

EUROPE MONTHLY REPORT



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Refugees from Sudan exit a plane in Timisoara. They are awaiting resettlement from Libya at UNHCR's Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara, Romania's third largest city.

TRENDS AND KEY FIGURES

In February, just over 3,600 refugees and migrants entered Europe via Italy, Greece and Spain. Overall arrivals to Spain (1,366 versus 4,612) decreased by just over 70% compared with the previous month while arrivals through routes to Greece (2,316 versus 2,652) and Italy (60 versus 202) decreased compared with the previous month. So far this year some 8,700 refugees and migrants arrived to Europe by sea compared to nearly 10,700 that arrived in the same period last year, marking an 18% decrease.

ITALY: the number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea in February (60) was the lowest number of arrivals by sea via the Central Mediterranean route since early 2013. Of those crossing the sea in February, 65% departed from Algeria and 35% departed from Tunisia, while no one departed from Libya. Of those arriving in Italy in January, 118 had departed from Libya. While departure numbers from the Libyan coast are lower in general, the Libyan Coast Guard has reported rescuing or intercepting over 300 persons in February. As of the end of February, arrival numbers by sea to Italy are 95% lower than in the first two months of 2018. The primary nationalities that have arrived by sea in 2019 so far are Bangladeshi (29%), Tunisians (26%), Algerians (20%) and Iraqis (19%).

Mediterranean
11,165
arrivals in 2019 ¹

225
estimated dead/missing in 2019 ¹

Greece ²			Italy		
4,770			262		
3,970	2,652	2,316	359	202	60
Dec	Jan	Feb	Dec	Jan	Feb

Spain ²			Cyprus		
5,978			124		
5,558	4,612	1,366	224	85	39
Dec	Jan	Feb	Dec	Jan	Feb

New asylum applications in Europe ³

Jan-Feb 2019	29,000
Jan-Dec 2018	697,000
Jan-Dec 2017	819,000
Jan-Dec 2016	1,322,000
Jan-Dec 2015	1,471,000

¹ data.unhcr.org/mediterranean as of 28 February 2019.

² Greece and Spain both include sea and land arrivals; Spain includes sea arrivals in the Mediterranean and to the Canary Islands.

³ Sources: Eurostats for EU+ countries (Only partial data for January and February 2019. All data is provisional and last updated 26 February 2019); UNHCR for Eastern Europe (as of 30 June 2018), Turkey (as of 30 September 2018) and South Eastern Europe (as of 31 December 2018).

34,705

Relocated in total ⁴
⁴Source: [European Commission](#), as of 30 October 2018.

 from **Greece**

21,999

(33% of 66,400)

 from **Italy**

12,706

(32% of 39,600)

1,838

Returns EU-Turkey statement ¹²
¹²Source: [Ministry of Citizen Protection](#), Greece as of 28 February 2019.

GREECE: in February, nearly 1,500 (1,486) refugees and migrants arrived by sea in Greece compared to over 1,250 whom arrived in the same period in 2018 (a 18% increase). They mainly originated from Afghanistan (49%), Iraq (12%), State of Palestine (12%) and the Syrian Arab Republic (9%). As of the end of February, sea arrivals to Greece have increased 16% compared to the same period in 2018. In addition, the number of persons rescued or intercepted by the Turkish Coast Guards after departing from the Turkish coastline has almost doubled this year compared to the same period last year. At the land border, 830 people arrived to Evros in February, almost at pace with the arrivals of January (801) and almost 53% more than the 544 arrivals of the same period in 2018.

SPAIN: nearly 1,400 people crossed the land and sea borders from North Africa in February, an increase of 8% compared to February 2018, when unusually high numbers (over 1,600) crossed the land borders. Their primary countries of origin are Guinea, Mali and Morocco.

Dead and Missing: As of 28 February, over 225 people have died or gone missing while trying to reach Europe by sea which is a 74% decrease compared to the number of deaths between January and February in 2018 (870). So far in 2019, 150 people are believed to have died while crossing the sea to Italy, double the 70 people that are believed to have died while crossing the sea to Spain.

In addition, at least 15 refugees or migrants have died along land routes in Europe or at Europe's borders.

