

EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



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Libya. First evacuation of 162 vulnerable refugees from Libya to Italy

TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

The number of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe in 2017 dropped 48% compared to 2016 with over 172,300 people arriving by sea last year compared to over 362,700 in 2016. Of the three sea routes, most crossed via the Central Mediterranean route from North Africa to Italy with smaller numbers crossing via the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece and Cyprus and the Western Mediterranean route to Spain. Most arrivals by sea in 2017 were men (69%), largely due to the higher proportion of men crossing the Central Mediterranean route, while proportions of women and children were higher along the Eastern Mediterranean. Across all three routes, women comprised 13% of arrivals and children comprised 18%.

In Italy, sea arrivals of refugees and migrants dropped from over 181,400 in 2016 to over 119,300 in 2017 - a 34% decrease. The majority of refugees and migrants were rescued in the Central Mediterranean and disembarked at ports in the Calabria region. After over 22,900 refugees and migrants arrived by sea in Italy in May and June (over 23,500), the number of arrivals each month dropped significantly from July onwards, including during October, November and December when 5,900, 5,600 and 2,200 arrivals were recorded, respectively. The number of arrivals in December was a 74% decrease compared to those in December 2016. The primary nationalities arriving by sea in 2017 in Italy were from Nigeria (17%), Guinea (9%) and Côte d'Ivoire (8%).

In 2017, just under 30,000 refugees and migrants arrived by sea in Greece, an 83% decrease compared to over 173,400 arriving in 2016. Most arrivals were to the islands of Lesbos (12,700), Chios (6,600), and Samos (5,600), a similar trend to previous years. Most arrivals by sea to Greece in 2017 were from the Syrian Arab Republic (42%), Iraq (20%) and Afghanistan (12%), and 41% were men, with 37%

Mediterranean

178,550

 arrivals in 2017¹

3,120

 estimated dead/missing in 2017¹
Greece

29,700

4,134	3,215	2,364
Oct	Nov	Dec

Italy

119,370

5,979	5,645	2,327
Oct	Nov	Dec

Spain²

28,420

4,072	4,679	2,373
Oct	Nov	Dec

Cyprus

1,130

83	154	27
Oct	Nov	Dec

New asylum applications in EU+ countries³

624,630

 applications in 2017

1,236,360

 applications in 2016

1,325,565

 applications in 2015

33,100

Relocated in total ⁴
⁴Source: [European Commission](#) as of 3 January 2018.

children and 22% women. The highest numbers of arrivals were recorded in September and October with over 4,800 and 4,100, respectively but arrivals dropped gradually to half in December (2,400) as the winter weather set in. As the weather deteriorated further, the average daily number of arrivals in December dropped to 76 from 107 in November. Additionally, an estimated 5,550 people arrived in Greece through the Greek-Turkish land border of Evros in 2017. In December, there were 450 arrivals according to provisional data. These figures are lower than the estimated 700 who used this route in November, but one third higher than the estimated 300 arrivals of December 2016. The higher water levels of the Evros River and the low, winter temperatures have made this crossing even more dangerous.

In Spain, over 28,300 refugees and migrants arrived by sea and land in 2017, of which 78% are sea arrivals. This is twice as much as the overall figure for 2016 (some 14,000 persons), largely due to more people crossing the sea, primarily from Morocco. Only in December, some 1,600 persons reached the Andalusian coast after departing from Morocco. On the other hand, last year, some 6,200 reached Spain by land through Ceuta and Melilla, a 5% increase from arrival figures in 2016. Land arrivals by Syrians have been on the rise: in 2017, some 2,300 Syrians reached Melilla (20% more than in 2016), most of whom were families (71% are

 from **Greece**
21,700
 (33% of 66,400)

 from **Italy**
11,400
 (29% of 39,600)

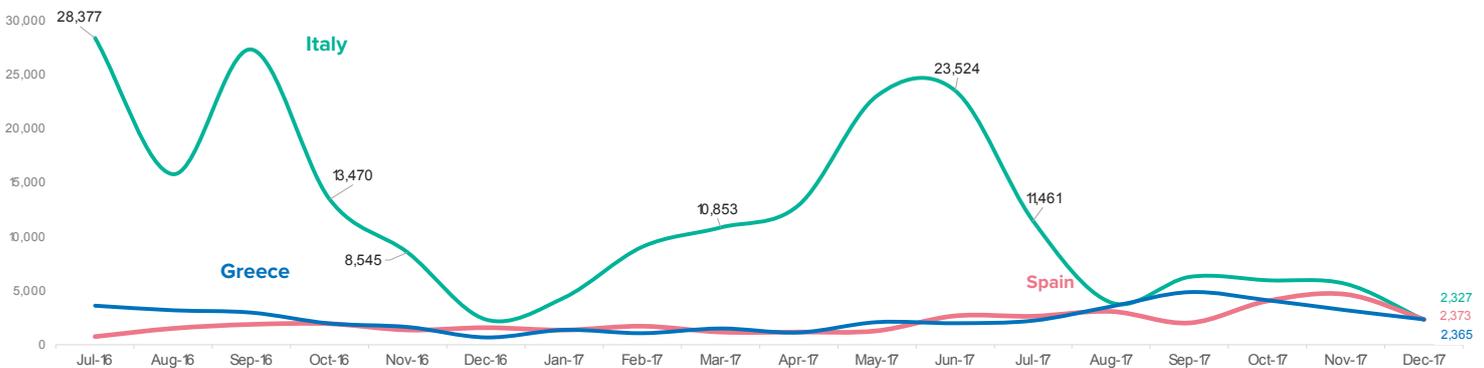
women and children).

Between 01 January and 31 December 2017, nearly 550 refugees and migrants have arrived by sea in Romania compared to just one person in 2016. Most arrivals were in August and September, with only one movement in November. Most of those using this route were from Iraq.

