

Italy

March 2021

Over 2,000 persons arrived in Italy by sea this month, while at least 100 crossed the Italy-Slovenia border weekly, often fleeing persecution and enduring years-long journeys.

UNHCR signed Memoranda of Understanding with the **National Ombudsperson for Children** and the **Ministry of Education** to strengthen child protection and promote inclusion in schools.

UNHCR **consulted with over 100 asylum-seekers and refugees** on ways to improve integration in Italy to inform its work with civil society and authorities.

KEY INDICATORS (MARCH 2021)

2,064

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

3,700

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

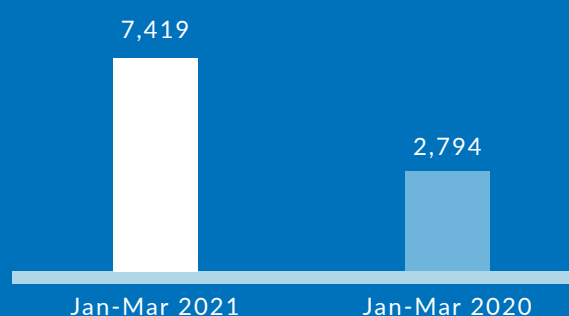
69

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

Sea arrivals in 2021 by disembarkation site

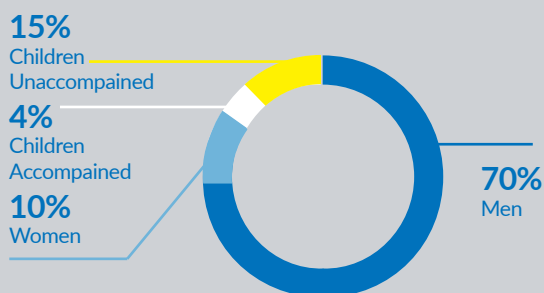


Sea arrivals POPULATION OF CONCERN



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.

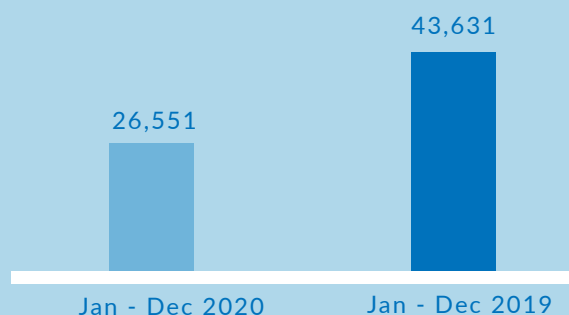
Sea arrivals by gender and age POPULATION OF CONCERN



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



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

- **Access to territory (sea arrivals).** In March, **2,386 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea**, a decrease compared to the almost 4,000 arrivals recorded in February, but a significant increase over the same month in recent years. Year to date, 7,489 refugees and migrants have reached Italian shores, compared to less than 2,800 in the same period last year and just over 500 in the January-March 2019 period. **Limited search and rescue capacity vis-à-vis increasing sea arrivals** is an issue, as various NGOs are subject to seizure of their vessels, investigations or post-rescue quarantine requirements: in March only two NGO rescue vessels, namely Ocean Viking and Open Arms, were operating in the Central Mediterranean. Since this is known to be the deadliest sea crossing for refugees and migrants worldwide, a predictable and reliable search and rescue system is essential to avoid deaths at sea.¹ The vast majority of March 2021 sea arrivals (63%) departed from Libya, consistent with a trend observed since the beginning of the year. An additional 23% of monthly arrivals departed from Tunisia, while 12% embarked in Turkey and 2% in Algeria. It is estimated that an additional 1,000 persons departed from Libya in March but were intercepted by Libyan authorities and returned to Libya. Most sea arrivals this month originated from Bangladesh, Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea and Guinea. As in recent months, the most common disembarkation site was Lampedusa, where almost 1,400 new arrivals were recorded.² Adult sea arrivals reaching shore in Lampedusa and Sicily continue for the most part to observe quarantine offshore, a sixth ferry having been made available during the month to respond to increasing sea arrivals. Persons disembarking in other regions, such as Apulia and Calabria, as well as persons with specific needs and unaccompanied children, observe quarantine onshore, but the limited availability of dedicated facilities for children continues to represent a serious concern impacting the adequacy of a response to their unique needs. As previously reported, **UNHCR advocates for the identification of onshore alternatives for the quarantine of children**, while following up on cases requiring specific attention.
- **Access to territory (land arrivals).** An average of **100 refugees and migrants were apprehended crossing the Italy-Slovenia border weekly** in March, but the actual number of persons crossing the border is estimated to be much higher.³ Land arrivals who are intercepted by the authorities observe quarantine in dedicated facilities but capacity in border areas, particularly in Friuli Venezia-Giulia, is limited, resulting in recourse to temporary alternatives such as tents. At land borders in northern Italy, refugees and migrants who travelled through South-East Europe or who intend to move onward to other European countries – not only adults but also families with children and children travelling on their own – face incredible difficulties, including journeys across dangerous mountain routes and precarious living conditions. While continuing to consult with NGOs, civil society and local authorities to identify a viable and coordinated response, **UNHCR stresses the need to make reception facilities available and provide adequate services to cater for the needs of often vulnerable individuals** who fled wars and persecution, enduring years-long journeys to reach safety in Europe. In March, UNHCR, in collaboration with partner CIR, delivered a webinar to law enforcement agents including border police officers, but also social workers, Prefecture staff and local health authorities personnel working in the Friuli Venezia-