Resettlement: In 2018, there were 26,084 resettlement departures to Europe, whereas in 2017 there were 27,450 resettlement arrivals. During 2018, over 32,300 refugees were submitted by UNHCR for resettlement to 20 countries in Europe, 17% less than in 2017.

In 2018, six countries in Europe (the UK, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway) received 80% of all resettlement submissions. The vast majority of refugees submitted for resettlement to Europe in 2018 are originally from Syria (69%), consistent with 2017. In total, 93% of refugees submitted for resettlement to Europe in 2018 originate from just seven countries: Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. 16% of submissions to Europe are from East Africa and just under 2% are from West Africa. More information is available in the [Europe resettlement 2018 update](#).

OTHER SITUATIONS IN EUROPE

Turkey **4.0 million**

Refugees and asylum seekers ⁵

 Syrian Arab Republic **3,637,000**

 Afghanistan **172,000**

 Iraq **143,000**

 Other nationalities **57,000**
⁵ Source: UNHCR as of 28 February 2019

Ukraine **1.6 million**

Internally Displaced Persons ⁶ and **Conflict Affected Persons** ⁷

 Refugees: ⁸ **2,620**

 Asylum seekers: ⁹ **6,408**

 Stateless persons: ¹⁰ **35,650**
⁶ Residing more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).

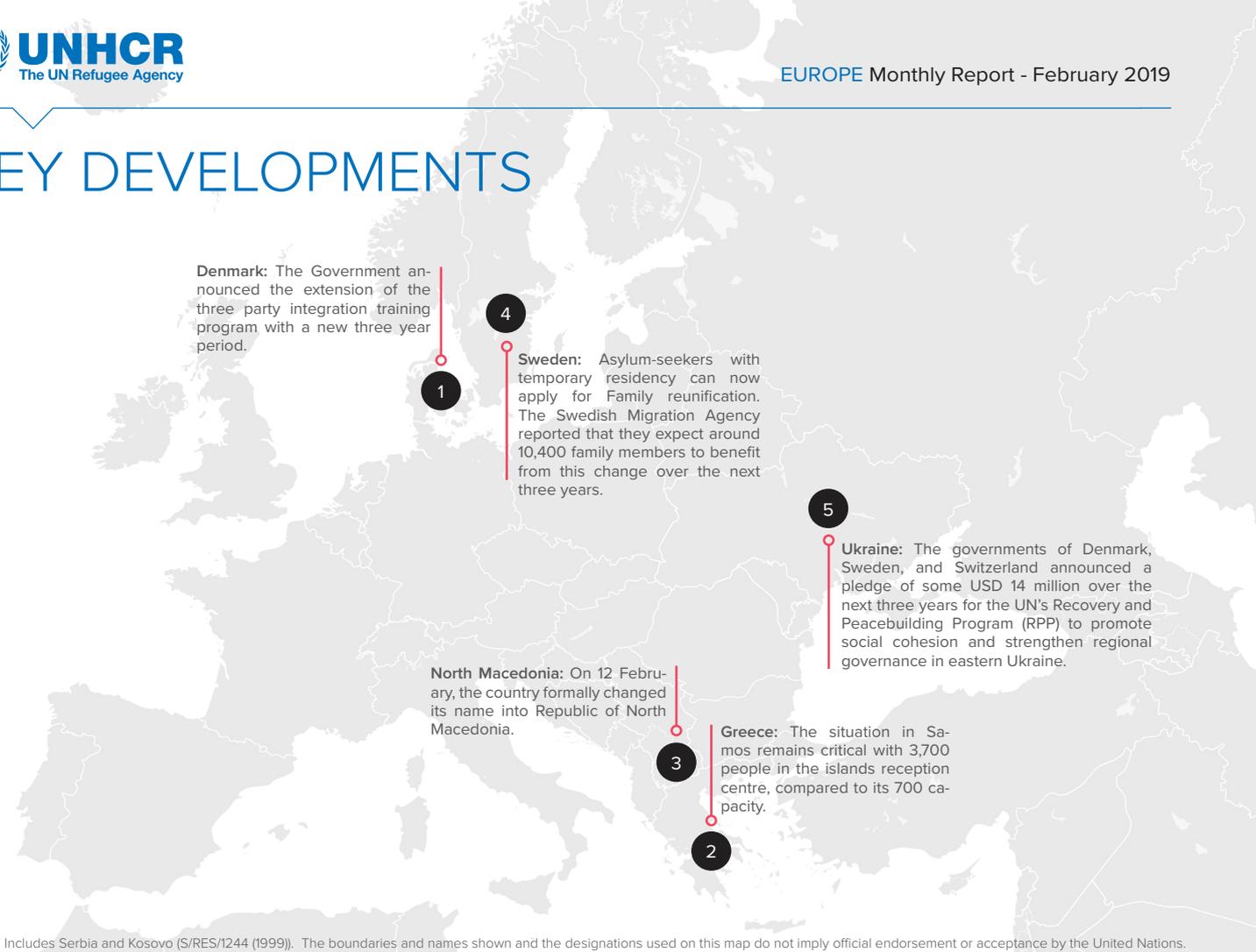
⁷ Estimated number of conflict-affected people living along the line of contact in government-controlled areas (GCA) and non-government controlled areas (NGCA).

