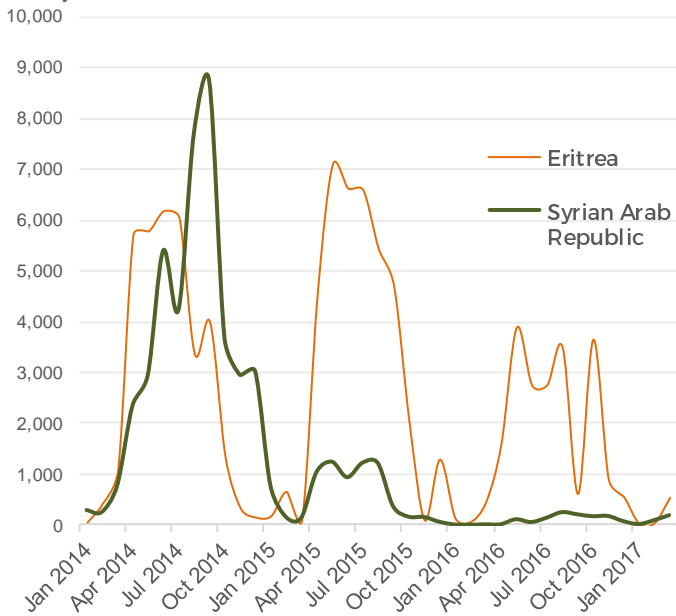
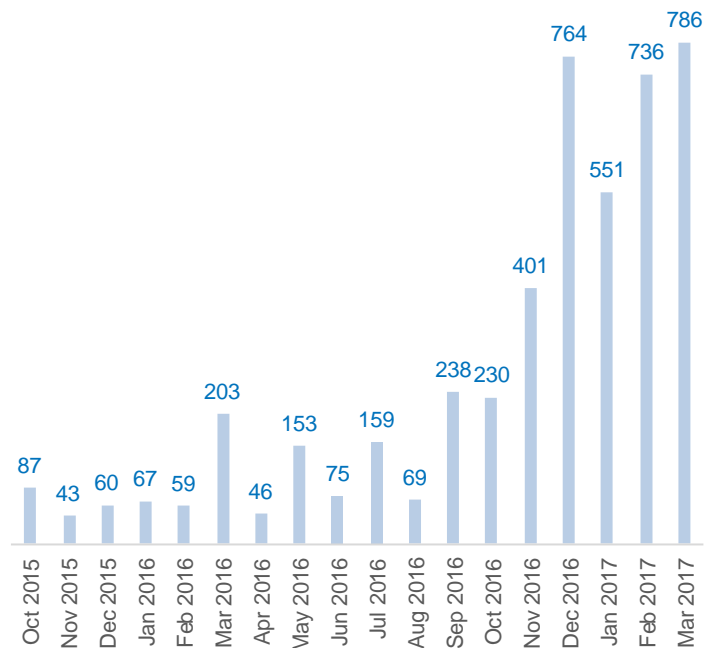


Figure 6. Relocations from Italy under the EU relocation scheme | October 2015 – February 2017



Four hotspots (Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto, and Trapani) are currently operational in Italy, with a total capacity of approximately 1,600 places. Representatives of the European border agency Frontex, EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Europol, and Eurojust provide operational support to Italian authorities in the hotspots, in order to identify new sea arrivals. However, identification procedures are routinely also carried out in other sea ports.

In 2016, UNHCR participated in an *ad hoc* Ministry of Interior working group supporting the Italian authorities in drafting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be applied by competent authorities in the hotspots and other main disembarkation sites.⁸ The SOPs - published in May 2016 and implemented as a pilot document - aim to ensure that access to the territory and to the asylum procedure are granted in accordance with national and international standards. UNHCR monitors the implementation of the SOPs and has suggested review and amendments with the aim to promote procedural safeguards and their tailored implementation in non-hotspot sites as well. In particular, UNHCR has advocated for discontinuing the practice of involving consular authorities in nationality screening before new arrivals have had the opportunity to state whether they wish to apply for asylum. UNHCR has also advocated for the improvement of screening procedures upon arrival.