According to official statistics of the Turkish Coast Guard, over 21,900 individuals were rescued/intercepted at the sea borders of Turkey in 2017. On the other hand, official statistics of Turkish Land Forces state that over 30,600 individuals were intercepted at the western land borders of Turkey in 2017; 93% of the interceptions took place at Turkey's land border with Greece.

Since the closure of the so-called 'Balkans route', as of March 2016, refugees and migrants have attempted to reach Western Europe through alternative paths including through the South Eastern European region. For example, in 2017, Bosnia and Herzegovina faced a substantial increase in the number of asylum applications, with more than four times the number of asylum-seekers when compared to 2016 (376 in 2017 vs 79 in 2016). In December alone, 149 people applied for asylum in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

MEDITERRANEAN ARRIVALS - JANUARY to DECEMBER 2017



OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey 3.7 million
Refugees and asylum seekers ⁵

Syrian Arab Republic	3,424,000
Afghanistan	163,000
Iraq	153,000
Iran	34,000

⁵ Source: UNHCR as of 31 December 2017

Ukraine 1.8 million
Internally Displaced Persons ⁶ and **Conflict Affected Persons** ⁷

Refugees:	8	3,253
Asylum seekers:	9	5,525
Stateless persons:	10	35,463

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 30/06/2017

⁹ UNHCR as of 21/12/2017

¹⁰ State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 30/06/2017

Dead and missing: In 2017, nearly 3,100 people died or went missing while trying to reach Europe by sea. The number of deaths decreased 40% from those in 2016 (almost 5,100), largely due to the decreased numbers crossing in 2017. Of those crossing to Italy from North Africa, the rate of deaths decreased slightly to one death for every 42 persons who crossed to Italy compared to one death for every 39 who crossed in 2016.

Relocation: According to the [European Commission \(EC\)](#), over 33,000 asylum-seekers had been relocated from Greece and Italy as of the end of 2017, including 21,700 from Greece (out of 66,400 originally foreseen, 33% of the total) and 11,400 from Italy (out of 39,600 originally foreseen, 29% of the total).

Resettlement: In 2017, 26,435¹¹ persons have been resettled to Europe.

Returns: In December, 16 people were returned from Greece to Turkey on the basis of the [EU-Turkey Statement](#). The total number of people returned in accordance with the EU-Turkey Statement is

1,484 as of 31 December 2017.

Asylum Statistics: According to the latest asylum trends report issued by the [European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\)](#), there were 60,690 applications for international protection in the EU+ countries¹³ at the end of November. When compared to November 2016, this figure is considerably lower with 83,690 applications lodged across the EU+ during the same period last year. Demographics for November 2017 remain consistent with Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan being the top five countries of origin of applicants. 4% of all applications received registered as unaccompanied children of which majority were Afghan nationals. The overall EU+ protection rate was 35 % in November where Syrians and Eritreans were the top two citizenships with high recognition rates among decisions issued.

1,484

Returns EU-Turkey statement¹²

¹² Source: [Ministry of Citizen Protection](#), Greece as of 31 December 2017.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

GREECE: In a press statement released on 22 December, UNHCR [called](#) for further efforts by the Greek government to ease overcrowding, improve conditions and maintain the accelerated pace of departures for asylum-seekers authorized to move from the islands to the mainland. Government efforts, supported by UNHCR, to ease overcrowding in the Moria Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) on Lesbos through transfers to the mainland have reduced the population to 5,100 from 5,800 at the end of November according to UNHCR estimates, despite 1,171 arrivals to Lesbos in December. In response to the winter and the overcrowded conditions on the islands, the government decided to accelerate efforts with the aim of transferring 5,000 people by 15 December with UNHCR's support. Since these efforts were announced by the Minister of Migration Policy (MoMP) on 27 November, UNHCR has facilitated the transfer of 3,748 people from Lesbos (2,055), Chios (794), Samos (497), Kos (168), Leros (220) and Rhodes (14) to the mainland and Crete by 31 December. In total, nearly half (9,983) of the 20,959 (between June 2016 and 31 December) transfers UNHCR has facilitated from the islands to the mainland have taken place since 15 August. In this process UNHCR supports the Asylum Service and the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) to identify and inform those authorized to depart from the islands and organize their departure, while in the process building the capacity of RIS to fully assume this role for future transfers.

UNHCR also works in the mainland as part of the joint working group with the MoMP and IOM staff to coordinate the transfers by reviewing available capacity and referring people accordingly. In December, the MoMP requested UNHCR's assistance in transferring 600 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) to the mainland. The transfers began on 5 January, and 120 children were assisted by 15 January.

UNHCR [convened](#) a meeting with mayors participating in the [Accommodation Scheme](#) on 11 December. The EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Avramopoulos, Minister of Migration Policy Mouzalas and other relevant Ministries also attended. The mayors reflected on the important achievements of the programme, and shared their positive experience and lessons learned while seeking ways to ensure the programme's continuation beyond 2018. Mayors hoped it could eventually become a sustainable project under municipal control. UNHCR will work with municipalities and the Government throughout 2018 to gradually transition the programme's implementation to the authorities. The accommodation scheme, as well as UNHCR's cash assistance help asylum-seekers regain a sense of normalcy. The programmes also help the integration of those who will eventually remain in Greece. The mayors agreed that work remains to be done to support asylum-seekers and refugees better access services, and to support self-reliance. These efforts are all the more urgent with the increasing number of people recognized as refugees in Greece as a result of the increased capacity of the Asylum Service to review cases, as well as an increase in the recognition rate from 26% in 2016 to 46% in 2017. In 2017, 10,364 people received refugee status, nearly four times more than in 2016 (2,700). This is also linked to the fact that the relocation programme to other EU Member States has closed, and thus many applicants of a refugee profile are having their cases reviewed in Greece.

Turkish President Erdoğan visited Greece on 7 – 8 December, in a much anticipated visit. President Erdoğan met with President Pavlopoulos and Prime Minister Tsipras on 7 December in Athens. There was reported [agreement](#) on specific measures in relation to the EU-Turkey Statement aiming to decongest the islands. Reports indicate that there was an agreement for returns within the framework of the EU-Turkey Statement to also take place from the mainland. The modalities for these returns remain to be determined.