⁸ UNHCR, State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 31/12/2018

⁹ UNHCR as of 31/01/2019

¹⁰ State Migration Service of Ukraine as of 01/01/2019

KEY DEVELOPMENTS



1 Denmark: The Government announced the extension of the three party integration training program with a new three year period.

4 Sweden: Asylum-seekers with temporary residency can now apply for Family reunification. The Swedish Migration Agency reported that they expect around 10,400 family members to benefit from this change over the next three years.

5 Ukraine: The governments of Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland announced a pledge of some USD 14 million over the next three years for the UN's Recovery and Peacebuilding Program (RPP) to promote social cohesion and strengthen regional governance in eastern Ukraine.

North Macedonia: On 12 February, the country formally changed its name into Republic of North Macedonia.

3 Greece: The situation in Samos remains critical with 3,700 people in the islands reception centre, compared to its 700 capacity.

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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.

Belgium: As part of the partnership and visibility activities, RREUA organized a well-attended high-level networking event in Brussels, on the Global Compact for Refugees. High-level counterparts from the European Institutions, ambassadors of CRRF roll-out countries, EU Permanent Representatives, NGOs and civil society, as well as private sector partners took part. As part of the action plan on asylum and migration adopted by the Council of Ministers on 15 February, additional reception places will be created in 2019. Besides discontinuing the capacity downsizing plan decided by former State Secretary Francken, 3,250 active places will be created in addition to 1,500 buffer places. This positive decision is expected to alleviate pressure on the reception system and hopefully allow for the resettlement programme to resume.

Council of Europe: Ms. Dunja Mijatović, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, published on 7 February a letter addressed to Italian PM Giuseppe Conte, requesting the Italian government to clarify the measures it intends to take to ensure the continuity of essential services for asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of protection. The Commissioner also underscored the need to uphold the human rights of persons rescued at sea, by expressing her deep concerns about Italy's recent measures "to criminalise the work of NGOs" ([press release](#) and [letter](#)).

Following a five day visit to Hungary, the Commissioner issued on 11 February a press release expressing her concern on the situation of NGOs, human rights defenders and journalists and regretting that asylum-seekers, including children over 14, are systematically detained, while very few asylum seekers are able to apply for international protection. She also urged the Hungarian authorities to refrain from using anti-migrant rhetoric and campaigns which fan xenophobic reactions among the population ([press release](#)).

Denmark: The Government announced the extension of the three party integration training program with a new three year period. Since its introduction in 2016, the program has been joined by 1,860 refugees and aims to secure fast entry to the job market, as language classes and job training are combined in the program.

EU Affairs: The European Parliament (EP) voted its position on the proposal for European Border and Coast Guard Regulation (EBCG) on 11 February. The negotiations between the Council, the EP and the Commission on the EBCG file have already started and are progressing quickly, with the aim to adopt the regulation before the end of EP's mandate. The last plenary of the EP is scheduled for 11 April, ahead of the EP elections on 23-26 May.

On 18 February, Nina Gregori, the current head of Inter-

nal Administrative Affairs, Migration and Naturalisation Directorate of the Ministry of Interior of Slovenia, was selected as the new Executive Director of EASO. Her appointment now requires the approval of the European Parliament (the hearing before the LIBE Committee will take place on 11 March in Strasbourg). She is an appreciated long-term interlocutor of UNHCR.