In line with the hotspot approach, three official regional hubs (Bari, Crotone, and Villa Sikania) are also operational and host relocation candidates, with a total official capacity of over 2,200 places. These hubs also host asylum-seekers whose applications are to be determined by Italian authorities. Other facilities throughout the country also host relocation candidates.

In the first three months of 2017, some 870 potential relocation candidates (Syrians and Eritreans) arrived in Italy by sea. 551 persons were relocated in January 2017, 736 in February, and 786 in March. In March 2017, Syrian and Eritrean asylum-seekers were relocated to Germany, Norway, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Latvia, Slovenia, Lithuania, and Portugal. Total relocations from Italy have reached 4,727 (out of 34,953⁹). **No UASC have been relocated from Italy so far, as of the end of March 2017.** While authorities are making efforts to begin relocating UASC, an effective procedure is yet to be developed. UNHCR has been liaising with the Ministry of Interior to enhance efforts to implement UASC relocation.

In close cooperation with EASO, UNHCR provides potential relocation candidates with counselling and information. UNHCR also liaises with the Italian authorities to expedite the registration of non-registered candidates, in particular persons who were dispersed and then moved to facilities in Rome. UNHCR has also deployed a team in northern Italy, where it conducts capacity-building activities to assist the authorities in providing persons in transit with information on the asylum and relocation procedures. In northern Italy, the team also monitors land border procedures and their potential impact on access to international protection. Furthermore, the team monitors instances of readmission, focusing in particular on people with specific needs, such as UASC. Readmissions of UASC to Italy have been reported, particularly from France and Switzerland.

⁷ Please note that Figure 3 above does not account for arrivals at the Trieste port or at other ports in northern Italy, as MOI data only capture arrivals in the following regions: Sicily, Calabria, Apulia, Campania and Sardinia.

⁸ Para. B.1 of the SOPs allows for the application of the SOPs to be extended to other places of landing. See: <http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/hotspot>.

⁹ See footnote 5 above.

Figure 7. Persons accommodated in reception facilities in Italy | 2013-2016 and on 31 March 2017

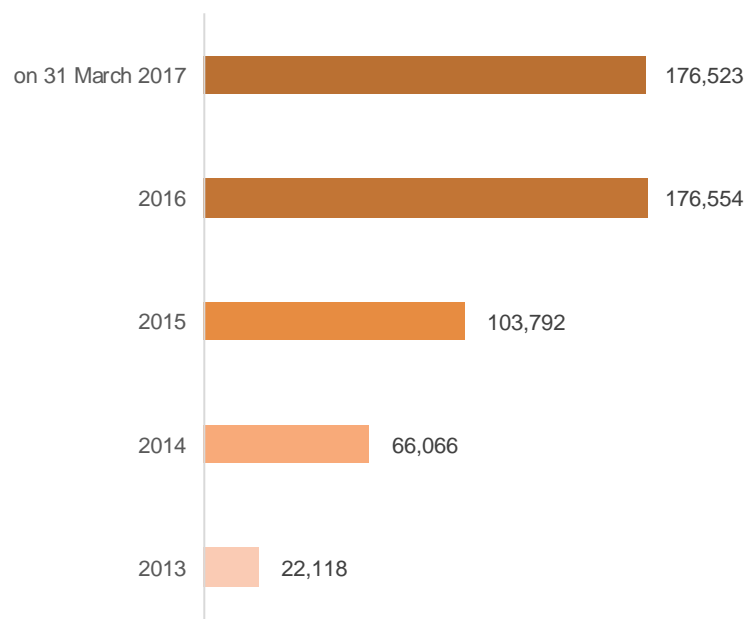
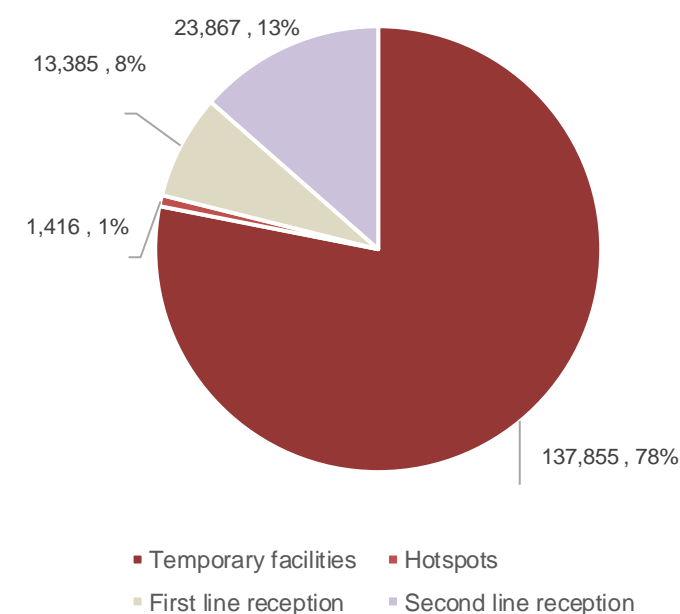


