

Italy

February 2019

Between 1 January and 28 February 2019, there were **6,335 asylum applications** in Italy. The three most common countries of origin of applicants were Pakistan, Nigeria, and Bangladesh.

By the end of February 2019, the only **NGO vessel** deployed to conduct rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean was the Alan Kurdi vessel, run by the German NGO Sea Eye.

In February, the Supreme Court of Cassation held that the recent repeal of **humanitarian protection**, (Law on Migration and Security) cannot apply retroactively.

KEY INDICATORS

79%*

Percentage of 2019 sea arrivals informed by UNHCR staff upon disembarkation

4,975*

Referrals of **sea arrivals with specific needs** to appropriate services since January 2015

376*

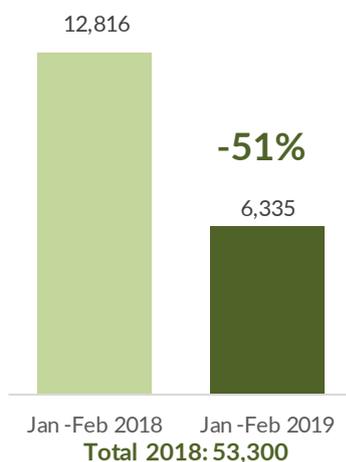
Monitoring **visits to reception centres** since May 2017, jointly with Minister of Interior staff and independent auditors

* Source: UNHCR

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Asylum applications

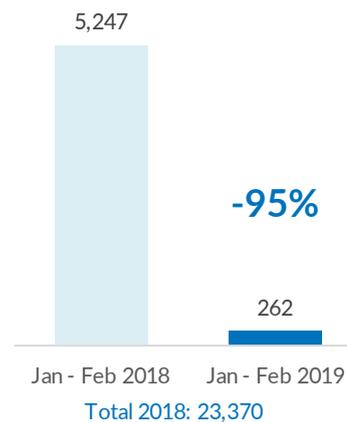
First time applications Jan-Feb, 2018-2019



Source: Eurostat and Ministry of Interior

Sea Arrivals

Jan-Feb, 2018-2019

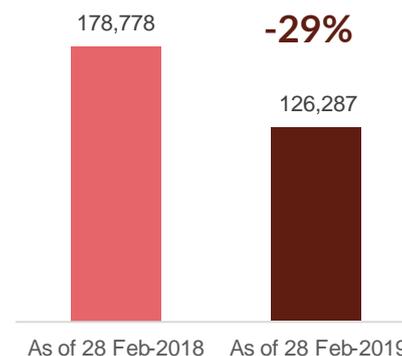


Source: Ministry of Interior

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Reception system

Population of concern in reception centres



Source: Ministry of Interior

Operational Context

- Between 1 January and 28 February 2019, there were 6,335 **asylum applications** in Italy (including 128 from UASC applicants). Applicants most commonly originate from Pakistan (23 per cent), Nigeria (8 per cent), Bangladesh (8 per cent), Ukraine (5 per cent), El Salvador (4 per cent), Morocco (4 per cent), Senegal (4 per cent), Peru (3 per cent), Albania (3 per cent), and Venezuela (3 per cent). In the same period, Territorial Commissions decided 13,743 cases, recognizing refugee status in 9 per cent of cases, followed by granting 6 per cent subsidiary protection, and 2 per cent complementary forms of protection¹.
- In a judgment dated 19 February, the Italian Court of Cassation found that the repeal of **humanitarian protection** introduced by the Law on Migration and Security is not retroactive. Therefore, asylum applications lodged prior to the entry into force of the new law (5 October 2018) ought to be determined on the basis of the previous legal framework.
- Between 1 January and 18 February 2019, **262 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea**, compared to 5,247 in the same period last year, and 13,439 in the January-February 2017 period. In the first two months of 2019, new arrivals reached Italian shores after search and rescue operations only on two occasions. Such operations were carried out by the Italian Navy and by NGO Sea Watch, respectively. In the other cases, new arrivals were intercepted near Italian shores or after they had already reached Italian soil.
- Since the beginning of the year, **232 refugees and migrants were reported dead or missing** at sea in the Mediterranean, of whom 149 either died or are missing in the Central Mediterranean. Furthermore, on 7 February, a 29-year-old Togolese man was found suffering from hypothermia on the Monginevre route while attempting to cross on foot from Italy to France; the man died in hospital shortly thereafter. The Italy-France border area was hit by heavy snow in early February, making it increasingly dangerous for refugees and migrants attempting to move onward from Italy to France.
- In February 2019, the Catania Prosecutor confirmed that the crew of the **NGO vessel** Sea Watch 3 did not commit any criminal offence in relation to the rescue of 47 individuals in January 2018 when it decided to sail towards Italy following the rescue. Furthermore, it was decided that there were no irregularities regarding the vessel registration. However, Sea Watch 3 was prevented from leaving the Catania port until 22 February, due to alleged anomalies in relation to safety and environmental regulations. In the second half of February, while Sea Watch 3 started sailing towards Marseille, NGO Sea Eye became again operational in the Central Mediterranean with its rescue vessel Alan Kurdi.
- On 19 February, the Senate Immunities Commission dismissed the Catania Ministers Tribunal's request to authorize the launch of criminal proceedings against the Ministry of

¹ Ministry of the Interior, *I numeri dell'asilo*, (last access 25 March 2019)

the Interior in connection with the alleged kidnapping of over 170 refugees and migrants who were prevented from disembarking the **Diciotti** vessel in August 2018.

- Between 15 and 16 February 2019, a fire broke out in the San Ferdinando **informal settlement** in Calabria, causing the death of a 29-year-old Senegalese man, a former beneficiary of humanitarian protection. This is the third death at the San Ferdinando settlement in just over a year. In the second half of February, local authorities started to implement a plan to transfer asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection to reception facilities in nearby areas.