UN Refugee Agency @Refugees · 22 Dec 2017

We are very concerned at the situation of refugees and migrants on the Greek Aegean islands, in particular Lesbos, Chios and Samos



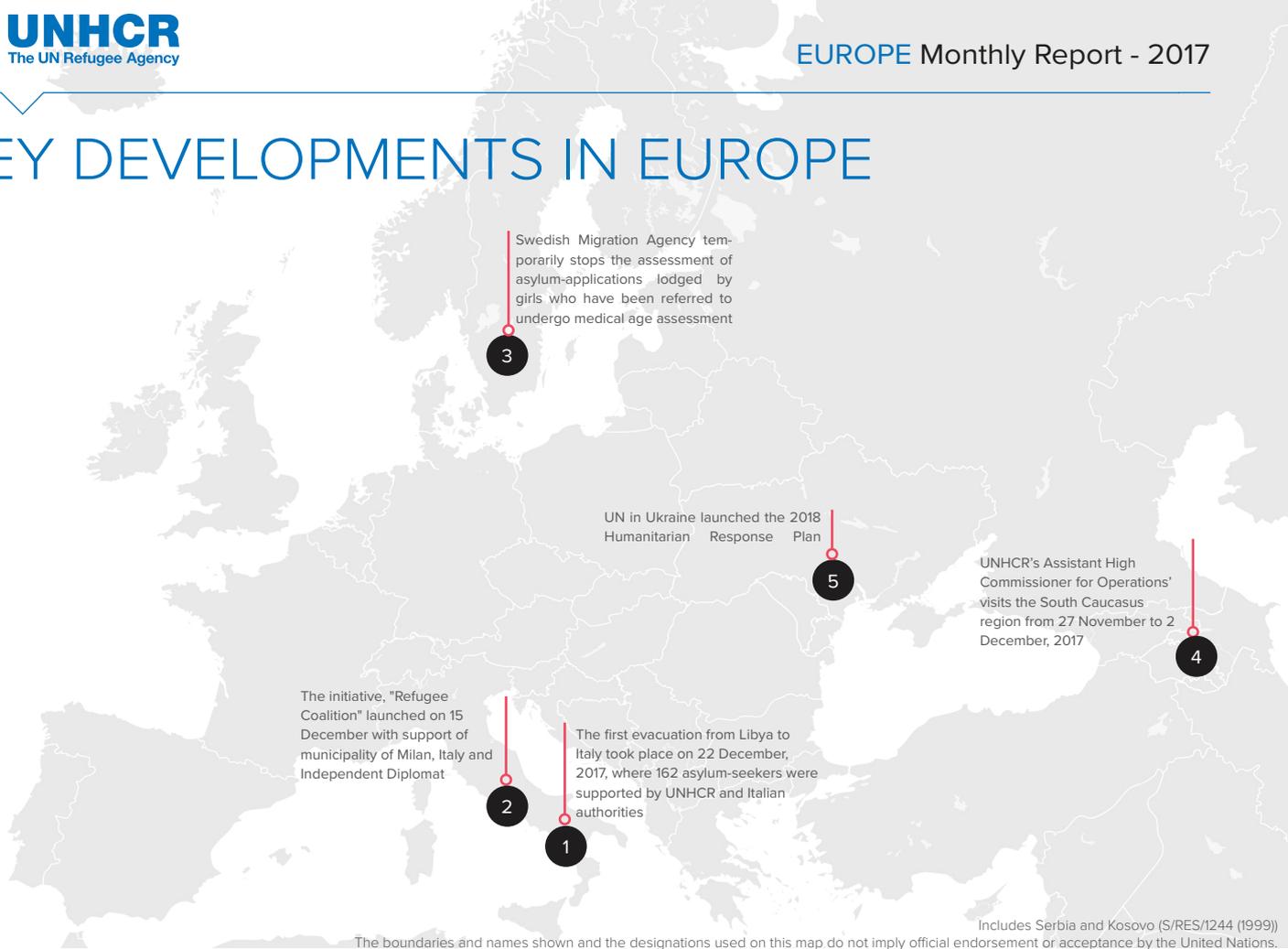
Situation on Greek islands still grim despite speeded transfers
 UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, remains very concerned at the situation of refugees and migrants on the Greek Aegean islands, in particular Lesbos...

1 44 43

¹¹ These departures are limited to individuals who were submitted for [resettlement](#) by UNHCR. Includes EU28, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Iceland

¹³ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE



On "Face Forward... into my home"

More entries have been received for the ongoing art project 'Face Forward...into my home' focusing on refugees' stories, hosted at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMST). The project was designed and implemented by EMST's Education Department, in collaboration with UNHCR, and funded by the European Commission, and tells the story of some of the refugees living in Greece through portraits and personal narratives.

ITALY: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, traveled to Italy between 30 November and 2 December to attend the [Rome Mediterranean Dialogues 2017](#), delivering a speech during the plenary session on 'Managing migration together: building a new partnership.'



Filippo Grandi @RefugeesChief · 1 Dec 2017
I agreed with Italian Minister of Interior Minniti that strengthening protection refugees+migrants in Libya is an urgent priority. He assured of Italy's support @Viminale



7 54 126

He, together with UNHCR's Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean, Vincent Cochetel, also had meetings with the Italian Minister of Interior, Mr. Marco Minniti; the Deputy Prime Minister of Libya, Mr. Ahmed Maitig; the UK Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr. Alistair Burt; and the Special Envoy for Libya, Mr. Ghassam Salame. The situation in Libya was the main topic covered during these meetings.

1 On 22 December, 162 asylum-seekers were evacuated from Libya to Italy. The group was composed of nationals of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen who had been detained in Libya, and included families, single mothers, UASC and persons with disabilities. The operation received strong political support by the Italian Minister of Interior, and the [UNHCR Italy](#) and [Libya](#) teams closely cooperated with the operational team of the Minister's cabinet. During a [press conference](#) held at Pratica di Mare, Italian Minister of Interior, Mr. Marco Minniti, stated that this is a historical event as it is the first time a humanitarian corridor has been established directly from Libya to Italy. In agreement with the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, competent Territorial Commissions will ensure that asylum applications from the group are duly prioritised. UNHCR will continue to follow up on specific cases ensuring provision of adequate services and due RSD prioritisation.



