

Italy

January 2021

UNHCR and partner CIR continue to **monitor the situation at the Italy-Slovenia border**. Informal readmissions of asylum-seekers from Italy to Slovenia were suspended in January.

Working in collaboration with the Higher School of the Judiciary, **UNHCR provided 50 judges and justices of the peace with training** on the detention of migrants and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR presented its **teachers toolkit** to 140 Italian teachers, supporting them to explain the situation of refugees and migrants to primary and secondary school children.

KEY INDICATORS (JANUARY 2021)

967

Sea arrivals assisted and informed about asylum procedures by UNHCR staff following disembarkation (Source: UNHCR)

4,210

Inquiries received and followed-up through UNHCR partner **ARCI toll-free number** (Source: ARCI)

50

Individuals received **medical assistance and psychosocial counselling** by UNHCR partners (Source: MEDU)

Sea arrivals in 2021 by disembarkation site



Sea arrivals POPULATION OF CONCERN

1,039

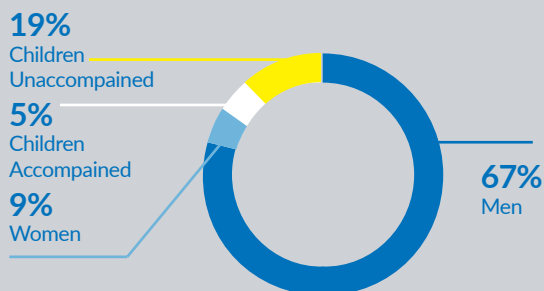
1,340

Jan 2021

Jan 2020

Source: Ministry of Interior. In addition to sea arrivals, Italy also receives land arrivals and air arrivals. This chart focuses on sea arrivals, as per official figures provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior.

Sea arrivals by gender and age POPULATION OF CONCERN



Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100% exactly.

Source: Ministry of Interior. In addition to sea arrivals, Italy also receives land arrivals and air arrivals. This chart focuses on sea arrivals, as per official figures provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior. Gender breakdown for children is not available.

Asylum applications POPULATION OF CONCERN

26,551

43,631

Jan - Dec 2020

Jan - Dec 2019

Source: Ministry of Interior. Please note that the chart refers to the latest available data.

- Access to territory (sea arrivals).** In January, **1,039 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea**, disembarking in Sicily and Calabria. Three out of four arrivals departed from Libya, while the others embarked in Tunisia and, to a much lesser extent, Turkey. Sea arrivals embarking in Libya most commonly originate from the Horn of Africa and western African countries. Consistent with a significant proportion of sea arrivals departing from Libya this month, 21% of refugees and migrants reaching shore in January originate from Eritrea, followed by 14% Guineans and 9% Ivorians.¹ Many Eritrean arrivals who met with UNHCR staff operating in disembarkation areas in January recounted spending up to five years in Libya and going through harrowing experiences of detention before departure to Europe. Over a third of persons arriving in Italy in January were rescued on the high seas by **Ocean Viking, the only NGO vessel to operate in the Central Mediterranean** in the first month of the year. A relatively small proportion of sea arrivals were rescued by the Italian Coast guard or by an Italian commercial vessel, while the remainder reached shore autonomously or were intercepted by the authorities off the coast. In a decision on an individual complaint² published on 27 January, the **UN Human Rights Committee** said that Italy had failed to respond promptly to various distress calls from a boat that was sinking in international waters within the Maltese search and rescue zone but closer to Italian shores in October 2013. Over 200 persons lost their lives in the ensuing shipwreck. In relation to this event, Italian authorities have recently launched criminal proceedings against the Italian Coast Guard and the Italian Navy as both were involved in the rescue.

Following disembarkation in Italy, sea arrivals continue to observe quarantine, most commonly aboard dedicated ferries offshore. By the end of January, two such ferries were operating in southern Italy, managed by the Red Cross. **UNHCR** continued to liaise with the Red Cross **to ensure that refugees and migrants with specific needs are promptly identified** and receive adequate follow-up support. UNHCR also coordinated with relevant authorities at local level **to identify suitable facilities to accommodate unaccompanied children** arriving by sea, both during quarantine and afterwards. Limited availability of places in reception facilities for unaccompanied children continues to cause delays in the transfer of children from arrival locations or from adult quarantine locations, often resulting in children observing quarantine in inadequate conditions.

- Access to territory (land arrivals).** Approximately **70 to 80 refugees and migrants were apprehended crossing the Italy-Slovenia border near Trieste** in January.³ The situation at the border is one of mixed onward movement that in Italy includes an important component of refugees and other individuals who may be in need of international protection. Reception conditions at the border are far from adequate, bearing in mind also the harsh conditions endured by many new arrivals while travelling by land through South East Europe. In mid-January, the **practice of informally readmitting asylum-seekers from Italy to Slovenia** pursuant to a bilateral agreement between the two countries **was suspended**. On 18 January, the Rome Tribunal ruled that such informal readmissions are unlawful and breach Italian and European law.