Click here to view UNHCR video on the situation of refugees and migrants at Italy's northern borders featuring a statement by the UNHCR Representative to Italy, the Holy See and San Marino, Chiara Cardoletti

¹ See also IOM, UNHCR, *Ennesima tragedia nel Mediterraneo conferma la necessità di un sistema di ricerca e soccorso in mare*, 10 March 2021, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/iom-unhcr-ennesima-tragedia-nel-mediterraneo-conferma-la-necessita-di-un-sistema-di-ricerca-e-soccorso-in-mare/> (last access 6 April 2021)

² 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 6 April 2021)

³ Please note official data is unavailable.

Giulia region: the course focused on the identification of persons with specific needs among refugees and migrants, with specific sessions dedicated to unaccompanied children and survivors of gender-based violence.

- **Child protection.** On 16 March, UNHCR signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with the National Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents** aimed at promoting joint initiatives for refugee and migrant children who arrived in Italy on their own. UNHCR's collaboration with the Ombudsperson started in 2017 and focuses on promoting and implementing the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the right of children to be heard and to participate in decisions affecting their future, the inclusion of unaccompanied children in the Ombudsperson's consultative body of children and adolescents, and capacity-development activities for guardians with a particular attention to issues relating to gender-based violence.⁴ In the first three months of 2021, 1,136 unaccompanied children arrived in Italy by sea. As of 28 February 2021, 6,632 unaccompanied children – who arrived in Italy by sea, land and air – were accommodated in dedicated facilities across the country: almost all of them (97%) were boys, and 66% were aged 17.⁵



On 23 March, UNHCR also signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education**, renewing the collaboration launched in 2016 which aims at promoting inclusion and awareness-raising activities on refugees in schools across Italy. Such activities have the long-term objective of making students aware of the reasons why individuals may become refugees and promoting better refugee integration as well as engagement by and with local communities.⁶

- **Gender-based violence.** In March, UNHCR signed a **new partnership agreement with the Catania-based organization LHIVE, to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for asylum-seekers and refugees** who have survived gender-based violence and female genital mutilation. The project entails outreach activities targeting refugee communities in the Catania area, identification of and multi-disciplinary support to survivors of gender-based violence and implementation of referral mechanisms to ensure coordination between NGOs and local health authorities, allowing adequate follow-up of individual cases.
- **Community engagement.** UNHCR, in collaboration with partner organizations, conducted **21 focus group discussions involving 105 asylum-seekers and refugees across Italy**, collecting their views on integration and other issues.⁷ Refugees highlighted that the limited availability of quality information

⁴ See also UNHCR, Autorità Garante per l'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza e UNHCR insieme per la protezione dei minori stranieri non accompagnati, 16 March 2021, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/autorita-garante-per-linfanzia-e-ladolescenza-e-unhcr-insieme-per-la-protezione-dei-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati/> (last access 6 April 2021)

⁵ Ministry of Labour, *Report mensili MNSA*, February 2021 (latest available data), available at <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Documents/Report-MSNA-mese-febbraio-2021.pdf> (last access 6 April 2021)

⁶ See also UNHCR, *Siglato protocollo d'intesa Ministero dell'Istruzione-UNHCR insieme per parlare di rifugiati a scuola*, 23 March 2021, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/ministero-dellistruzione-e-unhcr-insieme-per-parlare-di-rifugiati-a-scuola/> (last access 6 April 2021)

⁷ To learn more about focus group discussions as a tool to establish a dialogue with refugees, watch the UNHCR video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KaX3pE707zw> (last access 6 April 2021)

often impacts their ability to make informed decisions and access rights. They shared concerns about xenophobia and discrimination and reported difficulties in navigating the Italian bureaucracy, leading to problems in obtaining key documents and in accessing housing, language learning and employment opportunities, ultimately hampering integration in the country. UNHCR is working to strengthen its **collaboration with civil society and municipalities to guarantee refugees' access to clear, accurate information and individualized support, and create positive relations within host communities.**

