

Italy

April 2019

Between 1 January and 31 March 2019, **8,390 new asylum applications** were lodged in Italy, including 16 per cent from individuals originating from Latin American countries.

Despite standoffs over the docking of rescue vessels in Italy and increased restrictions against NGO rescue boats, **255 refugees and migrants** reached Italian shores in April 2019.

On 29 April 2019, **146 refugees were evacuated from Libya to Italy** in a joint operation between UNHCR, and Italian and Libyan authorities.

KEY INDICATORS

72%*

Percentage of 2019 sea arrivals informed by UNHCR staff upon disembarkation

5,003*

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

607*

Monitoring **visits to reception facilities** since April 2013

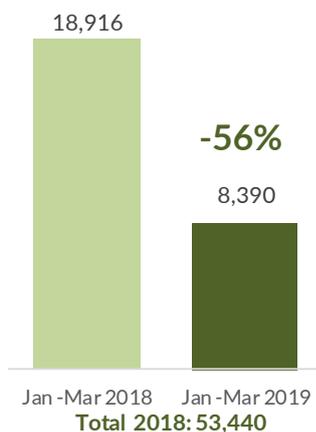
* Source: UNHCR

Between April 2013 and December 2016, monitoring visits were conducted jointly with Ministry of Interior, Prefectures, IOM, Save the Children, and Red Cross. Between April 2017 and April 2019, monitoring visits were conducted jointly with Ministry of Interior staff and independent auditors.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Asylum applications

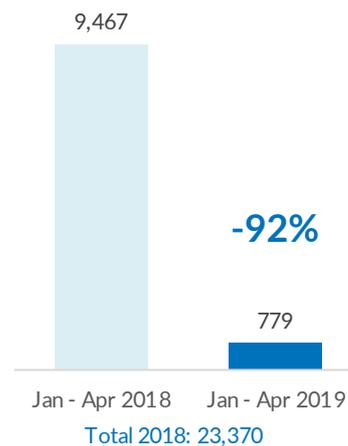
First time applications Jan-Mar 2018-2019



Source: Eurostat and Ministry of Interior

Sea Arrivals

Jan-Apr, 2018-2019

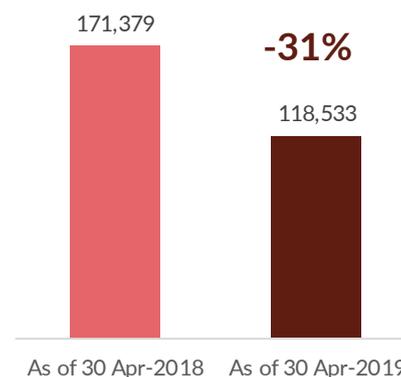


Source: Ministry of Interior

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Reception system

Population of concern in reception centres



Source: Ministry of Interior

Operational Context

- According to the latest available data, in the first three months of 2019, there were **8,390 new asylum applications** in Italy. First-time claimants more commonly originated from Pakistan, Ukraine, El Salvador, Peru, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Albania, Morocco, Nigeria, and Senegal. **Asylum-seekers from Latin American countries** (El Salvador, Peru, and Venezuela) constitute approximately 16 per cent of all applicants in the January-March 2019 period, a notable development compared to the same period last year, when asylum-seekers from the three countries above accounted for five per cent of the total number of applications only. This is consistent with the worldwide exponential increase of the number of asylum applications by individuals from Latin American countries, in particular by Venezuelans.¹
- As of 30 April, **118,533 asylum-seekers** were accommodated **in reception facilities** across Italy. Approximately half of them were hosted in five Italian regions (Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Campania, Latium, and Piedmont).² About half of the Italian Prefectures have recently issued calls for tender for the management of reception facilities in their territories, pursuant to the 2018 contract specifications for reception facilities. These calls relate to some 95,700 places in reception facilities nationwide: approximately half of these are in smaller, flat-like facilities dispersed across the national territory, while the remaining half are in larger facilities accommodating between 50 and 300 individuals. Various entities that were previously engaged in the management of reception centres decided not to respond to the calls for tender, or to issue judicial proceedings, questioning the excessive reduction of the daily rate paid by Prefectures, resulting in the inability to provide dignified reception conditions.
- On 29 April, **146 refugees** originating from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria were **evacuated from Libya to Italy** in a joint operation between UNHCR, and Italian and Libyan authorities. All of the evacuees had been previously held in detention facilities in Libya and were transferred to the UNHCR Gathering and Departure Facility in Tripoli prior to departure to Italy. The group included particularly vulnerable individuals who endured abuse and violence in Libya, as well as 46 children who were separated from their families. Italy is the first country to have stepped forward to receive evacuees from Libya since the recent violence began. UNHCR **urged** the international community to offer similar evacuations for refugees caught up in the conflict in Libya.
- In April, **255 refugees and migrants reached Italian shores**, which is at par with arrivals by sea in the previous month (262). Notably, there were no arrivals by sea of individuals