"Avrei pagato per fare questo lavoro" - UNHCR

L'UNHCR ha circa 11.000 dipendenti, la maggior parte dei quali sono dislocati sul campo. Vi presentiamo Roberto Mignone, rappresentante unhcr.it

2 In a [statement](#) issued on 15 December, UNHCR welcomed the launch of the “Refugee Coalition for Europe.” The Coalition, which brings together refugee representatives living in different European countries, aims at giving a voice to refugees in Europe and at ensuring that their opinions and needs are better taken into account in decisions and policies impacting their lives. It will also promote concrete actions to strengthen refugee rights and enhance their integration in host countries. The first meeting of the Coalition, which was organized thanks to the support of the Municipality of Milan, Italy, and in partnership with Independent Diplomat, a non-profit diplomatic advisory group, and UNHCR was held from 13 to 15 December. Some 15 refugee representatives currently living in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Sweden discussed the scope of the Coalition and set up a platform where they will be able to discuss issues relating to protection and integration needs of refugees in Europe. The group members, originating from Afghanistan, Algeria, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Russia, Somalia and Syria, include teachers, journalists, published authors, LGBTI activists, students, and heads of organizations supporting refugees and victims of trafficking. UNHCR’s Director of the Bureau for Europe, Pascale Moreau, noted UNHCR’s support for this initiative. “UNHCR strongly believes in the importance of the Refugee Coalition for Europe,” she said. “This initiative will help increase refugees’ active participation in decisions reacting to their situation and needs, and ensure that such decisions are relevant, effective and well-targeted. We intend to consult the Coalition on a number of policies and initiatives which UNHCR is pursuing in Europe.”

PORTUGAL: UNHCR warmly welcomes Portugal’s recent announcement of 1,010 resettlement places in 2018 and 2019. On 14 December, Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Four (V4) met with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and the Italian Prime Minister in Brussels before the European Council meeting. The Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, confirmed that the V4 countries will participate in solidarity efforts by providing €35 million in financial assistance for the Libya situation.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Several events took place in December with the aim to advance the finding of durable solutions for IDPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of which was on 5 December, UNHCR organized a conference, for representatives of the authorities, international organizations, civil society and potential donors, on “Strategies for funding solutions for vulnerable IDPs and returnees”. Best practices for allocation of resources were presented and the need for comprehensive and up-to-date data of those affected was emphasized. UNHCR and OSCE also supported a two-day session, organized on 14 December by Bosnia and Herzegovina government officials, with the aim to take stock of the problems faced by IDPs and returnees when accessing health care.

HUNGARY: In December, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) visited Hungary to assess the situation of asylum-seekers in the transit zones. UNHCR met the staff of the EU agency both in Budapest and in the transit zones on the Hungary-Serbia border. On 18 December, UNHCR met with a delegation of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([GRETA](#)) and facilitated their visit to both transit zones. The key issues affecting asylum-seekers in the transit zones include mandatory detention of children and the need to strengthen capacities for interpretation services as well as psycho-social support.

On 7 December, the European Commission announced its decision to move forward with the infringement procedure against Hungary concerning its asylum law with regards to irregular returns, not providing effective access to an asylum procedure, unlawfully extending the border procedure and not providing

adequate procedural guarantees on detention among other matters. To that end, the Commission has sent a reasoned opinion to the Government. Hungary has two months to respond to the reasoned opinion. If no reply is received, or if the observations presented in the reply are not satisfactory, the Commission may decide to move to the next stage of the infringement procedure, and refer the case to the Court of Justice of the EU.

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: In December, a book of cartoons, “Black and White Lives”, aimed to raise public awareness and strengthen solidarity with refugees, was [published](#) in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This innovative approach is part of the [UNHCR Skopje](#) ongoing project of “Now a refugee – Always human”, funded by the EU and implemented by two local partner NGOs. The cartoons were [developed](#) by seven university students, under the mentorship of their professors, and with guidance from partners and UNHCR.

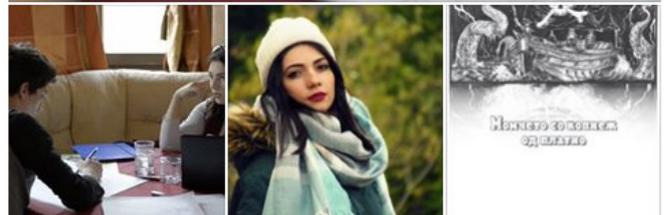


UNHCR-Skopje shared Association for Research, Education and Development - RED Center's album. December 16, 2017 · 🌐

Би сакале да ве запознаеме со стрипот „Момчето со копнеж од платно“ за силата што едно момченце-бегалец ја црпи од неговата кукла. Запознајте ги и неговите автори Верче и Марко.

До 20 декември, посетете ја изложбата „Црно-бели животи“ во Јавна соба, каде е изложен и целиот стрип за момчето кое ги симболизира сите деца-бегалци на кои им е потребна заштита. Дополнително, побарајте ја вашата бесплатна копија од книгата со стрипови (на македонски или албански јазик).

