Trends of Arrivals in the Mediterranean

From 20 to 26 March, 414 persons arrived by sea to Greece. Chios recorded the majority of sea arrivals (224), followed by Lesvos (72) and Leros (72). A total of 3,783 persons reached the Greek shores from 01 January until 26 March 2017.

Between 01 January and 26 March 2017, 21,894 persons arrived in Italy by sea (plus 45 per cent compared to the sea arrivals in the same period last year). During the week, 5,665 persons (including over 500 unaccompanied and separated children/UASC) disembarked in various ports of southern Italy. New arrivals departed from Libya and mainly originate from sub-Saharan African countries, but also from Morocco and Bangladesh. Furthermore, on 21 March, 10 Tunisian nationals spontaneously reached shore in western Sicily and were subsequently transferred to the hotspot in Taranto, while on 26 March 28 persons originating from Pakistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Somalia spontaneously reached Porto Badisco, Lecce and were subsequently transferred to the Centro di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza (CPSA) Don Tonino Bello for identification.

On 23 March, at least two shipwrecks were reported off the Libyan coast. NGOs reported that five corpses of young men were recovered some 14 miles off the Libyan coast near two empty and partially submerged rubber dinghies. A third boat also called the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Rome asking for help, with NGOs consequently patrolling the area, for the time being there are no reports about this boat. Vincent Cochetel, Director of UNHCR’s Europe Bureau, claimed that defeating the business model of traffickers requires the existence of credible legal pathways for those in need of international protection, including through resettlement, family reunification programmes and private sponsorship.

It is estimated that at least 205 are dead or missing bringing the total number of 811 from January to 26 March 2017. As of 28 March, 959 people have died or went missing while trying to reach Europe by sea, compared to 5,022 in the whole of 2016.

In Spain, arrivals have increased and as of 26 March some 4,200 persons arrived since January 2017 (110 per cent of increase compared to same period of last year), 55 per cent by sea (2,300) and 45 per cent by land to Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. In the reporting period 240 persons arrived by sea. While the majority were rescued by the Spanish Rescue Agency in the high seas and transferred to different points of the Andalusian coast, a significant number of spontaneous arrivals were registered in Cádiz and Melilla. Most sea arrivals originated from western African countries, namely Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia and Guinea. On 24 March a small inflatable boat, reportedly carrying seven persons (all males from Sub-Saharan countries) capsized, trying to reach the Spanish shores through the Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco. The Spanish Rescue Agency rescued three survivors and recovered three dead bodies in the Mediterranean (one is still missing). UNHCR, present at the landing of two other boats rescued that day and carrying 24 persons (4 women, 19 men and 1 little child), remains in contact with Spanish authorities in charge of providing humanitarian aid to survivors and will follow up with them.

In terms of land arrivals to the Spanish enclaves (Ceuta and Melilla), despite ongoing and serious restrictions, Syrians and Palestinians (mainly families) continue to enter through Melilla claiming asylum at the border crossing point (some 500 applications in 2017). Other land arrivals originated from Guinea, Algeria and Cameroon. Recep-
Key Figures

Greece

414
Total Weekly Arrivals to Greek Islands
20 - 26 March 2017

59
Daily Average Arrivals to Greek Islands
20 - 26 March 2017

Italy

5,702
Total Weekly Arrivals to Italy
20 - 26 March 2017

815
Daily Average Arrivals to Italy
20 - 26 March 2017

Key Developments

Situation in Greece
UNHCR continues to provide assistance in Greece through its cash distribution programme. Last week, UNHCR’s distribution benefited 1,486 individuals, as 580 cards were distributed for the first time in Ioannina, Attika, Rovies, as well as in Thessaloniki, Northern Greece, and on the Aegean islands of Lesvos, Tilos and Chios. The Shelter Working Group and the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Working Group developed practical measures to mitigate the risks of SGBV and to integrate SGBV prevention into shelter and site planning in the sites in Greece both in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and open accommodation facilities. These include specific measures in the areas of population control to avoid overcrowding; adequate shelter privacy; adequate lighting in the site; appropriate communal WASH facilities; site layout; assessments, analysis and strategic planning. The recommendations seek to promote the well-being of groups at risk, and to contribute increase security. It also recommends that shelter...
and site planning staff design all response services to be inclusive and accessible, including to persons with disabilities.

By 27 March, 27,708 people had benefited from UNHCR’s Accommodation Scheme since the beginning of the programme (123 people in the past week) and 18,916 places were available in apartments (11,394), hotels (4,216), buildings (1,982), facilities for unaccompanied children (732), sites (360) and host family programme (232).

Situation in Serbia
As of 26 March, 7,892 asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants were counted in Serbia, of which 6,738 (85 per cent) were accommodated in 17 government shelters.