¹ UNHCR, *Asylum applications by Venezuelans soar to over 400,000*, 8 March 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/3/5c826efe2e9/asylum-applications-venezuelans-soar-400000.html> (last access 8 May 2019). See also EASO, *Nationals of countries with visa-free access lodge over a quarter of asylum applications in EU+*, 14 May 2019, <https://www.easo.europa.eu/news-events/nationals-countries-visa-free-access-lodge-over-quarter-asylum-applications-eu> (last access 17 May 2019)

² Ministry of the Interior, *Cruscotto statistico giornaliero*, 30 April 2019, available at: http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_30-04-2019_0.pdf (last access 8 May 2019)

departing from Libya in April. Over half (52 per cent) of monthly sea arrivals departed from Tunisia, while 30 per cent and 12 per cent departed from Turkey and Greece, respectively. An additional 7 per cent of monthly sea arrivals embarked in Algeria reaching shore in Sardinia. In the first four months of the year, there were 779 sea arrivals, a 92 per cent decrease compared to the numbers of persons reaching Italian shore in the same period last year (9,467). Most refugees and migrants arriving by sea since the beginning of 2019 originated from Tunisia (32 per cent), Algeria (12 per cent), Iraq (10 per cent), Pakistan (7 per cent), Bangladesh (7 per cent), Guinea (5 per cent), Senegal (4 per cent), Somalia (3 per cent), Côte d'Ivoire (3 per cent), and Islamic Republic of Iran (3 per cent). In 2019 so far, 37 per cent of sea arrivals in Italy departed from Tunisia, followed by 27 per cent from Libya, 16 per cent from Algeria, 12 per cent from Turkey, and 8 per cent from Greece. In the first four months of the year, on the route from Libya to Italy, one person died for every three who made it to European shores.

- Furthermore, in April, an average of **20 refugees and migrants** were reported **crossing** on a **daily** basis **from Slovenia into Italy** in the northern towns of Trieste and Gorizia. New arrivals mainly originate from Afghanistan and Pakistan and predominantly include adult males who travelled through South-East Europe.
- **Standoffs over the docking of rescue vessels** continued to occur in April: when the NGO vessel Alan Kurdi rescued 64 refugees and migrants off the Libyan coast on 3 April, both Italy and Malta refused to allocate a port of safety allowing individuals on board to promptly disembark. Following the agreement by France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Portugal to relocate the rescued individuals after their disembarkation, the Alan Kurdi was eventually allowed to dock in Malta on 13 April.
- A generally restrictive approach continued to **limit the capacity of NGOs to conduct rescue operations** in the Central Mediterranean. In April, the Sea Watch 3 vessel was prevented from departing towards the search and rescue area due to the adoption of more stringent technical requirements for NGOs operating search and rescue vessels flying the Dutch flag. Furthermore, in the second half of April, Italian authorities cautioned the captain of the Italian-flagged NGO vessel Mare Jonio against carrying out rescue operations in a stable and organized manner until it is duly registered to undertake this type of operations. The Mare Jonio had only recently returned at sea. Together with the Alan Kurdi, they were the only NGO rescue vessels operating in the Central Mediterranean in April.
- On 4 April, the Ministry of Interior issued a **directive** stating that an attempt by the Alan Kurdi vessel to enter Italian territorial waters would constitute a threat to the good order and security of the state, effectively preventing the boat from entering or transiting through Italian territorial waters. On 15 April, a further directive was issued calling on law enforcement authorities operating at sea to monitor that the Mare Jonio vessel acts pursuant to national and international legislation on rescue at sea, and respects the instructions by foreign authorities in their capacity to coordinate rescues at sea. The directive sparked reactions by other members of the Government, who referred to the

deteriorating security situation in Libya and the inadequacy of a “closed ports” policy to address a possible increase of sea arrivals in Italy.