Figure 8. Persons accommodated in Italy by type of facility on 31 March 2017



On 31 March 2017, 176,523 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 CPSPA) and hotspots; (2) first-line reception facilities; and (3) second-line reception facilities (so-called SPRAR centres, run by the National Association of Italian Municipalities). If no spaces are available in first-line or second-line reception centres, the law stipulates that persons 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.

The vast majority of persons are currently accommodated in temporary reception centres. On 31 March 2017, 1,416 persons (1% of the total) were in the four operational hotspots, while 137,855 persons (78%) were accommodated in temporary facilities, and 13,385 (8%) were in first-line reception centres.¹⁰ Furthermore, 23,867 persons (13%) were in second-line reception facilities.¹¹ UNHCR provides support to the newly established monitoring body on reception, for instance by ensuring that their approach is age and gender sensitive (AGDM), ensures participation by beneficiaries, and has a focus on SGBV-related risks. UNHCR advocates for the overall improvement and harmonization of reception conditions, and for increased accountability within the reception system. It also advocates for the implementation of relevant domestic legislation requiring that reception facilities be equipped with dedicated services for persons with specific needs.

Reception capacity in Italy has steadily increased in recent years in order to keep pace with rising numbers of persons staying in the country. Such growing numbers can be linked to tighter border controls making it increasingly difficult for persons to move onward across Italy's northern borders to France, Switzerland, and Austria. Furthermore, strengthened identification procedures also contribute to the fact that the majority of those arriving by sea now remain and register their asylum applications in Italy. In 2016, over 181,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea and over 123,000 asylum applications were lodged, a significant increase compared to 2015, when some 84,000 claims were submitted.

¹⁰ These figures reflect the situation on 31 March 2017 and are subject to constant change. Please note that Mol data does not statistically capture the reception capacity of transit facilities opened by local authorities in the northern border areas (e.g. Como, Ventimiglia) to provide basic services to refugees and migrants in transit.

¹¹ As of 13 March 2017.