We would l... [See More](#)
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Association for Research, Education and Development - RED Center added 4 new photos to the album: Момчето со копнеж од платно. December 14, 2017 · 🌐 [Like Page](#)

AUSTRIA: On 7-8 December, the 24th OSCE Ministerial Council (MC) meeting took place in Vienna, bringing together about 40 foreign ministers of the 57 OSCE participating States (pS), among them also the foreign ministers of the Russian Federation and United States. UNHCR was represented by the Regional Bureau for Europe Director Pascale Moreau, Deputy Director, Angela Li Rosi, as well as the Head of its Liaison Office in Vienna. Among the six OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions that the 57 States adopted unanimously are the Decision on [Strengthening Efforts to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings](#), and the Decision on [Strengthening](#)

[Efforts to Combat all Forms of Child Trafficking, Including for Sexual Exploitation, as well as Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children.](#) On 8 December, on the margins of the Ministerial Council, the BE Deputy Director delivered a statement at the side event “Improving the Coordination of Efforts against Human Trafficking: The Role of the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)”, co-organized by OSCE and Belarus. As an active member of the ICAT working group, UNHCR has contributed expertise to a number of policy papers and short issue briefs.

GERMANY: Ahead of the Interior Ministers’ meeting on 7 December, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) Interior Ministers discussed the possible return of Syrians as of mid-2018 (despite a national ban on forced return since 2012). A similar earlier proposal by the Alternative for Germany (AfD) had been rejected by Parliament at the time. UNHCR had previously submitted a letter highlighting UNHCR’s international protection considerations for Syrian nationals, and issued a [press release](#) on 7 December on the issue of returns.

 **UNHCR Germany** @UNHCR_de · 7 Dec 2017
 „Im Lichte der in Syrien vorherrschenden Verhältnisse kann UNHCR die Rückkehr von Flüchtlingen weder befürworten noch unterstützen.“
[#Innenministerkonferenz](http://unhcr.org/dach/de/19015-...)
 Translate from German



2 9 7

BELGIUM: On 4 December, UNHCR’s Special Envoy for the Central Mediterranean participated in a roundtable held by [11.11.11](#) (a collective of Flemish NGOs, with 20,000 volunteers, which aims to achieve a fair world without poverty) in the Federal Parliament. He called for other States to show solidarity with Niger, to where some refugees are being evacuated from Libya, and said that responsibility does not lie solely with the EU. Restoring stability and the rule of law are essential to tackle smuggling and human trafficking from Libya.

On 20 December, a Belgian newspaper stated that six of the nine Sudanese nationals who were forcibly returned to Sudan [reported](#) to the Tahrir Institute that they had been arrested and tortured by Sudanese authorities on arrival. The Belgian government has launched an investigation. The Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration came under fierce criticism from opposition parties and civil society for allowing Sudan to carry out an identification mission in Belgian closed centres from September to October 2017.

THE UNITED KINGDOM: Two events on 5 and 7 December hosted by the all-Party Group’s chair supported two pieces of legislation on family reunification due for debate in the coming weeks in the Commons and Lords. The aim was to influence change in allowing child refugees to sponsor their parents and siblings, expand the range of family members entitled to join family members in the UK and reintroduce legal aid for family reunion cases. Two young Syrian refugees shared their stories of reaching safety and challenges they now face in trying to sponsor their family members for family reunification. MPs and peers from all the main parties spoke in favour of their testimonies.

 **Matt Saltmarsh** @MattSaltmarsh · 5 Dec 2017
 Young Syrians in UK tell their story to @APPGRRefugees, explain why family reunion rules, if adapted, can help vulnerable #refugees



Oxfam, IMiX, Citizens UK and 7 others

6 24 47

DENMARK: The Danish government suspended its annual resettlement quota in 2016 and 2017 – the quota has traditionally been approximately 1,500 refugees on a three-year basis (approx. 500 refugees a year). On 20 December 2017 a law proposal on resettlement was adopted in Parliament, securing the majority of the votes. The Minister of Immigration and Integration will now hold the decision-making power to decide the number of refugees to be accepted for resettlement – or whether or not Denmark should receive any at all – on an annual basis. The Minister will review the resettlement quota earliest in mid-2018. UNHCR will continue its advocacy for the resumption of the quota.

3 SWEDEN: On 7 December, the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) temporarily stopped the assessment of 200 asylum applications lodged by girls, who have undergone or been referred to undergo a medical age assessment. This is the result of a recent decision by the Swedish National Board of Forensic Medicine, to halt assessments in order to analyse new research into the bone maturity of girls. The SMA does not plan to reopen cases concerning girls that have undergone an age assessments and have already received a negative decision. In addition, on 11 December the Swedish Ombudsman for Children presented a [report](#) to the Government addressing the protection concerns for UASC that disappear in Sweden. In brief, the report concluded that UASC arriving in Sweden risk falling through the cracks within the current reception system and that missing children risk being subjected to prostitution or involved in criminality. The report stated that Sweden must do more to ensure that homes and other accommodation where children stay are safe and have qualified staff, and that children who go missing must be tracked down.

The [report](#) of the Swedish inquiry into Alternative Legal Pathways to Seek Asylum in the EU was released on 19 December. UNHCR participated in the inquiry as an expert member. The inquiry was launched by the government in January 2016 to analyse the conditions for creating legal routes to the EU to seek asylum. The report suggested that Sweden should work towards a system within the EU that would allow for the possibility of issuing visas or another form of entry permit for people intending to seek asylum in the EU as a complement to resettlement and spontaneous asylum applications.

ESTONIA: The Government of Estonia announced on 21 December that Estonia had fulfilled its commitments under the EU’s emergency relocation and resettlement programme. Currently, Estonia is planning to finalize 50 pending cases (6 in Italy and 44 in Turkey), however it remains unclear how many of

these persons will eventually arrive to Estonia. As of December 2017, a total of 175 refugees have been relocated and resettled to Estonia. For 2018-2019, the Government of Estonia has agreed to voluntarily resettle 80 refugees from Turkey (40 per year).

NORWAY: In November 2015, the Norwegian Government adopted a series of temporary restrictive amendments to the asylum legislation, introducing expedited admissibility procedures with reduced safeguards. These include the possibility to return applicants to Russia without having assessed the merits of their application. On 11 December, the Norwegian Parliament voted in favour of making these restrictions permanent as of 1 January 2018. The decision raises serious concerns pertaining to compliance with international standards. UNHCR has previously submitted extensive [comments](#) on the law proposal and [raised](#) concerns with relevant stakeholders.