The impending implementation of the Hungarian Law passed on 06 March and prospects of spending prolonged period of time in detention before being rejected and sent back to Serbia is a major concern among refugees and migrants in all sites. While psycho-social and other health partners report increasing mental health issues at all sites, a first peaceful demonstration against the new law took place on 22 March in front of Adaseveci Transit Centre. UNHCR continues offering authorities increased support to maintain mental health and security in the centres.

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) continued arriving daily, mainly from Bulgaria. Some 30 new, mostly Afghan, boys were referred by UNHCR and partners to the Centre for Social Work in Belgrade alone. By now, over 900 UASCs are in Serbia, with 758 accommodated in government centres, including 350 in Obrenovac, 118 in Presevo, 32 in Bujanovac, and 258 in all other governmental shelters, as well as close to 200 in Belgrade city centre.

Five cases of collective expulsions from Hungary were encountered this week, the lowest number reported since last summer. Consistent with increased attempts to irregularly enter Croatia instead, the number of reported collective expulsions from Croatia rose to 60 from last week’s 57. In support to the government’s efforts to improve and expand emergency shelter UNHCR donated another 250 bunk beds to the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and delivered them to the Transit Centres of Obrenovac, Subotica, Sombor and Sid.

On 20 March, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights presented its annual report “Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia 2016”, which documents and analyses small improvements but also systemic problems in accessing fair and efficient asylum procedures and refugee protection in Serbia. The full report is available here.

On 24 March, UNHCR and partners surveyed refugees/migrants in Belgrade city centre. Amongst 1,395 counted - all male - 368 agreed to be interviewed. Most were from Afghanistan (85 per cent), followed by Pakistan. 11 per cent confirmed to be sheltered in Obrenovac centre but come to the city regularly and 125 were UASCs, mostly Afghan. Over 50 per cent of those profiled reached Serbia in the past four months. 64 per cent stated they are waiting for smugglers to try to reach France or Italy.

Situation in Hungary
From 20 to 26 March, 55 asylum-seekers (compared to 43 from 13 to 19 March) entered Hungary through the two transit zones: 28 into Röszke and 27 into Tompa (10 men, 10 women, 30 children, 1 single man, 1 single woman and 3 UACs); breakdown by nationality: 27 Afghans, 20 Syrians, seven Iraqis, and one Nepali. The daily admissions remained at around five people per day per transit zone with no admissions over the weekends and public holidays. The Hungarian police reported seven apprehen-
Deplorable living conditions in most of the reception facilities have not been improved. The chronic issues include physical/hygiene conditions in the centres, difficulties in finding doctors willing to register asylum-seekers, local municipalities unwilling to provide address registration to asylum-seekers, overloaded case workers, and presence of unregistered individuals residing in a centre. On the other hand, some reception centres continue to implement good practices such as regular local-level coordination meeting (NGOs, UNHCR and SAR officials) and improved communication between reception officials and asylum-seekers on day-to-day issues.

**Update on Relocation**

As of 27 March, the European Commission (EC) states that 15,055 persons have been relocated within the EU, with 10,575 persons relocated from Greece (14 per cent of the initial 66,400 target) and 4,480 from Italy (10 per cent of the initial 39,600 target). [EC Figures]

From 20 to 26 March, 572 asylum-seekers were relocated from Greece, to Finland (148), France (178), Ireland (38), Latvia (30), Luxembourg (57), Netherlands (104) and Slovenia (17), including 3 Dublin cases (to France). There were 135 new pledges from Norway (115) and Croatia (20). A total of 10,853 asylum-seekers have left or will leave Greece until the end of March 2017. The number of monthly departures in 2017 is finally growing in comparison to 2016, when the average of monthly departure was 607 persons. In January and February, 1,132 and 1,204 asylum-seekers have departed and in March 1,237 asylum-seekers have left or are expected to depart to another EU Member State.

During the week, 45 asylum-seekers were relocated from Italy to France.

**European Union Developments**

On 20 March, the EC awarded EUR 12.2 million in emergency funding under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) to Italy. The funding is aimed at helping the Italian Coast Guard strengthen border surveillance as well as to support its search and rescue capacity.

On 25 March, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Rome treaties, the Leaders of 27 EU Member States, the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission adopted the Rome Declaration. In the Declaration, they reaffirm their commitment to the European Union, and outline strategic directions. In particular, they single out “a safe and secure Europe” as one of their four overarching areas of work. In that context, they aim at fostering “a Union where all citizens feel safe and can move freely, where [...] external borders are secured, with an efficient, responsible and sustainable migration policy, respecting international norms”.

**Situation in Bulgaria**

While the number of irregular entries has drastically decreased as compared to the same period in 2016, the number of asylum-seekers accommodated in State Agency for Refugees (SAR) centres is increasing: 2,872 persons were registered at SAR centres as of 24 March 2017, compared to only 758 on 14 March 2016. The main reasons include Bulgaria and Serbia’s tightened measures to control cross-border movement along their borders.