Figure 9. Asylum-seekers by nationality
January – March 2017

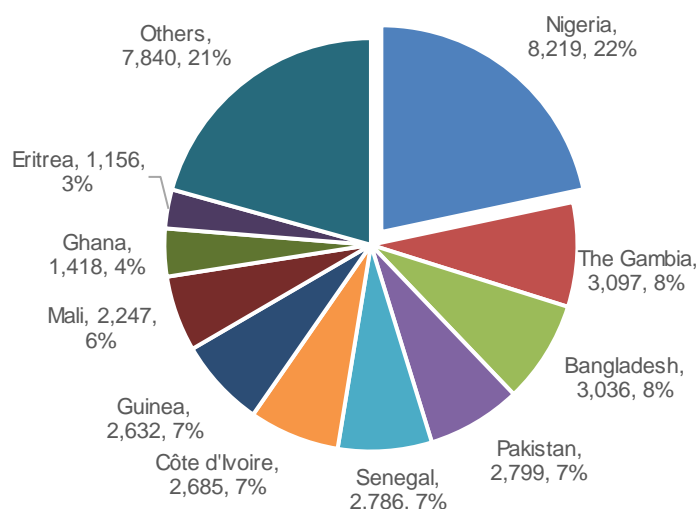
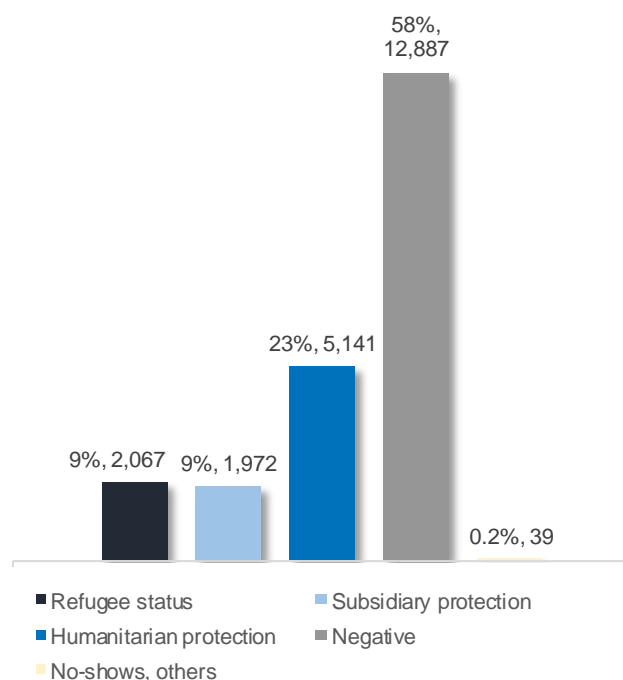


Figure 10. Outcome of RSD decisions in Italy
January – March 2017



During the first three months of 2017, 37,915 asylum applications (including UASC) were lodged in Italy. 32,180 applicants (85%) were male, while 5,735 (15%) were female. UASC have submitted 2,254 asylum applications in 2017. Since the beginning of 2017, the main countries of origin of asylum-seekers in Italy have been Nigeria (22% of the total); The Gambia (8%); Bangladesh (8%); Pakistan (7%); Senegal (7%); Côte d'Ivoire (7%); Guinea (7%); Mali (6%); Ghana (4%); and Eritrea (3%). Applications by Ukrainian nationals account for 2% of the total. 1% of asylum applications were lodged by Salvadorian nationals. Asylum claims by Moroccan nationals also account for 1% of the total.¹²

In the first three months of 2017, the 48 decentralized Territorial Commissions decided on 22,106 asylum claims. Although refugee status determination (RSD) trends should be assessed over time, 2017 statistics so far show an overall international protection rate of 18% (9% refugee status and 9% subsidiary protection), while 23% of applicants were granted humanitarian protection.¹³

UNHCR participates in first instance RSD procedures, with staff members posted in the 48 operational decentralized Territorial Eligibility Commissions. These UNHCR staff provide advice on the use of eligibility criteria, procedural standards, and country of origin information. Furthermore, UNHCR teams, in close cooperation with the National Commission for the Right of Asylum, monitor the quality of RSD procedures and support the implementation of guidelines for the referral of potential victims of trafficking who seek asylum. UNHCR is also involved in capacity-building activities, including training events for decision-makers, judges, and police staff.

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.

Contacts:

Carlotta Sami, Senior Regional Public Information Officer, sami@unhcr.org, Tel: +39 06 80212316, Cell +39 3356794746

Federico Fossi, Public Information Unit, fossi@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 0680212326, Cell +39 33 16355 517

Links: [Regional web portal](#) [UNHCR Italy webpage](#) [Twitter: @UNHCRItaly](#) [Facebook UNHCRItaly](#)

¹² See footnote 2 above.

¹³ See footnote 2 above.