- In April, legal proceedings were brought against the Prime Minister, the two Deputy Prime Ministers (including the Minister of the Interior), and the Minister of Transport, in connection with the delayed disembarkation of over 40 refugees and migrants from the NGO vessel **Sea Watch 3** at the end of January 2019. Should charges be brought against the Ministers, the Senate will be called to vote on the possibility to lift parliamentary immunities.
- Meanwhile, all adult individuals who disembarked the Sea Watch 3 in late January 2019 have now been transferred from Italy to France, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, and Romania. Unaccompanied and separated children who were on board the Sea Watch 3 have been accommodated in ad hoc facilities in southern Italy.
- In April, the **Court of Cassation** reiterated the principle that individuals who claim asylum on account of their sexual orientation are entitled to refugee status in consideration of the risk of persecutory or discriminatory treatment upon return, not only at the hands of state actors, but also at the hands of non-state actors where the state is unable to offer effective protection. Therefore, simply ascertaining that homosexuality is not criminalized in the applicant’s country of origin is insufficient to refuse a claim. Furthermore, in another judgment issued in April, the Court of Cassation stressed the need for refusals of asylum claims to clearly refer to the sources of country of origin information relied upon by decision-makers to arrive at their conclusions, specifying the need to avoid stereotyped refusal formulas.



Refugees reach safety after evacuation from Tripoli to Italy on 29 April 2019. Pictured are UNHCR staff welcoming a Somali woman carrying her baby who is disembarking from a plane at Pratica di Mare military airbase near Rome, after being evacuated from Libya.

Main Activities

Access to procedures

- UNHCR regularly monitors access to asylum procedures in Italy. In particular, it pays attention to situations in which registration of the asylum application is hindered, including by requests for documentation that is not specifically required by law, such as the case of requests for evidence of current address. In April, UNHCR raised the issue with relevant authorities at national level, and followed-up locally through field colleagues and liaison with organizations in selected locations, to ensure that asylum-seekers have unrestricted access to relevant procedures.
- On 29 April, UNHCR staff welcomed 146 refugees who were evacuated from Libya, arriving at the Pratica di Mare military airport in Rome. UNHCR personnel assisted new arrivals as they were going through medical screening by INMP (National Institute for Health, Migration, and Poverty) staff, followed by identification and fingerprinting procedures carried out by the police. By liaising with relevant authorities, UNHCR ensured that persons with specific needs received adequate assistance, and provided new arrivals with information on asylum and other relevant procedures.



UNHCR staff keep two Eritrean children entertained in a waiting area at Pratica di Mare military airbase near Rome, after they were evacuated from Libya on 29 April 2019.

Protection outreach

- In April, UNHCR and partner organization LILA conducted protection monitoring and outreach activities in six urban locations in Catania where asylum-seekers and refugees live or usually congregate. Each of these locations accommodates between 20 and 100 persons, mainly originating from Bangladesh, the Gambia, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, and Tunisia. The main protection concerns identified during the visits comprise exposure to trafficking and sexual exploitation, as well as exploitative labour practices, but also poor housing and hygienic conditions. In addition, UNHCR staff conducted outreach activities to a rural informal settlement in Cassibile, Sicily – hosting some 300 individuals- with a view to assessing access to services and working conditions for persons of concern to UNHCR who are locally employed in the agricultural sector. UNHCR liaised with local authorities and NGOs, offering technical support, and advocating for alternative housing and effective access to relevant services, including in particular healthcare.

Community-based protection

- In the context of the joint UNHCR-Interos [PartecipAzione programme](#), UNHCR continued to reach out to refugee-led and community-based organizations across various Italian regions. Approximately 200 organizations were identified across Italy so far. UNHCR continues to work to promote networks among refugee-led and community-based organizations, and strengthen refugees' access to decision-making structures and processes. The PartecipAzione programme's [online community](#) has also been growing, with an increasing number of active members. Notably, over 110 organizations applied to the second edition of the PartecipAzione programme, which closed in mid-April.
- In April, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Palermo-based NGO [Zabbara](#) to implement the « Cinema for Inclusion » project, in the context of the European Youth Initiative Fund. The project, involving 15 asylum-seekers and refugees between the ages of 15 and 24, focuses on participatory storytelling, and aims at providing young persons of concern to UNHCR with a safe space where they can develop their creativity and nurture their confidence to be engaged in decision-making and in identifying solutions to challenges. Zabbara is a community-based organization that took part in the first edition of the PartecipAzione programme in 2018.

Reception

- In April, a dedicated UNHCR team continued to conduct monitoring visits to reception facilities jointly with Ministry of Interior staff and independent auditors. Sixteen facilities were monitored in April. Reception facilities staff do not receive advance warning of the visit. In early April, criminal proceedings were launched in Venice against Prefecture and reception facilities staff in connection with a number of allegations, including fraud and the fact that Prefecture staff were allegedly informing reception centre staff of forthcoming monitoring visits conducted by Ministry of Interior staff, UNHCR and independent auditors.