European Court of Human Rights: On 28 February 2019, the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgments in the cases of: *H.A. and Others v. Greece* (no. 19951/16), in which UNHCR intervened as a third party, concerning alleged violations by Greece for the detention in police stations and in a border post in northern Greece and the reception conditions in Diavata refugee camp of nine asylum-seeking UAC, just before the signature of the EU-Turkey Statement. The ECtHR unanimously found Greece in violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) on account of the conditions of the applicants' detention in the police stations and in a border post; Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) taken together with Article 3 because the domestic remedy available was not effective, neither for the applicants' transfer to the open facility of the Diavata centre, nor for an examination of their complaints concerning their detention conditions; Article 5.1 and 5.4 (right to liberty and security) on account of inter alia the automatic application of the "protective custody" and the impossibility to seek speedy judicial review of detention. The ECtHR found no violation of Article 3 as regards the living conditions in the Diavata open centre which had a safe zone for UACs ([Judgment](#) - not final).

Khan v. France (no. 12267/16), the first case concerning the failure by the French authorities to provide an unaccompanied minor with care before and after the dismantling of the makeshift camps set up in the southern section of the "lande de Calais", in breach of Article 3 ECHR ([Judgment](#)).

France: Release of the National Court of asylum case law compilation: On 12 February, the National Court of asylum has [published](#) its annual case law compilation for 2018. It gathers 96 decisions of the Court itself and the Conseil d'Etat. The Court highlights decisions on matters related to the termination of protection on grounds of serious threat for State security, the change of social group definition for women and young girls who extracted themselves from forced marriages and also decisions on threats related to ongoing armed conflicts in Syria or Afghanistan.

Germany: Refugees and asylum-seekers in Germany will continue to be prescribed their place of residence, according to a decision of the Federal Cabinet made that is likely to pass in parliament. This regulation, introduced on a temporary basis in 2016 to handle large

numbers of arrivals, will now apply indefinitely. Refugees must reside for three years in the federal state in which their asylum application was pending. Further residence requirements can then be imposed within the states. Critics argue that restricting free movement amounts to a breach of the Geneva Convention and EU law. Municipalities and cities support the cabinet's decision referring to the allegedly positive effect the regulation has on local integration. Comprehensive data to assess this is not available though. The co-ruling Social Democrats announced to discuss the topic again in upcoming plenary sessions in the Bundestag. The federal government however dismisses any legal concerns.

Greece: The situation in Samos remains critical with ² 3,700 people in the islands reception centre, compared to its 700 capacity. The month was marked by protests of both the asylum-seeking and local communities against the conditions in Samos' reception centre some peaceful while others caused damage and involved small-scale fires. Tension also mounted in Leros – a small island in the South Aegean – between asylum-seekers and the local community where the asylum-seeking population has increased significantly in comparison to the host community as a result of a recent increase of arrivals. In Greece, UNHCR works with key Government institutions, and provides specialists and advice to help build State systems and expertise. In this context, UNHCR provides Technical Assistance to the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) and the Department for the Protection of Asylum-seekers of the Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) through a project funded by the European Commission's Structural Reform and Support Services (SRSS) and in cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). This month, UNHCR organized a workshop that brought together for the first time key staff from RIS, including the Directors of the reception centres of the islands and the Evros land border, experts and representatives from EASO, DPAS, the Asylum Service, the General Secretariat for Governmental Work and SRSS. The two-day discussion provided the opportunity to exchange information and expertise on the situation in the borders, work to improve and harmonize procedures in the reception centres, systematize data collection and use, and strengthen coordination. The conclusions will be put in practice through an Action Plan for RIS (2019 – 2020).

Hungary: The Hungarian Ministry of Interior confirmed that it has facilitated the arrival of 300 Venezuelan nationals of Hungarian origin. They were provided with flight tickets and an integration package. The Government plans to continue this programme.

