



Hadir, a refugee and research scientist resettled from Iraq, volunteers at an oncology unit at Stepping Hill Hospital in Stockport in the United Kingdom. As many European countries continue to struggle with the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, the Council of Europe and UNHCR have encouraged States to benefit from the support refugee health professionals can provide to national health systems at this critical juncture. [Read more](#)



See video

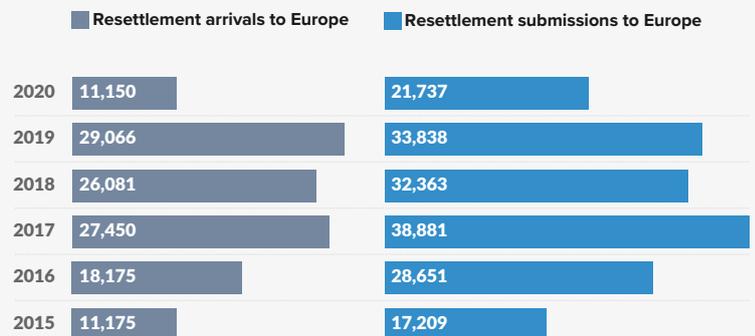
## OVERVIEW

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR submitted just over 21,700 refugees for resettlement to eighteen countries in Europe, 36 per cent fewer than in 2019 (33,838), and 28 per cent fewer than the yearly average of 30,200 over the previous five years (2015-2019).<sup>1</sup> COVID-19-related measures and the closure of EU external borders led to the disruption or temporary suspension of resettlement programmes in many European countries. Moreover, the temporary hold on resettlement travel announced by UNHCR and IOM in March 2020 as a result of pandemic-related government measures and disruptions to international air travel delayed the departures of some 10,000 accepted refugees to resettlement countries globally. This hold was eventually lifted in June, after which UNHCR encouraged States to resume travel arrangements.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission's commitment remained significant as evidenced by the proposal in September 2020 of a new [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) and a dedicated [Recommendation on Legal Pathways to Protection in the EU](#). In this recommendation, the Commission called for States' efforts to build and expand resettlement programmes, develop community sponsorship programmes, and expand legal pathways to protection for refugees through humanitarian admissions, education and labour mobility pathways.

In 2020, Europe received 55 per cent of all UNHCR-facilitated resettlement submissions worldwide, the region's highest share since 2017. This was primarily due to a significant reduction in the scale of some other States' resettlement programmes in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

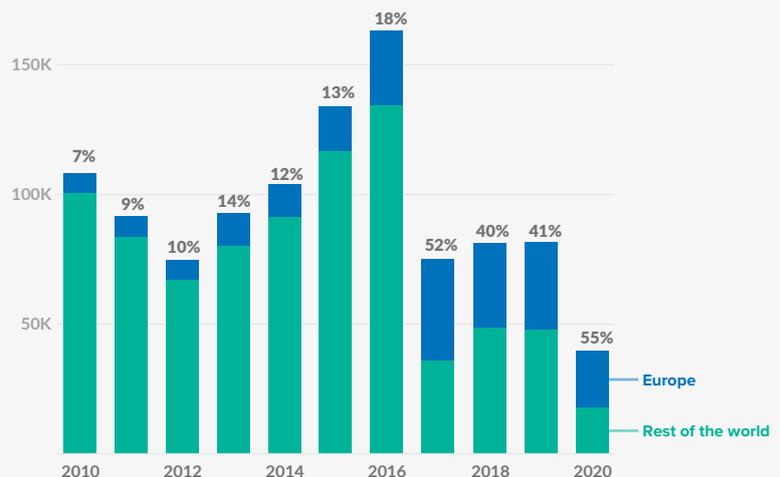
### Europe resettlement



\* Only data on resettlement cases referred by UNHCR are available for 2020. Arrival figures reported by UNHCR may not match resettlement statistics published by States as government figures may include submissions received outside of UNHCR's resettlement processes.

Source: [resettlement submissions and departures data](#)

### Resettlement submissions to Europe compared to global trends



Source: [resettlement submissions and departures data](#)

## COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

As in 2019, the vast majority of refugees submitted for resettlement to Europe in 2020 were originally from the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria), their number having increased significantly between 2013 and 2016 in accordance with the increase in displacement from Syria during those years. Some 92 per cent of refugees submitted for resettlement to Europe in 2020 originate from six countries: Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.<sup>3</sup> Overall, 20 per cent of refugees submitted for resettlement in Europe were from East Africa and the Horn of Africa, 15 per cent from Central Africa and the Great Lakes, and 1 per cent each from South-West Asia and West Africa.

## COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM

Refugees submitted for resettlement to Europe were typically registered in the following countries: Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Turkey or Jordan; Congolese refugees (Democratic Republic of Congo) in Uganda, Rwanda or Kenya; Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, Niger or Libya; Sudanese refugees in Egypt, Chad or Libya; South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, Egypt or Kenya; and Somali refugees in Kenya, Ethiopia or Niger.<sup>3</sup>

In November 2017, UNHCR and the Government of Niger established an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), a lifesaving mechanism for the evacuation of the most vulnerable persons of concern from detention in Libya to Niger, to ensure their access to protection and durable solutions. In 2019, UNHCR, the Government of Rwanda and the African Union set up a second ETM in Rwanda for the same purpose.

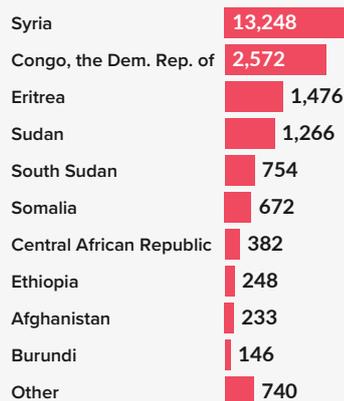
In 2020, UNHCR made 315 resettlement submissions globally through the ETM in Rwanda and 677 submissions through the ETM in Niger.<sup>4</sup> In the same year, 599 refugees were resettled through the ETMs in Niger (403) and Rwanda (196), in addition to 151 other refugees resettled from Niger and 867 from Rwanda.

## COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT

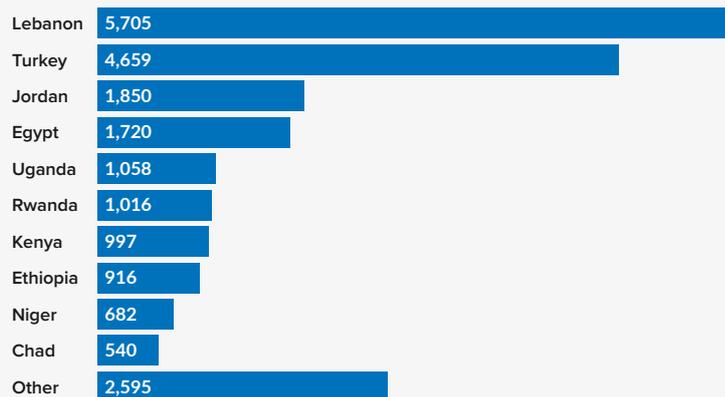
In 2020, five countries (Sweden, France, Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom) received 77 per cent of all submissions for resettlement in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Of the eighteen European countries that received resettlement submissions in 2020, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Romania and Portugal resettled predominantly Syrians, who comprised at least 90 per cent of the refugees resettled in these six countries. Sweden, Norway, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark<sup>3</sup> also resettled substantial numbers of other nationalities, including refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.<sup>3</sup>

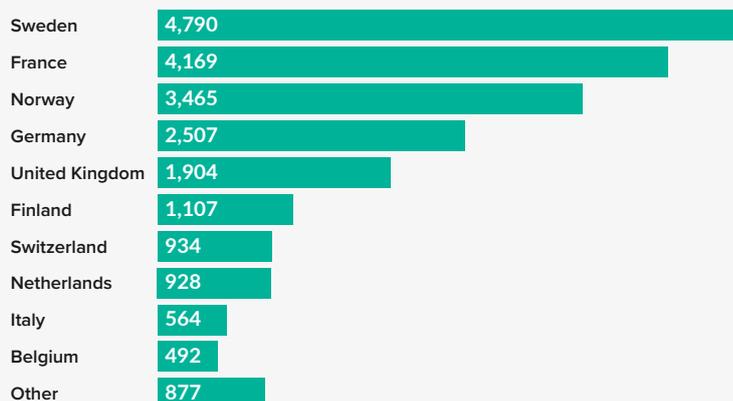
### Resettlement submissions to Europe (by country of origin)



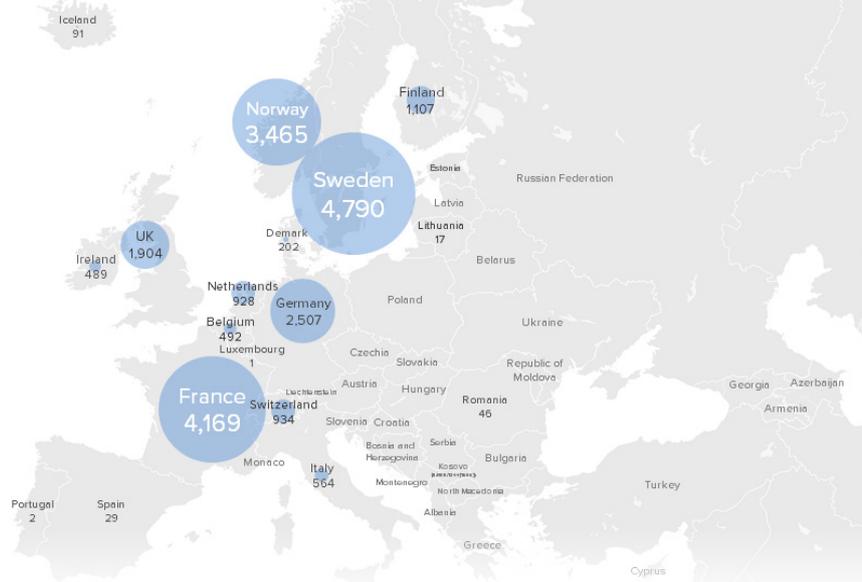
### Resettlement submissions to Europe (by country of asylum)