- In April, UNHCR staff conducted 66 visits to reception centres across various regions in Italy, totaling 317 visits since the beginning of the year. Among the facilities visited by UNHCR were the first-line reception centre in Mineo, Sicily, and the hotspot in Taranto. In Mineo, UNHCR has more recently followed-up in particular on the transfers of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection to temporary facilities, and SIPROIMI facilities, respectively, calling for the provision of adequate assistance to persons with specific needs. At the Taranto hotspot, UNHCR has been monitoring the situation of individuals who have been transferred from Ventimiglia, in northern Italy, providing them with information on international protection and other relevant procedures, and calling for adequate conditions and services at the hotspot, such as medical assistance, psycho-social support, legal counselling, and cultural mediation. Following visits to reception facilities conducted in April, UNHCR followed-up on relevant individual cases, including by liaising with authorities to ensure prompt transfers of unaccompanied children to ad hoc facilities.
- In April, UNHCR visited a pre-removal facility in the southern region of Basilicata, where asylum-seekers are also administratively detained, monitoring the situation with regard to material conditions, provision of services, and identification of persons with specific needs, and identifying cases requiring individual follow-up. In April, UNHCR met with the National Ombudsperson for Persons Deprived of Personal Liberty discussing concerns over the implications of the implementation of the recent Law 132/2018 on immigration detention, with particular regard to persons with specific needs.
- In April, UNHCR staff carried out visits to AMIF-funded reception facilities for unaccompanied children in Sicily and Molise, supporting reception facilities staff in organizing and managing participatory activities with children.

Education

- In mid-April, the selection of applicants to the **UNICORE** – University Corridors project was finalized, following an assessment by University of Bologna professors and Federmanager that took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Selected students will go through entry visas procedures, with a view to subsequently travelling to Bologna where they will undertake graduate courses in line with the aim of the project. Other Italian universities have recently expressed their interest in launching similar projects enabling refugee students to undertake university curricula in Italy.

Capacity development

- In early April, UNHCR, jointly with IOM, delivered a **training** on trafficking in Trieste. The training, including workshops from both UNHCR and IOM, was aimed at reception centres staff, anti-trafficking organizations staff, Territorial Commissions members, Prefectures and Tribunals staff, law enforcement agents, interpreters, and cultural mediators.
- On 5 April, UNHCR facilitated a training session on sexual and gender-based violence, addressed to staff of reception facilities and anti-violence centres. The training was

delivered in the context of the “Trame di Donna” project, which is run by the Catania-based NGO Thamaia thanks to funding by the Department of Equal Opportunities.

- UNHCR, in partnership with CNOAS (National Council of the Board of Social Workers), organized a workshop in Milan for social services staff working in border areas and other relevant locations in northern Italy, namely Ventimiglia, Val di Susa, Val d'Aosta, Milan, Bolzano, Trieste and Gorizia. The workshop aimed at creating a network of social workers and identifying best practices for the protection of children on the move.

External relations

- UNHCR staff attended numerous public engagements in April including the [SIMI International Conference](#); [Mediterranean Downtown](#); [Moby Dick Festival 2019](#); the [International Journalism Festival](#) in Perugia; the [WECCS Crash Course](#) at the University of Catania; and the [Festival dell'Europa Solidale e del Mediterraneo](#) in Ventotene on 24-26 April. The latter is a refugee and migrant-led initiative, this year in its third edition. The initiative's main organizer, [Generazione Ponte](#), is one of the community-based organizations supported by UNHCR through the first edition of the [PartecipAzione](#) programme in 2018. The aim of the three days initiative was to exchange good practices with refugees from various EU countries, and debate with journalists the role of the media in relation to integration and the narrative around migration.
- On 15 April, the UNHCR Regional Coordinator for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela, Mr. Jose Samaniego, was on mission to Italy, where he held meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and gave interviews to media focusing on the current situation in Venezuela and neighbouring countries.
- Catania's Refugee Network, which brings together some twenty organizations including UNHCR, officially launched the “Refugees got Talent” contest. Inspired by the well-known reality show TV format, the contest focuses on various disciplines (including singing, dancing, acting, sports) and promotes participation by asylum-seekers and refugees. The initiative will culminate in a public event to be held in Catania on 21 June 2019 under UNHCR patronage and with support from Canon, that will award prizes to the winners.



In view of the May 2019 European Parliament elections, UNHCR launched seven key calls to candidates. Click on the image to visit UNHCR's European Parliament elections mini website.

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 \(Consortio Communitas\)](#), [Carta di Roma](#), [CIDAS](#), [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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