

# EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



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Asylum-seekers face dangerously overcrowded conditions in Moria. Asylum-seekers prepare to spend the night in camping tents in the olive grove adjacent to Moria, Lesbos, Greece.

## TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

**MEDITERRANEAN ROUTES:** 99,000 refugees and migrants have arrived via the three Mediterranean routes<sup>1</sup> to Europe in January-October 2019. This is a roughly 18% decrease compared to the same period last year, when 121,000 people had arrived. In October, some 17,600 refugees and migrants arrived via these routes, which is a 4% decrease compared to October 2018 and 10% decrease compared to September 2019.

**GREECE:** In October alone, some 11,000 people arrived by sea (9,000) and land (2,000). For the second consecutive month, the top countries of origin were Afghanistan (32%) and Syria (32%). In 2019, the highest number of monthly arrivals to Greece was reported in September (12,500).

From January to October 2019, some 57,100 refugees and migrants have arrived in Greece by land and sea, 32% more than the same period last year (43,300). Some 37% were from Afghanistan, 28% from the Syrian Arab Republic and 7% from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As of end of October 2019, Greece hosted 103,500 refugees of whom 68,100 are on the mainland and 35,400 on the islands.

**Population on the Aegean islands:** As of 31 October, the population on the islands reached a new high at 35,400. The five Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) host 30,700 people, almost six times more than their maximum capacity of 5,400.

Mediterranean  
**99,000**  
 arrivals in 2019<sup>1</sup>

**1,099**  
 estimated dead/missing in 2019<sup>1</sup>

**Greece<sup>2</sup>**  
**57,100**

9,334	12,530	10,968
Aug	Sept	Oct

**Italy**  
**9,700**

1,268	2,499	2,016
Aug	Sept	Oct

**Spain<sup>2</sup>**  
**27,400**

2,854	3,794	4,020
Aug	Sept	Oct

**Malta**  
**3,100**

631	489	406
Aug	Sept	Oct

**Cyprus**  
**1,700**

89	326	163
Aug	Sept	Oct

<sup>1</sup> [data.unhcr.org/mediterranean](https://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean) as of 31 October 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Arrivals include Cyprus, Italy, Malta; Greece and Spain both include sea and land arrivals; Spain includes sea arrivals in the Mediterranean and to the Canary Islands.

**Population on mainland:** 21,600 asylum-seekers/refugees live in UNHCR accommodations (apartments for vulnerable asylum-seekers). An estimated 22,500 people are hosted in 28 State-run sites. Moreover, some 5,400 people reside in hotels run by IOM, and another 21,800 people live in shelters and private accommodations across urban areas of the country.

**Unaccompanied children:** Out of the 4,800 unaccompanied children in Greece, 1,000 are in age-appropriate shelters. 2,100 unaccompanied children are in the RICs on the islands and Evros (1,100 of which in Moria, Lesbos).

More information can be found in the [UNHCR Greece monthly report for October](#).

**SPAIN:** In Jan-Oct 2019, almost 27,400 refugees and migrants arrived in Spain, 50% less than in the same period in last year (54,200). After a peak of 4,600 arrivals in January, the highest number of arrivals this year was reported in October (4,000). Most people arriving in Spain this year were from Morocco (30%), Algeria (15%), Guinea (13%) and Mali (11%).

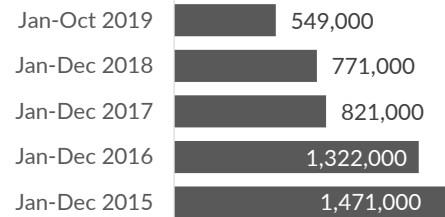
More information can be found in the [UNHCR Spain sea and land arrivals October report](#).