¹ For further information on sea arrivals in Italy, please refer to the Italy page of the UNHCR data portal, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205> (last access 5 February 2021)

² The Human Rights Committee is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by its State parties. The First Optional Protocol to the Covenant gives the Committee competence to examine individual complaints with regard to alleged violations of the Covenant by States parties to the Protocol.

³ Please note that this data is unofficial and only reflects apprehensions by the authorities, not actual crossings, in the Trieste area: it does not account for apprehensions or crossings in other provinces bordering Slovenia, e.g. Udine.

- Through its partner [CIR](#), UNHCR continues to maintain a presence in the area, which also entails monitoring the situation at the border. Between 26 and 28 January, **UNHCR Representative to Italy, the Holy See and San Marino, Chiara Cardoletti, conducted a mission to the Italy-Slovenia border area**, together with the Director of the IOM Coordination Office for the Mediterranean, Laurence Hart. In meetings with Government and local authorities, as well as with civil society organizations, they expressed concern for new arrivals' testimonies of serious violence experienced along this route and **stressed the importance of ensuring that persons arriving at the border have access to an individual assessment** of their circumstances and to the right to asylum. The 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights require States to inquire if a person arriving at its borders, even if apprehended following irregular entry, has international protection needs and to ensure that they are not at risk of refoulement, including chain-refoulement, in case readmission to another country is considered. UNHCR Representative and IOM Director also underlined the urgent need for a structured system to identify refugees and migrants with specific needs arriving at the border and requiring specific attention and care.⁴
- **Reception.** As of 31 January, 80,097 persons were accommodated in reception facilities across Italy, including 54,343 in first-line reception centres and 25,574 in second-line facilities.⁵
- **Asylum procedures.** In January, COVID-19 prevention measures continued to result in fewer than usual refugee status determination interviews being scheduled by the over 40 Territorial Commissions assessing asylum applications in Italy. Decision-making sessions, on the other hand, continued to take place remotely, with UNHCR staff participating and providing support to Ministry of Interior caseworkers. UNHCR delivered a **training to 50 judges and justices of the peace**, focusing on the administrative detention of migrants and asylum-seekers, including persons with specific needs such as unaccompanied children or stateless individuals. The training, which aimed at further developing the capacity of the judiciary on complex issues affecting the fundamental rights of refugees, marked the launch of UNHCR's **renewed cooperation with the Italian Superior School of the Judiciary** in 2021. Almost 95,000 asylum appeals are currently pending before Italian Tribunals.
- **Resettlement and complementary pathways.** UNHCR refugee determination experts in Italy provided support to the UNHCR operation in Rwanda by conducting **remote case processing for persons** who are currently accommodated in a transit facility **in Rwanda**, in the context of the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), pending resettlement to France. The ETM is a vital lifeline allowing UNHCR to evacuate vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees from Libya to safer countries, including Rwanda, where they receive assistance while durable solutions are sought for them, including resettlement to another country. In 2020, resettlement numbers globally hit a record low in almost two decades, reflecting low quotas put forward by states as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: UNHCR called on governments, including the government of Italy, to boost their resettlement programmes in 2021, offering more places, expediting



⁴ See also UNHCR, *Missione OIM-UNHCR al confine nord-est: migliorare assistenza e protezione per chi arriva dalla rotta balcanica*, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/missione-oim-unhcr-al-confine-nord-est-migliorare-assistenza-e-protezione-per-chi-arriva-dalla-rotta-balcanica/> (last access 6 February 2021)

⁵ Ministry of Interior, *Cruscotto statistico*, available at http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-01-2021.pdf (last access 6 February 2021)

case processing and helping to save the lives of those most in need and at greatest risk. As a result of the pandemic-related restrictions, only 21 refugees were resettled to Italy in 2020, as against 471 in 2019.⁶

- **Integration.** In January, **UNHCR presented its teachers toolkit to 140 teachers** attending training sessions organized by NGO Dokita and the Ministry of Education's Institute for Innovation (INDIRE). The toolkit, recently translated into Italian, aims to assist educators explaining the situation of refugees and migrants to primary and secondary school children. UNHCR materials also offer professional development and guidance to primary and secondary school teachers on including refugee children in their classes.⁷ In 2020, UNHCR was appointed as a member of the Italian Ministry of Education's National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Students and also contributed to reviewing the Guidelines on School Integration, putting forward the inclusion of forced migration in citizenship curricula.
- UNHCR also recently concluded a project named **Giving voice to young refugees in Italy**, in collaboration with the National Council of Social Workers (CNOAS), which saw young refugees aged 17 to 21 involved in designing a refugee-focused training module for social workers, thereby developing soft and digital skills.
- On 14 and 15 January, UNHCR ran workshops with 16 civil society organizations and local institutions from various Italian regions, discussing **participatory approaches and consultation mechanisms with refugees** and identifying their needs for support to locally engage refugees.⁸ UNHCR also collected views to improve a practitioners' tool for refugee integration that UNHCR and Brussels-based Migration Policy Group are currently piloting in seven European countries.
- **Fundraising.** In January, UNHCR raised **1,658,000 Euros from individual donors and private companies** in Italy. Many individual donors contributed through UNHCR's **#FantasticaRoutine campaign** leveraging the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on daily routine to raise awareness on the situation of 700,000 refugee children in the Sahel region who have been forced to interrupt their education as a result of indiscriminate violence, with armed groups destroying over 4,000 schools in the region. The campaign runs into mid-February and promotes return to school and protection for these refugee children.⁹

In the first month of the year, the major private donors in Italy contributing to UNHCR operations worldwide were Brunello Cucinelli SPA, BNL Foundation and MYCIS SPA.