- Integration.** The third edition of the [University Corridors for Refugees – UNICORE](#) programme was launched in March. The programme will enable **43 refugees living in Ethiopia to continue their studies at 24 Italian universities.** Selected refugees will have the possibility to safely reach Italy to pursue their higher education, consistent with UNHCR's objective to strengthen complementary pathways for refugees to safely reach other countries and to ensure that 15% of refugees can enrol in higher education programmes in countries of first asylum or in third countries. UNICORE was launched in 2019 with an initial pilot involving six students and two universities; it extended to eleven students and 20 universities in 2020 and is expanding further this year.⁸
- Fundraising.** In March, UNHCR raised **1.6 million Euros from private donors** in Italy, totalling 4.9 million Euros since the beginning of the year. The major private donors in Italy contributing to UNHCR operations worldwide this month were Bolton Hope Foundation, Suore della Santa Famiglia di Bordeaux, the Boeningers and Mrs Longo.



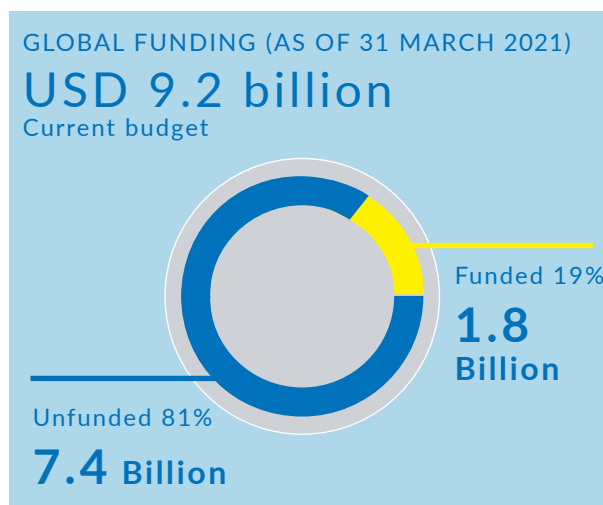
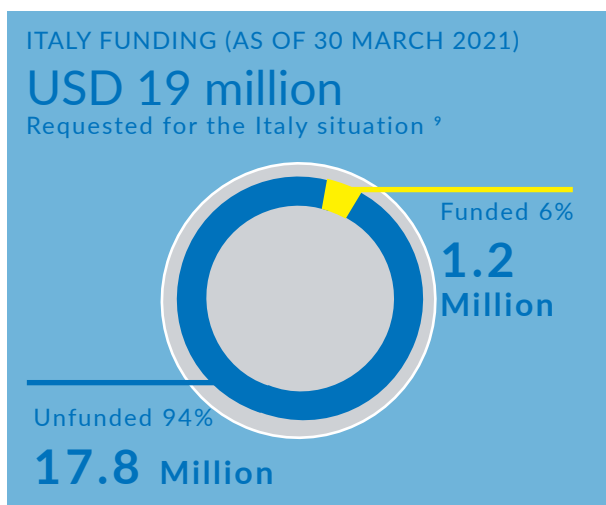
Coursera for Refugees



UNHCR Italy recently partnered with Coursera, an online learning platform providing courses from prestigious universities around the world. Coursera for Refugees offers asylum-seekers and refugees the possibility to access free four-to six-week basic and specialization courses and certificates, with no limit to the number of courses taken. Internet is required only to download the course. Asylum-seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can receive more information and enrol in courses by sending an email to itarocoursera@unhcr.org including their full name and a copy of their residence permit.

⁸ See also UNHCR, *PROGETTO UNICORE (UNIVERSITY CORRIDORS FOR REFUGEES), AL VIA LA TERZA EDIZIONE. 24 università italiane accoglieranno 43 rifugiati dall'Etiopia*, 3 March 2021, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/progetto-unicore-university-corridors-for-refugees-al-via-la-terza-edizione-24-universita-italiane-accoglieranno-43-rifugiati-dalletiopia/> (last access 6 April 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.

BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of broadly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

United States of America 5.3 M

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Norway 80 M | **Sweden** 66.9 M | **Netherlands** 36.1 M | **Denmark** 34.6 M | **Germany** 22.1 M | **Switzerland** 16.4 M | **Private donors Spain** 13.3 M | **Ireland** 12.5 M | **Belgium** 11.9 M

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CONTACTS

Elisabetta Dolzan, Senior Reporting Assistant, dolzan@unhcr.org

Cristina Franchini, External Relations Associate, franchin@unhcr.org

LINKS

UNHCR data portal Mediterranean situation - UNHCR Italy - Twitter - Facebook - Global Focus

⁹ 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.