**ITALY:** Over 2,000 people arrived by sea in October. This is the second highest number of monthly sea arrivals this year so far, following the 2,499 in September. 45% of sea arrivals had departed from Libya while others departed from Tunisia, Turkey and other countries. Some 9,700 refugees and migrants arrived by sea so far in 2019, a 56% decrease from 22,000 in the same period of 2018. Top countries of origin throughout the year were Tunisia (26%), Pakistan (12%) and Côte d'Ivoire (11%).

More information can be found in the [UNHCR Italy monthly report for October](#).

**MALTA:** The number arrivals to Malta has increased significantly as a result of disembarkations of people rescued in the Central Mediterranean after departing

## New asylum applications in Europe



Sources: Eurostats for EU+ countries (Only partial data for September and October 2019. All data is provisional and last updated 21 November 2019); UNHCR for Eastern Europe and Turkey (as of 31 December 2018) and South Eastern Europe (as of 31 October 2019).

from Libya. So far in 2019, some 3,100 refugees and migrants arrived in Malta, more than three times the number recorded at this time last year. Most people were from Sudan (41%), Eritrea (7%), and Nigeria (6%).

**CYPRUS:** So far in 2019, some 1,700 refugees and migrants arrived in Cyprus by sea, nearly four times more than in the same period in 2018 (460). Top countries of origin were the Syrian Arab Republic, Cameroon and Nigeria.

**Search and rescue operations at sea:** In October, after departing from Libya, 2,430 people were able to disembark after interception/rescue, of which 1,113 were returned to Libya. From January to October 2019, 14,526 persons were intercepted or rescued at sea upon departure from Libya, of which 56% disembarked in Libya. In October, for the third consecutive month, NGOs were the primary rescuer of those disembarked in Europe (30%). So far this year, NGOs have rescued one third of those disembarked in Europe.

**Dead and missing:** By October 2019, 1,099 people are believed to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean on their way to Europe, 46% decrease compared to the same period in 2018. The majority of deaths took place in the Central Mediterranean where 704 people are believed to have died. In October, some 47 people were reported dead or missing in nine incidents along the Eastern, Western and Central Mediterranean routes, including 28 people off the coast of Lampedusa on 7 October. Some 123 deaths have been reported along land routes so far in 2019.

## OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey **4 million**

Refugees and asylum seekers<sup>3</sup>

Syrian Arab Republic	3,682,400
Afghanistan	172,000
Iraq	143,000
Other nationalities	57,000

<sup>3</sup> Source: UNHCR as of 31 October 2019

Ukraine **1.5 million**

Internally Displaced Persons<sup>4</sup> and Conflict Affected Persons<sup>5</sup>

Refugees: <sup>6</sup>	2,627
Asylum seekers: <sup>7</sup>	2,171
Stateless persons: <sup>8</sup>	35,650

<sup>4</sup> Residing more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).

<sup>5</sup> Estimated number of vulnerable, conflict-affected persons living along the 'contact line' in government-controlled areas (GCA) and non-government controlled areas (NGCA).