Main Activities

Access to procedures

- On 27 February, UNHCR, together with the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, organized a European workshop on quality assurance in the Refugee Status Determination procedures. The workshop took place in Rome and was attended by representatives from the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, the Territorial Commissions, UNHCR, EASO, ECRE as well as experts from various European countries. The experiences of quality assurance in the Refugee Status Determination procedures in France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK were presented and discussed.

Protection outreach

- In February, UNHCR partner Medici per i Diritti Umani (MEDU) conducted night visits at informal settlements in the Rome area, accommodating asylum-seekers and refugees, including persons with specific needs. MEDU promotes access to health, social, and psycho-social services to persons of concern to UNHCR. During outreach activities, persons living in informal settlements raised concerns about the more restrictive approach to residence registration following the coming into force of the new Law on Migration and Security. They also shared concerns about the possible consequences of settlements being rapidly evicted, leaving many without shelter. In addition to protection outreach activities, MEDU runs a safe space for women and their children in Rome, where a protected space with free baby items and trained cultural mediators are available, and where weekly informative sessions are carried out focusing on international protection, access to health, and women and children's health, including referral to appropriate services. Thanks to UNHCR support, MEDU also runs Psychè, a centre in Rome providing specific medical and psycho-social support for SGBV and torture survivors, including men and boys.
- In February 2019, UNHCR also conducted assessment visits in various informal settlements in Milan, meeting with asylum-seekers from the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. Staff delivered information on asylum and other relevant procedures.

Reception

- In the first half of February, the first groups of asylum-seekers were transferred from the first-line reception centre in Mineo, Sicily, to other facilities in nearby provinces. UNHCR visited the Mineo facility, liaising with the managing entity to follow-up on the situation, ensuring also that persons to be transferred were duly informed in a language they understood, and that adequate referral mechanisms were in place for transferees, including persons with specific needs.

Safe legal pathways

- On 27 February, 16 refugees were resettled from Libya to Italy, in the context of the Italian Resettlement Programme, which is run and coordinated by the Ministry of Interior with support from UNHCR. The group comprised 5 Palestinian nationals and 11 Sudanese nationals. This was the second arrival of refugees resettled from Libya to Italy, the first group of 44 having arrived in November 2018. Furthermore, at the end of February, 22 Syrian refugees were resettled from Lebanon to Italy, while 26 refugees originating from Eritrea and Ethiopia were resettled from Sudan to Italy. UNHCR welcomed resettled refugees upon their arrival in Rome and follows up to promote that their reception and other needs are adequately catered for.

Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence

- On 21 February, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, organized a roundtable on preventing, combating and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in the context of asylum and migration. Representatives from UNHCR, and the Council of Europe delivered presentations, as well as the Special UN Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the former President of the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking (GRETA), representatives from the National Commission for the Right to Asylum, the national anti-violence network, and the European Court of Human Rights. The event was attended by some 90 practitioners from specialized NGOs of the anti-violence and anti-trafficking networks, as well as judges, lawyers and experts. The event was an opportunity to discuss international standards and the situation in Italy, stressing the importance of connecting the asylum system, with the anti-trafficking and anti-violence systems so to enhance the protection of survivors.

Education

- On 6 February, UNHCR signed an agreement with the University of Bologna aimed at launching university corridors enabling five refugee students in Ethiopia to continue their graduate studies in Bologna and obtain a scholarship. The agreement was also co-signed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Caritas. Other project partners are: the Archdiocese of Bologna, the Regional Agency for post-Graduate Studies, Federmanager, Gandhi Charity, Manageritalia and Next Generation. The University of Bologna recently published the [call for applications](#), to which the selection of candidates in Addis Abeba will follow. Further information is available on UNHCR's [press release](#).

Durable solutions

- In the context of the [Welcome - Working for refugee integration](#) project, UNHCR received over 90 applications from companies wishing to receive the UNHCR logo in recognition of their efforts to promote employment opportunities for refugees and support their integration in Italy. On 21 February, the awarding committee – composed by representatives from Confindustria, IISole24Ore, and the Ministry of Labour- approved the list of companies that will receive the award during an event taking place in Milan in the second half of March 2019.

External relations

- Between 19 and 21 February 2019, a group of four refugees, originally from Colombia, Senegal, Syria and Venezuela travelled to Rome as part of a committee representing different migrant communities living in Argentina. The visit aimed at promoting dialogue, respect and diversity, and raise awareness of the plight of refugees around the world. Accompanied on the three-day trip by Argentina's Human Rights Minister, Argentine government officials and UNHCR and IOM officers, the group attended the Vatican for a public audience with the Pope, and visited a reception facility in the Rome area. Furthermore, in late February 2019, UNHCR met with a delegation from the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, and accompanied the delegation to visit a reception facility.



A UNHCR Resettlement Officer poses with a group of four refugees, originally from Colombia, Senegal, Syria and Venezuela, who travelled to Rome in February 2019, as part of a committee representing different migrant communities living in Argentina.

Working with Partners

- Since 2017, UNHCR has engaged in partnerships with a number of NGOs in Italy, with a view to enhancing its protection delivery, focusing in particular on SGBV prevention and response, child protection and integration. In 2019, partners include [ARCI](#), [Cambalache](#), [Caritas \(Conorzio Communitas\)](#), [Carta di Roma](#), [Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati](#), [Di.RE](#), [Fondazione Adecco](#), [Intersos](#), [LILA Catania](#), [MEDU](#), and [University of Pollenzo](#). Further information is available on the [What we do in Italy](#) publication.



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