Italy: On 6 February, [UNHCR signed an agreement](#) with the University of Bologna, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Caritas, aimed at launching university corridors

enabling five refugee students in Ethiopia to continue their graduate studies in Bologna and obtain a scholarship. Selected students will also benefit from administrative and logistical support, while their integration into the local university life will be promoted. A number of partners will collaborate in the project, including the Archdiocese of Bologna, the Emilia-Romagna regional agency for higher studies (ER.GO.), Federmanager Bologna - Ravenna, Ghandi Charity, Manageritalia Emilia-Romagna, and Next Generation Italy. The selection of candidates will start in Addis Abeba in April, and will be carried out by the University of Bologna, jointly with University of Mekelle and Manageritalia.

North Macedonia: On 12 February, the country formally ³ changed its name into Republic of North Macedonia. A joint letter by Skopje and Athens was sent to the UN Secretary General, informing him about the entry into force of the Final Agreement, which puts an end to the dispute between the two countries.

The Russian Federation: On 22 February the Government of the Russian Federation endorsed the Plan of Realization of the Concept of State Migration Policy. While the Concept is effective within the period of 2019-2025, the Plan currently covers 2019-2021. It foresees the adoption of a number of laws regulating the migration regime, regular analysis of the migration situation and ways of implementation of administrative regulations. According to the Plan, the Mol should draft laws and formulate proposals aimed at simplifying naturalization procedures for certain categories of foreigners and stateless persons.

Sweden: Asylum-seekers with temporary residency can ⁴ now apply for Family reunification. The Swedish Migration Agency reported that they expect around 10,400 family members to benefit from this change over the next three years. On 26 February 2019, Sweden co-hosted together with the UN and Switzerland, the third High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen.

The United Kingdom: On February 27, Isabel Marquez, UNHCR's Deputy Director for the Americas, gave evidence to the International Development Committee's inquiry in Parliament into the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. The session considered the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, and its impact upon other countries in the region. It also assessed the response of the UK Government to the crisis, and how the UK can ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those in need.

Ukraine: The governments of Denmark, Sweden, and ⁵ Switzerland announced a pledge of some USD 14 million over the next three years for the UN's Recovery and Peacebuilding Program (RPP) to promote social cohesion and strengthen regional governance in eastern Ukraine. The press release issued on 8 Feb-

ruary, mentioned that the "breakdown in trust" in the conflict-hit region "can only be overcome by job creation, poverty alleviation, anti-corruption measures, law enforcement and judicial reform, and the promotion of human rights."

On 12 February, convened by Russia, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held a session to discuss the situation in Ukraine and to mark the fourth anniversary of the Minsk Agreements. Prior to the meeting, European Union Members States issued a joint media statement supporting the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognized borders. The statement also mentioned the continued impact on the civilian population in particular – "the most vulnerable, living in the non-government control areas and along the contact line where people are under continuous threat of shelling."

On 16 February, the Ukrainian Embassy in the United States has reported that US President Donald Trump signed a package of legislative acts that increases aid to Ukraine up to \$ 700 million for military-technical assistance and support to reforms.

REFUGEE STORIES

[Learning is a welcome respite for child refugees on Kos](#)

By Leo Dobbs in Kos, Greece

Thirteen-year-old Bahez from Iraq carefully sketches an ancient marble head. His skills – and interest in Greece – are taking shape thanks to a school set up by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, on the Greek island of Kos. Bahez is one of around 100 child asylum seekers attending KEDU, an informal school on Kos, supported by UNHCR. Today, they are learning about the island’s history during an outing to the Archaeological Museum of Kos. The school teaches displaced

children aged between seven and 18 years old. Almost 400 youngsters, who might otherwise have no education, have passed through its doors since they opened last April under the management of UNHCR’s partner, ARSIS. Offering a range of subjects from mathematics to Greek, it provides a welcome respite to children in the nearby Pyli reception centre on the island, whose lives have been upended by flight. Sixteen-year-old Mohamed, who fled conflict in Yemen, never misses a day. “This is my second home,” he says. “I love everything about school.”



ACADEMIC SPOTLIGHT

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) report [“Bridging refugee protection and development: Policy Recommendations for Applying a Development-Displacement Nexus Approach”](#), to which the UNHCR Liaison Office Vienna had provided feedback in a consultation round in October 2018, is now available in English, Arabic and Turkish. The report outlines policy options, practices and practical guidance identified by these stakeholders as essential to mitigating adverse effects associated with forced displacement, building the resilience of refugees and host communities and stimulating various aspects of development.