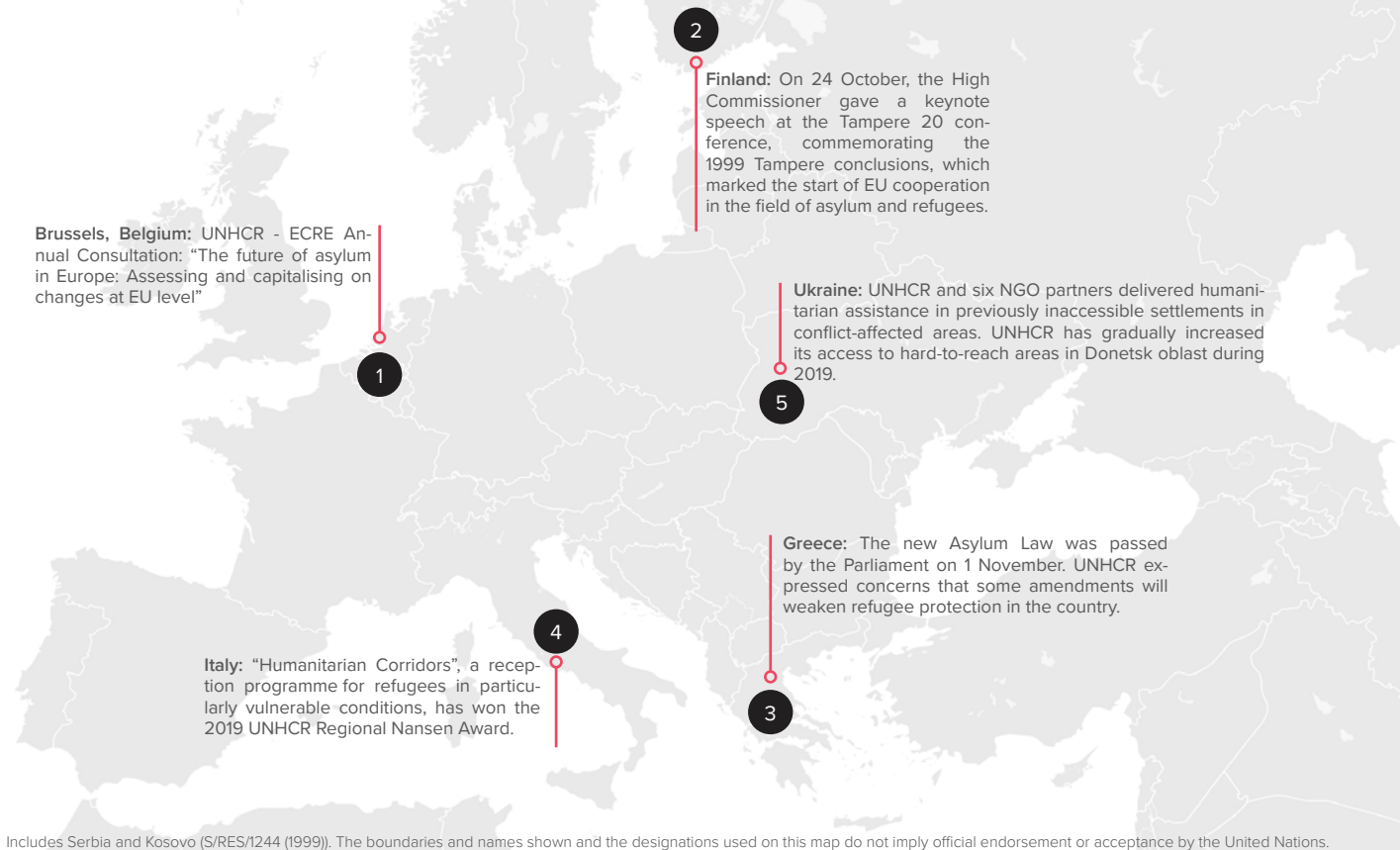
<sup>6</sup> 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), UNHCR

<sup>7</sup> Refugees, including persons with complementary protection, UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 31/10/2019

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR as of 31/10/2019

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 31/10/2019

# KEY DEVELOPMENTS



**SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE<sup>9</sup>:** The region continues to experience increasing numbers of arrivals believed to have transited through Greece, attempting to reach other countries. For the month of October, data made available to UNHCR indicates that 1,697 asylum applications were submitted in this region, an increase by 25% compared to the previous month, while overall numbers of arrivals have increased only by 4.6% compared to September. Top countries of origin are Afghanistan (28%), Pakistan (17%), Iraq (11%), Syria (9%).

UNHCR works with States in the region to strengthen their asylum systems.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to host the largest number of people among the countries on the route towards other states. At the end of October, these were 8,146 asylum-seekers and migrants (almost 60% of the entire region), 289 of which were unaccompanied or separated children. UNHCR and partners continue to carry out protection monitoring in order to identify and refer persons with specific needs, while providing counselling to those who wish to seek asylum in the country.

Push-backs continue to be widely reported across the region, including with use of violence.