4 UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Operations' visit to the South Caucasus: From 27 November to 2 December, UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, George Okoth-Obbo and Deputy Director of the Europe Bureau Angela Li Rosi visited the region. [Mr Okoth-Obbo](#) reviewed the key segments of the operations: the programmes for refugees, IDPs, stateless persons, as well as contingency planning, emergency preparedness and UNHCR's operational involvement in the region.

George Okoth-Obbo @GeorgeOkothObbo · 3 Dec 2017
 Noting progress in #Armenia asylum management, discussed w/ Gagik Yeganyan. Head of Govt refugee management agency -State Migration Service - steps 2 enhance capacities, address reception, broaden recognition + positively conclude integration 4 refugees.



1 2 5

ARMENIA: On 14 December, for the first time since 2009, the Administrative Court of Armenia (first instance court) issued a judgment overruling the decision by the State Migration Service (SMS) to deny refugee status to a family from Iraq and obliging the SMS to recognize the applicants as refugees in Armenia. Positive aspects in the court proceedings and the judgment include the testimony of the applicants before the Court and research conducted by the Court on country conditions in Iraq. This is the first time the Court has made its own assessment of a letter from the National Security Service.

5 UKRAINE: On 4 December, the United Nations in Ukraine launched the 2018 [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) (HRP). The plan requests USD 187 million to assist 2.3 million out of 3.4 million people in need. UNHCR's portion of the appeal for shelter and protection activities amounts to USD 24.2 million. The HRP highlights the conflict's serious impact on civilians living along the line of contact. UNHCR has increased critical aid in distributions of clothing, shelter, fuel and cash to the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict.



2018 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN

The human toll of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine is critical, with 4.4 million people affected, of whom 3.4 million require humanitarian assistance and protection. The shelling of urban areas and civilian infrastructure means that 60 per cent of the people living along the 457-kilometre 'contact line' are affected by shelling regularly, and almost 40 per cent are affected every day. There are around a million individual crossings of the 'contact line' each month, which is rapidly becoming one of the most mine contaminated stretches of land in the world. Food insecurity has doubled since 2016, with 1.2 million people food insecure, and there are escalating cases of multi-drug resistant TB, HIV and even polio. These impacts are aggravated by Ukraine's extremely harsh winter, severe restrictions on humanitarian access, and limited livelihood opportunities for those affected by the crisis. As hopes of a political solution have waned, so have people's savings and their ability to cope. Four years into the crisis, millions of people including 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), half of whom are the elderly, are being forced to make impossible choices between food, medicine, shelter, heating or their children's education.

UKRAINE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES		KEY FIGURES	
1	Advocate for and respond to the protection needs of conflict-affected people with due regard to international norms and standards	PEOPLE IN NEED	REQUIREMENTS (US\$)
2	Provide emergency assistance and ensure non-discriminatory access to quality essential services for populations in need	3.4M	\$187M
3	Improve the resilience of conflict-affected population, prevent further degradation of the humanitarian situation and promote durable solutions, early recovery and social cohesion	PEOPLE TARGETED	CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS (US\$)
		2.3M	\$137M

A New Year's Message from UNHCR Bureau for Europe Director Pascale Moreau

The start of every New Year urges us to look forward to what still needs to be done.

In 2018, we will mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first global expression of rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled. The principles enshrined in this Declaration also form the cornerstone of the Treaty of the European Union, and of the Union itself.

The anniversary comes at a time when we are witnessing continuous violations of human rights. In 2017 we have witnessed the highest levels of displacement on record: 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them, nearly 22.5 million are refugees. There are also 10 million stateless people, people who have been denied nationality and access to basic rights.

Faced with the choice between pessimism and optimism, I choose to remain optimistic. How could I not? I continue to see bursts of solidarity around me. In the stories that we have shared with you this year, there were wonderful acts of compassion and generosity from individuals and communities across Europe.

Addressing refugee and asylum challenges requires a compre-

hensive response with durable solutions, based on responsibility, trust and solidarity, especially with host countries and with coun-



tries faced with large-scale arrivals.

May 2018 be the year where UNHCR's message of compassion for those who had to leave everything behind resonates all over Europe and beyond.

*Excerpt from speech given at the the Belgian avant-première of 'Human Flow' by Mr. Ai Weiwei

As Ukraine conflict heads into fourth winter, thousands face freezing conditions

As temperatures plummet across Ukraine, [UNHCR has stepped up distributions of aid](#), including clothing, fuel and cash to the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict in the country's East. Recipients include some 15,300 people, who are mainly single parents, elderly, families with many children, and people with disabilities or chronic illnesses.

Houses near the line of contact between the government and the non-government controlled areas are frequently damaged by shelling and villages have been cut off because of damaged or degrading infrastructure. Winter brings additional hardship to the population as temperatures can plummet to -20 C in January. In some villages, gas pipes have been damaged by shelling and, as a result, coal and firewood represent the sole means of heating homes. UNHCR staff report that people are often forced to make a choice between buying food and medicines, or buying fuel to heat their dwellings.

my mother, transport to Donetsk from our village, or food like bread," he says.



Meanwhile, in government-controlled areas, UNHCR provides unconditional cash grants to 1,000 households, and winter jackets to more than 4,700 children, mostly donated by private companies such as Japan's UNIQLO.

Movement across the line of contact is also more difficult during the winter months, as checkpoint operating hours are reduced and heated waiting areas are limited. To address these challenges, UNHCR reinforces existing weather shelters and heated tents at checkpoints or constructs new ones as needed.

"In some of the more remote, conflict-affected locations, people are sometimes unable to access basic goods. Many elderly people use most of their pensions to get coal and keep their places warm, and sacrifice the purchase of medicines for chronic illnesses. It is our priority to ensure that the most vulnerable IDPs and conflict affected persons have means to survive this year's harsh winter," says UNHCR's Ukraine representative, Pablo Mateu.

UNHCR required \$37.6 million to assist them in 2017. Nevertheless, despite funding from donors such as Canada, Estonia, the European Union, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Norway and the USA, UNHCR has only received 35 per cent of the necessary funding to complete its planned activities in 2017.