### Resettlement submissions to Europe (by country of resettlement)



### Number of refugees submitted for resettlement by country in Europe



The map includes Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999)). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

### Number of individuals submitted for resettlement in January - December 2020

Canada	10,937
Australia	3,847
United States of America	2,081
New Zealand	879
Japan	51
Argentina	1
Korea, Republic of	1
Sweden	4,790
France	4,169
Norway	3,465
Germany	2,507
United Kingdom	1,904
Finland	1,107
Switzerland	934
Netherlands	928
Italy	564
Belgium	492
Ireland	489
Denmark	202
Iceland	91
Romania	46
Spain	29
Lithuania	17
Portugal	2
Luxembourg	1

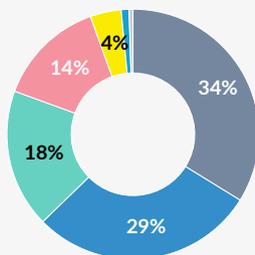
Resettlement submissions globally in 2020 total 39,534 (January to December), including the 21,737 (55%) submitted to the 18 European countries highlighted on the map. Source: rsq.unhcr.org

## CATEGORIES OF RESETTLEMENT SUBMISSIONS

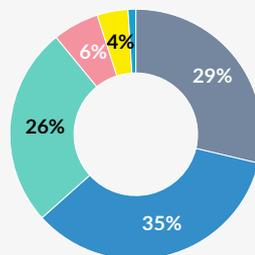
Resettlement remains an important tool to address protection needs of refugees who cannot access appropriate protection and support in their country of asylum, and to show solidarity with countries hosting large numbers of refugees. In 2020, resettlement submissions to European countries most commonly involved survivors of violence and/or torture (34 per cent), persons with individual legal and physical protection needs (29 per cent), and children and adolescents at risk (18 per cent).<sup>5</sup>

### Categories of resettlement submissions

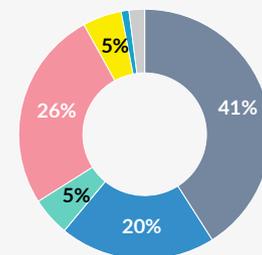
- Survivor of violence and torture
- Legal and physical protection needs
- Children and adolescents at risk
- Women and girls at risk
- Medical needs
- Family reunification
- Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions



All nationalities



Syrians

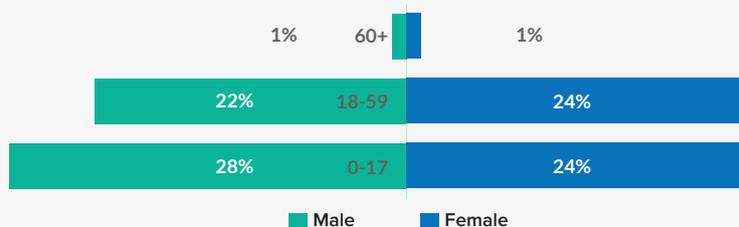


Other nationalities

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Each resettlement case submitted to European countries in 2020 included four people on average. Overall, resettlement submissions to Europe comprised 52 per cent children, 46 per cent adults between the ages of 18 and 59 years, and 2 per cent persons age 60 and over. The number of submissions of women and girls (49 per cent) almost equalled that of men and boys (51 per cent). This demographic profile is mostly consistent with submissions in 2019.

### Resettlement demographics



### Endnotes

- The Europe region comprises 49 countries, including the EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Eastern Europe and South Eastern Europe (Kosovo (S/RES/1244 [1999])). Countries receiving resettlement submissions in 2020 are shown on the map on p.3.
- See [www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html](http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html) for more background information on resettlement. The figures presented in this fact sheet reflect UNHCR submissions of resettlement cases to resettlement countries. Following submission, the timescale can vary in each resettlement country before a case is accepted, the refugees depart from their previous country of asylum and arrive finally in the country of resettlement.
- Countries are listed in descending order by number of resettlement submissions.
- During the 2020 calendar year, thirteen States allocated quotas for new resettlement submissions from Libya, Niger and Rwanda. These thirteen States include: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America.
- See the [UNHCR Resettlement Handbook](#): chapter six (resettlement submission categories) on page 243 and section 6.11 (resettlement priority levels) on page 246.