**UKRAINE:** The [2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#) estimates that some 1.5 million people are internally

displaced or affected by conflict within Ukraine, in addition to 2,620 refugees and 6,408 asylum-seekers in the country. According to the State Migration Service, there were nearly 35,650 stateless persons as of 30 June 2019.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

**1 Belgium:** On 23 October the 2019 Annual UNHCR - European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) consultations brought together over 240 participants and 155 civil society organizations who discussed ways to influence the future of asylum in Europe. Two key cross-cutting issues raised repeatedly throughout the event were the current window of opportunity for alternative proposals/approaches to asylum in the EU, and the need for a joint action, bringing together all stakeholders, including strengthening the representation and engagement of refugees and refugee-led organizations.

**2 Finland:** On 24 October, the High Commissioner gave a keynote speech at the Tampere 20 conference, commemorating the 1999 Tampere conclusions, which marked the start of European Union (EU) cooperation in the field of asylum and refugees. The High Commissioner met with ministers and, jointly with the IOM Director General, spoke with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament. At the Helsinki Skills Center, he was briefed on Finnish integration policy and met with civil society and refugees and asylum-seekers.

<sup>9</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia. References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)



**Germany:** On 1 October, UNHCR attended a round of the 'Integration Summit' in Berlin. This Summit is an institutional initiative of the Chancellor which brings together representatives from politics, academia, think tanks, international organisations and civil society who are involved in the integration of refugees. This high-level platform aims at discussing the current state of integration in Germany, exchanging ideas and best practices on the topic and collecting inputs to advance refugee integration in the country. During the meeting, good progress in labour market integration of refugees in Germany was underlined.

**3 Greece:** The new Asylum Law was passed by the Parliament on 1 November after just four working days of public consultation. UNHCR appreciates efforts by the government to overhaul its strained asylum system as a matter of priority but is concerned that some legislative amendments will weaken refugee protection in the country. Of concern are the reduced procedural safeguards, the provision extending detention time limits and a more restrictive approach to social rights for asylum-seekers. UNHCR issued this [press release](#) ahead of the law approval.

The increasing number of people on the Greek islands remains of concern. UNHCR deployed additional staff to respond to the higher needs, including with information provision and communication with communities, and to accelerate the enrolment of asylum-seekers in the cash assistance programme. Additionally, UNHCR provided 125,000 core relief items like blankets, water and food for new arrivals, and temporary shelter for 4,500 places to increase the temporary accommodation capacity on the mainland which helps alleviate the overcrowding of the islands' centres. UNHCR continues supporting the Government's transfers of asylum-seekers from the islands to the mainland through ferry tickets.

**Transfers from islands to mainland:** In October, 4,772 asylum-seekers left the islands, 2,411 of whom through organized transfers to open reception facilities, with the support of the government or with joint UNHCR-government support. UNHCR confirmed continued support to the authorities in order to take pressure off the island centres, which have a capacity for 5,400 people but are currently hosting some 30,700 people.

**4 Italy:** On "National Day of Remembrance and Reception", established by law to honour the 368 persons who died in the shipwreck off Lampedusa on 3 October 2013, UNHCR [reiterated](#) that full search and rescue capacity urgently needs to be restored in the Mediterranean, which includes a return of EU Member States' search and rescue operation at sea. UNHCR also recalled that all States in the Mediterranean basin must uphold their responsibilities for swift rescue and disembarkation, with saving lives as the core priority. UNHCR acknowledged NGO partners who have been

crucial in saving lives. These efforts should be praised, not criminalized nor stigmatized.

"Humanitarian Corridors" has won the [2019 UNHCR Regional Nansen Award](#). Established as cooperative agreement between Italy's government and civil society organisations, this reception programme for refugees in particularly vulnerable conditions has won this year's award, which honours an individual or organisation who have dedicated themselves to helping people forcibly displaced from their homes.