Pablo Mateu @MateuPablo · 20 Dec 2017
Heavy shelling on 18 December injured 8 civilians and damaged 45 houses in #Novoluhanskoe in #Donetsk oblast. Our NGO partner @proliska_org immediately delivered @UNHCRUkraine emergency shelter kits & winter items to affected families. Strong donor support makes this possible.



8 13

The situation is particularly critical in the non-government controlled areas, where 40 percent of the households are in need of heating fuel and nearly 90 percent are in need of winter clothes and insulation. In these areas, UNHCR is providing 9,000 tonnes of coal to 3,000 households and more than 7,500 pieces of winter clothing. UNHCR is also repairing 500 homes to make them suitable for the winter. Sergei* received three tonnes of coal from the agency to keep his 83-year-old mother warm at home and for cooking. "If you hadn't given us the coal, I would have bought it – but then I wouldn't have had money for medicine for

Refugee Food Festival in Strasbourg



© UNHCR/ Benjamin Loyseau

Residents of Strasbourg and tourists enjoying the Christmas holidays discovered new flavours in dishes from Syria, Afghanistan and Tibet, all cooked by refugees. Between 18 and 24 December 2017, the Refugee Food Festival had a stall among the twinkling lights in the centre of the historic Alsatian city. A citizen-led initiative, founded by NGO Food Sweet Food, an organisation that specialises in forming connections between people through culinary events, the festival began in the gastronomic heart of Paris in 2016. With the support of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, it has spread to cities across Europe and plays a useful role in altering public perceptions and giving refugee chefs the opportunity to show off their talent and resume their professional careers.

EU-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

On 14 and 15 December, a [European Council](#) meeting took place in Brussels, Belgium. A [note](#) drafted by European Council President Tusk on the way forward on asylum and migration was the starting point of informal talks. Discussions are [expected](#) to continue in 2018 with an assessment of progress in March and possible decisions to be made in June. As most recently noted in its [recommendations](#) to the Bulgarian Presidency, UNHCR considers the relocation of asylum-seekers within the European Union a key element to ensure effective responsibility-sharing. UNHCR also encourages EU Member States to refrain from seeking to render admissibility procedures mandatory. To ensure protection for those in need and facilitate the return of those who do not need protection, UNHCR proposes the use of accelerated procedures which include the applicable safeguards to ensure that fair, sufficiently flexible and effective procedures are in place.

In December, UNHCR [released](#) its [recommendations](#) to the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. "This is a critical moment. We need a strong Presidency that paves the way for ensuring a well-managed asylum system in the EU, including more solidarity among all EU Member States," said UNHCR's Director of the Bureau for Europe, Pascale Moreau. The recommendations identify two priorities that require urgent attention: better assessing protection needs in the EU, and fostering greater solidarity and responsibility-sharing among EU Member States. The recommendations also include calls for the development of safe and legal pathways to Europe for refugees and for strong support in the run-up to the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018. UNHCR also calls for a focus on contingency planning, for systems to better protect refugee children, and for more investment in integration.

On 7 December, the European Commission decided to refer the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to the Court of Justice of the EU for [non-compliance](#) with their legal obligations on the relocation of asylum-seekers from other EU countries.



UNHCR's recommendations to the Republic of Bulgaria for its Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU)
A time for solidarity
January - June 2018¹



Republic of Bulgaria / A family in the reception and registration centre, Voenna Rampa district, Sofia © UNHCR / Nikolay Stoykov

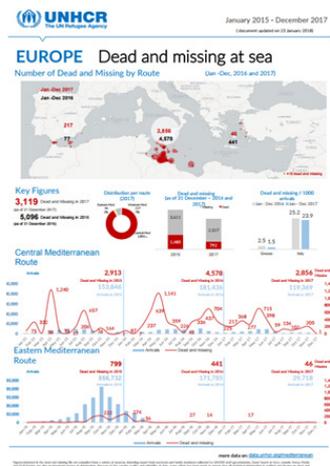
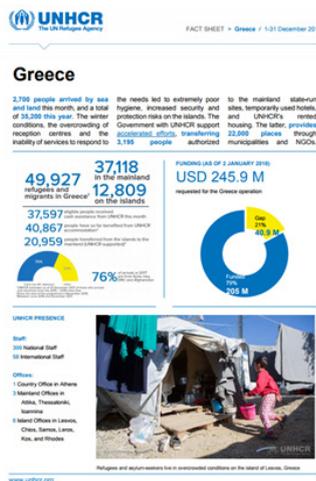
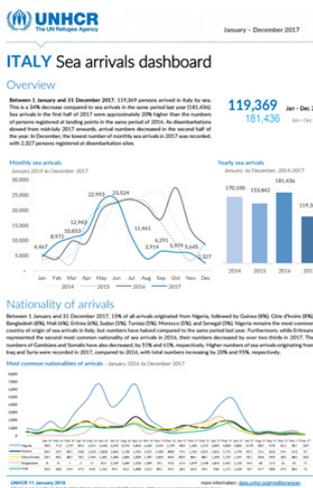
The Republic of Bulgaria will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) at a critical time.

More than one year after the adoption of the September 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants,² EU Member States (MS) and institutions are in the process of concretizing the Declaration's principles. They are also following up on the commitments to a comprehensive approach to asylum and migration issues made as part of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). Discussions are on-going as to how solidarity and responsibility-sharing can best be organized at the global level, and how to effectively extend protection to those in need while supporting refugee-hosting countries.

Aspects of these discussions are of particular relevance for internal EU policies, particularly at a time when EU institutions and MS are reflecting on possible lessons to be drawn from the 2015-2016 refugee situation, as well as reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

¹ The present recommendations should be read together with UNHCR's *Better Protecting Refugees in the EU and Globally* December 2016 proposals, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58385d4d.html>, as well as with UNHCR's more detailed commentaries on the European Commission's proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System.
² UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants - resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1*, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ceeb74a8.html>.