Powercoders: IT coding academy for refugees is launched in Milan



Photo © Powercoders International

Since 2017, IT coding academy Powercoders has been offering refugees and migrants intensive free training followed by employment opportunities in the IT sector, promoting refugee talent and access to the labour market while contributing to digital innovation in the host country. Powercoders was initially launched in Switzerland and subsequently reached Turin, where 19 students joined: 10 of them found a job after participating in the programme. Starting in February 2021, 20 refugee students will join the programme in Milan. Powercoders Italy is supported by Reale Foundation in partnership with Accenture Foundation and Lenovo, in collaboration with UNHCR, Le Wagon and the Municipality of Milan. Click [here](#) to read UNHCR press release (in Italian).

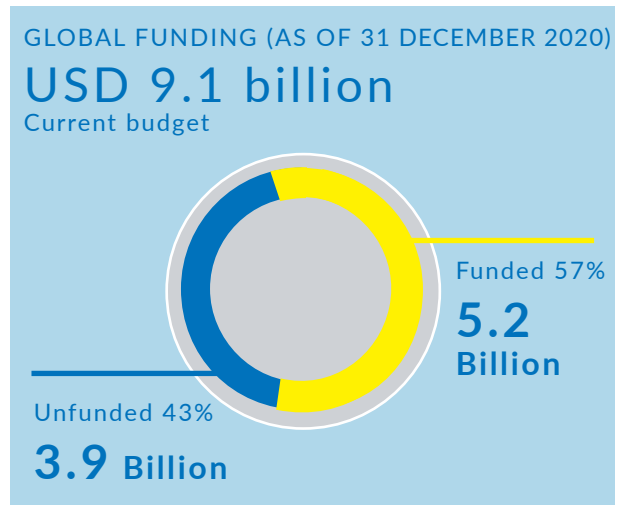
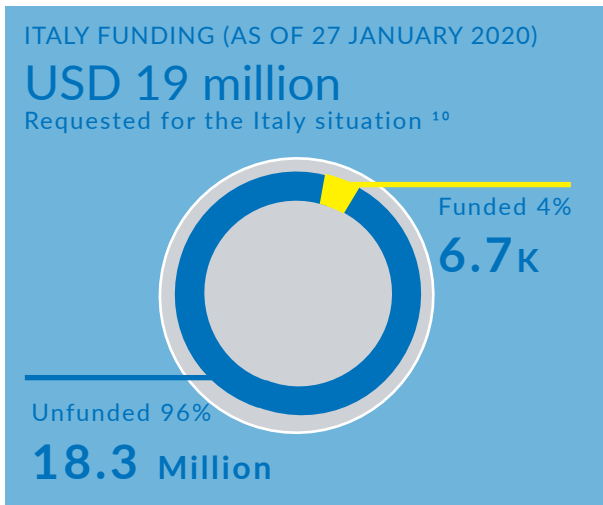
⁶ See UNHCR press release, *Reinsediamento dei rifugiati al minimo storico nel 2020: l'UNHCR chiede agli Stati di offrire posti e salvare vite*, 25 January 2021, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/reinsediamento-dei-rifugiati-al-minimo-storico-nel-2020-lunhcr-chiede-agli-stati-di-offrire-posti-e-salvare-vite/> (last access 6 February 2021)

⁷ UNHCR teachers toolkit is available in English at this link: <https://www.unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees.html> and in Italian at this link: <https://www.unhcr.org/it/risorse/insegnare-il-tema-dei-rifugiati/> (last access 6 February 2021)

⁸ See more information on Focus Group Discussion as a useful tool for creating a positive relationship with refugee communities, see the UNHCR video available in English at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaX3pE707zw> and in Italian at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJaQF4rovLA> (last access 12 February 2021)

⁹ For more information on UNHCR's #FantasticaRoutine campaign, please visit <https://www.unhcr.org/it/sostienici/fantastica-routine/> (last access 6 February 2021)

Financial information



UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Sweden 66.9 M | **Netherlands** 36.1 M | **Denmark** 34.6 M | **Germany** 22.1 M | **Switzerland** 16.4 M | **Ireland** 12.5 M | **Belgium** 11.9 M

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LINKS

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¹⁰ Unearmarked funding is allocated and reallocated multiple times during the year to allow UNHCR to fund prioritised activities. The contributions earmarked for Italy shown above are combined with an indicative allocation of the softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions. This allocation respects different levels of earmarking.