Sara Issa, 16, a Palestinian refugee from Syria, talks with Daniela Hondrea, a social worker for the Federation of Evangelical Churches, at Sara's new house in Rome. Sara has just arrived in Italy under the Humanitarian Corridors programme.

**Moldova:** After years of UNHCR advocacy, asylum-seekers in Moldova have now access to state-provided primary health care, thanks to a revised implementation of the law by the authorities. Access to food assistance in social canteens for vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers, including newly arrived persons staying in the government's Temporary Accommodation Centre, has also been agreed by the authorities.

**Slovakia:** The text of the Memorandum of Cooperation between UNHCR and the Board of the Slovak Judicial Academy was approved. This agreement will allow UNHCR to conduct trainings within the regular curriculum for continuing education of judges.

**Sweden:** The High Commissioner visited Sweden on 22-23 October and met with the Prime Minister and other ministers. He also met with representatives of youth wings of the political parties, the fundraising partner "Sweden for UNHCR", civil society and refugees. During the visit, the High Commissioner signed a collaboration agreement with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, with the aim to analyze the multiple root causes of forced displacement and provide a solid evidence base for innovative and sustainable policies.

**5 Ukraine:** UNHCR and six NGO partners delivered humanitarian assistance in previously inaccessible settlements in conflict-affected areas. UNHCR has gradually increased its access to hard-to-reach areas in Donetsk oblast during 2019 and continues implementing shelter repairs and peaceful co-existence projects, as well as distribution of shelter kits and core relief items.

## Statelessness



On 7 October, the High-Level Segment on Statelessness was convened as part of UNHCR's 70th Executive Committee meeting to mark the mid-way of the ten-year #IBelong Campaign. States showcased their achievements and made pledges for the remainder of the Campaign. Over 350 commitments were submitted by governments, civil society and international organizations, of which 14 were from countries in Europe, many as a result of sustained UNHCR's advocacy.

UNHCR will continue supporting governments in Europe to establish and strengthen dedicated procedures to adequately identify and protect stateless people by providing technical support and promoting good practices, for example in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Georgia.

UNHCR will further support States and other stakeholders in following up on their commitments made, such as accession to one or both Statelessness Conventions (Belarus, Iceland, North Macedonia and Malta) withdrawal of reservations to these instruments (Bulgaria, Germany, Sweden) and facilitation of naturalization for stateless persons (Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova). North Macedonia's Parliament has promptly approved the accession to the 1961 Convention in the aftermath of the High-Level Segment, which [UNHCR welcomed](#).

More information about the run-up and the outcome of the High-Level Segment can be found in [this quarterly Campaign update](#).



Estonia. Portrait of a stateless person

## Global Refugee Forum

In numerous countries across the region, UNHCR has co-hosted, with respective governments, think tanks or civil society, **informative sessions on the Global Refugee Forum**. The objectives of the Forum and of the respective governments' participation were presented. In several countries, UNHCR will support authorities in debriefing NGOs about the outcomes of the Forum and the concrete follow-up actions.

The first Global Refugee Forum will open with an advance session on 16 December and will officially take place on 17 and 18 December (see [programme](#)), at the Palais de Nations in Geneva. It will focus on six themes: arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing, education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions, and protection capacity. Convened at the ministerial level, the Global Refugee Forum is an opportunity to translate the principle of international responsibility-sharing, which lies at the heart of the Global Compact on Refugees, into concrete action. More about the Global Refugee Forum [here](#).

**France: Solidarity Train #WithRefugees** is a partnership between UNHCR, the French National Railways (SNCF), and the Interministerial delegation for reception and integration of refugees (DIAIR), and financed by the City of Paris and three foundations. Preparations for the train's journey have fast progressed in October, finalising dates for stops in Paris, Bordeaux, Clermont Ferrand, Lyon and Strasbourg from 28 November to 17 December, before arriving in Geneva for the opening of Global Refugee Forum. This initiative aims at creating a meeting point between refugees and host communities, enhance the role of cities and associative partners. The train cars will host exhibitions and platforms for exchanges at each stop.