Key Documents from the Web Portal



Italy Sea arrivals dashboard - December 2017

Monthly dashboard covering arrivals to Italy for December 2017

Greece Factsheet December 2017

Greece factsheet covering December 2017 with key figures on arrivals and operational updates

Dead and Missing at sea December 2017

Monthly dashboard on dead and missing people as of December 2017

Sign up for the latest information products.



Key Highlights from 2017

December: UNHCR [stepped up distribution](#) of aid, including clothing, fuel and cash to the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict in eastern **Ukraine** as winter set in and thousands faced freezing conditions. Most had been displaced from their homes in eastern Ukraine by the conflict in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, which is now well into its fourth year. In total, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine has displaced more than 1.5 million people within the country and over one million others have sought safety outside the country's borders. UNHCR has called all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and critical infrastructure, in full and immediate compliance with international law.

November: UNHCR [released](#) a report on integration of Syrian refugees in the **United Kingdom** on 9 November. UNHCR and its partners published the [Towards Integration report](#), revealing that Syrian refugees in the UK benefit from integration efforts, but need extra support for language acquisition and employment.

October: UNHCR [called](#) for accelerated winter preparations on the **Greek Aegean islands**. During October, conditions on the islands deteriorated further as a result of the increased arrivals since August 2017 and the limited reception capacity. The statement noted that UNHCR, which works closely with the Ministry for Migration Policy, would "continue to provide emergency relief items until stocks are depleted; places in the island accommodation scheme for the most vulnerable; and transfers to the mainland to help alleviate the situation." Throughout 2017 UNHCR provided protection guidance, logistical assistance and provision of [information](#) to asylum-seekers and refugees in Greece. Towards the end of 2017, national institutions assumed most services and the Greek government and the EU gave assurances they will continue capacity building initiatives.

September: On 13 September, the Deputy Head of the Directorate of Migration in **Bulgaria** delivered the [first official decision granting statelessness status](#) to a 28-year-old man of Armenian origin from the former Soviet Union. UNHCR was closely involved in this process for the last several years and has advocated for accession to the Statelessness Conventions, the subsequent legislative changes and the establishment of the Statelessness determination procedure. UNHCR will continue to support the authorities throughout the procedure.

August: On 28 August, French President Macron led a high-level meeting in Paris, **France** on migration and asylum, with the participation of Germany, Spain, Italy, Niger, Chad, Libya and the EU. A joint [declaration](#) was issued accompanied by a [second communique](#) related to resettlement. Reinforced cooperation with UNHCR on human rights protection and resettlement was reiterated throughout the meeting. UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, issued a [statement](#) on the Paris meeting noting that he "welcomes commitments made at the Paris meeting on migration and asylum."

July: The Italian government drafted a [code of conduct](#) to be applied to NGOs conducting search and rescue operations off the coast of Libya. A meeting was held at the Italian Ministry of Interior on 31 July, which was attended by three NGOs (Save the Children, MSF and Jugend Rettet). Five NGOs signed the Code of Conduct (MOAS, Save the Children, Proactiva Open Arms, Sea Eye and SOS Mediterranean). UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, issued a [statement](#) on 1 July urging more solidarity with **Italy** and the importance of saving lives. He stated that, "search and rescue by all those involved, including by NGOs, the Italian Coast

Guard, and government authorities, is critical." He highlighted Italy as a key player in providing assistance and protection but that it cannot continue to do this alone.

June: World Refugee Day was celebrated on 20 June to commemorate the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees. In 2017, UNHCR and Food Sweet Food launched the [Refugee Food Festival](#) in 13 major European cities in support of refugee integration. In addition to the Refugee Food Festival, there were many events and initiatives to commemorate World Refugee Day across Europe.

May: UNHCR issued [Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis](#), the report tells the stories of some of the world's six million refugee children and adolescents under UNHCR's mandate who are of primary and secondary school age between 5 and 17. In May last year, governments, companies and philanthropists met at the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey to create the Education Cannot Wait Fund, an initiative to meet the educational needs of millions of children and youth affected by crises around the world. European countries including **Germany**, show support through programme's such as DAFI, UNHCR's higher education scholarship programme, which gives young refugees financial assistance to access higher education in their host countries alongside national students.

April: On 12 April, UNHCR and UNICEF [welcomed](#) a new policy guidance from the **European Commission** as an important milestone for the protection of migrant and refugee children. "It is the first EU policy to address the situation and rights of all children in migration – refugee and migrant children, children alone and with their families - linking migration, asylum and child protection," Noala Skinner, Director of UNICEF's Brussels Office said. "These important guidelines will help EU States better respond to the needs of refugee and migrant children. We strongly hope that these guidelines will contribute, in a very concrete manner, to the protection of the many children who arrive to Europe..." said Diane Goodman, Deputy Director of UNHCR's Europe Bureau.

March: **Hungary** passed a new law which has been voted for by the Hungarian Parliament which enabled the mandatory detention of all asylum seekers, including many children, for the entire length of the asylum procedure. UNHCR [expressed](#) deep concern stating that this law violates Hungary's obligations under international and EU laws, and will have a worrying physical and psychological impact on women, children and men who have already greatly suffered. In May, the European Commission launched [infringement](#) proceedings concerning Hungary's asylum law.

February: UNHCR's report [Desperate Journeys](#) detailed the impact of the increased border restrictions on refugee and migrant movements to and through Europe. It showed that people continued to move, but undertook more diversified and dangerous journeys, often relying on smugglers because of the lack of accessible legal ways to Europe.

January: On 19 January, UNHCR, IOM and 72 other partners [launched](#) a new strategy and appeal to help respond to the situation of refugees and migrants in Europe in 2017. [The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan](#) aimed at complementing and reinforcing governments' efforts to ensure safe access to asylum and the protection of refugees and migrants. It also aimed to support long-term solutions and orderly and dignified migration management. Strengthened partnership and coordination was also prioritized in 2017.

TIMELINE OVERVIEW