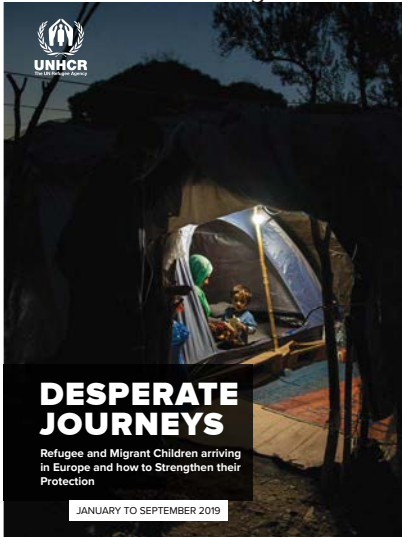




# Child Protection

## Desperate Journeys

More than a quarter of arrivals via Mediterranean routes<sup>10</sup> in 2019 were children, many without their parents. In its October [Desperate Journeys](#) report, UNHCR urged European States to do more to protect and support child refugees and migrants who, after enduring difficult journeys, continue to face risks in Europe, including unsafe accommodation, incorrect registration as adults and lack of appropriate care. While there have been many positive steps across Europe towards improving protection, the report notes that more needs to be done to address some of the challenges children continue to face. Among its recommendations, the report



calls on European States to urgently end the use of immigration detention for children, appoint trained guardians or social workers and ensure that refugee and migrant children can receive an education. Across Europe, children may also struggle to be recognised as a child and the report calls for holistic and

multi-disciplinary methods to be used when assessing a child's age.

By taking the steps outlined in this report, States will be able to increase the protection given to children on the move and be better equipped to determine how their best interests can be met, which may include solutions outside Europe.

## Launch of child protection reports

On 23 October, UNHCR UK launched three reports funded by the European Union under the DG Justice project shedding light on child protection in the UK for unaccompanied and separated children.

[“Destination Anywhere - The profile and protection situation of unaccompanied and separated children and the circumstances which lead them to seek refuge in the UK”](#) found that no child had been sent to the UK as ‘anchor’ to help their family migrate. Almost all said they sought protection from violence, detention or terrorism, and most did not know their final destination at the moment of departure. Those trafficked, the study found, were susceptible to re-trafficking even after entering state care. Some suffered mistreatment on their journey, which influenced their decisions to move on. It found children were often unable to effectively engage or communicate with authorities during the journey, hindering access to support and contributing to onward movement.

In terms of reception, [“A Refugee and Then... - Participatory Assessment of the Reception and Early Integration of Unaccompanied Refugee Children in the UK”](#) shows that UK authorities generally treated children in a kind and humane manner. Space for improvement was identified in terms of access to education for age-disputed children and children transferred through Dublin III and similar procedures. Local authority support for families receiving children under these procedures is limited and discretionary.

[Putting the Child at the Centre - An Analysis of the Application of the Best Interests Principle for Unaccompanied and Separated Children in the UK](#) maps the existing system of children's social care case management and best interest procedures within the UK, with proposals for reform.

## REFUGEE STORIES

### [Lone children face insecurity on Greek island](#)

By Boris Cheshirkov on Lesbos, Greece | 14 October 2019



Children seeking asylum who have been separated from their parents say they face poor conditions and threats of violence at a reception centre on the Greek island of Lesbos.

### [Afghan boy endures hardship en route to a better future](#)

By Barbara Molinario in Rome | 17 October 2019



Farouk, 15, fled Afghanistan and endured a difficult journey overland across 10 countries. Now he is reunited with his siblings in London thanks in part to help from UNHCR.

<sup>10</sup> Arrivals via Mediterranean Routes include Cyprus, Italy, Malta; Greece and Spain both include sea and land arrivals; Spain includes sea arrivals in the Mediterranean and to the Canary Islands.