

THE REFUGEE CRISIS THROUGH STATISTICS

**A compilation for politicians, journalists
and other concerned citizens**

30 January 2017



Refugees in Budapest in September 2015 © Ferenc Isza

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Global displaced population at end-2015

The global displaced population at the end of 2015 was 65.3 million, according to UNHCR.¹ This was the highest number recorded since the aftermath of World War II. It comprised:

- **16.1 million refugees** outside their home countries
- **5.2 million Palestinian refugees** inside and outside Palestinian territories registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- **3.2 million asylum seekers** outside their home countries whose applications had not yet been decided by the end of 2015
- **40.8 million internally displaced persons** inside their home countries

Since 2011 the number of forcibly displaced people in the world has sharply risen every year. From 2014 to 2015 alone, it rose by 10 percent, from 59.5 to 65.3 million. This increase included 1.7 million more refugees (including 1 million new Syrian refugees), 1.4 million more asylum seekers with pending claims, and 2.6 million more internally displaced persons.²

According to UNHCR, the main single driver behind the recent increase was the conflict in Syria, but a series of other crises and conflicts also led to new displacement. These included new or reignited conflicts in Iraq, Nigeria, Burundi, Libya and Niger, and older unresolved crises in Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Yemen.³

UNHCR definition of “refugee” (16.1 million):

“Refugees include individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, individuals granted complementary forms of protection, and those enjoying temporary protection. The refugee population also includes persons in refugee-like situations.”⁴

¹ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, p. 2.

² For 2014 figures, see UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2014](#), 18 June 2015.

³ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, p. 6.

⁴ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, p. 54.

World: Top 10 nationalities of refugees at end-2015

Source: UNHCR⁵

Country	No. of refugees
1. Syria	4.9 million
2. Afghanistan	2.7 million
3. Somalia	1.12 million
4. South Sudan	778,700
5. Sudan	628,800
6. D.R. Congo	541,500
7. Central African Rep.	471,100
8. Myanmar/Burma	451,800
9. Eritrea	411,300
10. Colombia	340,200
TOTAL:	12.3 million (of 16.1 million)

This ranking does not include 5.2 million Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestinian territories registered with UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) who have been the largest group of refugees for decades.

It also does not include people who were internally (inside their home countries) displaced or who had asked for asylum in other countries and had not yet received a decision at the end of 2015.

⁵ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, p. 16.

World: Top 10 countries hosting refugees at end-2015

Source: UNHCR⁶

The ten countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees were in developing regions based on [UN statistical classification](#), with five located in poor sub-Saharan Africa.

Country	No. of refugees
1. Turkey	2.5 million
2. Pakistan	1.6 million
3. Lebanon	1.1 million
4. Iran	979,400
5. Ethiopia	736,100
6. Jordan	664,100
7. Kenya	553,900
8. Uganda	477,200
9. D.R. Congo	383,100
10. Chad	369,500
TOTAL	9.3 million (of 16.1 million)

Altogether, countries in developing regions hosted 13.9 million (86 percent) of the world's total refugee population, compared with 2.2 million (14 percent) hosted in developed regions. According to the UN's classification, the developed regions are Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

World: Top 10 countries by number of hosted refugees per inhabitant at end-2015

Source: UNHCR⁷

Country	No. of refugees/ 1,000 inhabitants
1. Lebanon	183
2. Jordan	87
3. Nauru	50
4. Turkey	32
5. Chad	26
6. Djibouti	22
7. South Sudan	21
8. Mauritania	19
9. Sweden	17
10. Malta	17

⁶ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, pp. 15-16 and 57-59.

⁷ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, p. 18.

World: Top 10 countries recording new asylum claims in 2015

Source: UNHCR⁸

Country	No. of individual claims	Share
1. Germany*	441,900	22 %
2. US	172,700	8.5 %
3. Sweden	156,400	7.7 %
4. Russia**	152,500	7.5 %
5. Turkey***	133,300	6.5 %
6. Austria	85,800	4.2 %
7. Italy	83,200	4.1 %
8. Hungary****	74,200	3.6 %
9. France	74,200	3.6 %
10. South Africa	62,200	3.1 %
Other	603,600	30 %
TOTAL	2,040,000	100 %

* Germany recorded the arrival of 890,000 asylum seekers in 2015,⁹ but its asylum authority was able to accept only 441,900 claims, the remaining claims were processed in 2016.

** 98 percent of these claims were submitted by Ukrainians. Before the conflict in Ukraine, the number of asylum claims in Russia never exceeded 5,000 per year, according to UNHCR.

*** Claims registered by UNHCR in Turkey. They generally exclude Syrians who are protected under a separate regime in Turkey.

**** Adjusted for claims of refugees who then moved on and submitted claims elsewhere.

Note: The figures quoted here are new asylum applications lodged at first-instance. UNHCR had asked the reporting member countries to exclude repeat claims, reopened cases and appeals. (Repeat claims are claims submitted by the same person for a second or more times in the same country after the previous application/s had been rejected with all appeals possibilities exhausted). Eurostat numbers usually provides figures including repeat claims, so its numbers are higher.

⁸ UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, pp. 37-40.

⁹ German Interior Ministry, [890.000 Asylsuchende im Jahr 2015](#) (890,000 asylum seekers in 2015), press release, 30 September 2016.

World: Recognition rates and claims in selected countries in 2015

Source: UNHCR¹⁰

Country	New claims received	Decisions made	Refugee status or complementary protection given	Recognition rate
Turkey*	133,320	15,341	14,532	95 %
Sweden	156,354	39,552	31,338	79 %
Norway	30,521	7,953	6,012	76 %
Canada	16,562	12,554	8,478	68 %
USA	172,739	45,077	29,565	66 %
Germany	441,899	219,550	132,058	60 %
Austria	85,798	30,043	16,891	56 %
Australia	12,231	4,326	2,377	55 %
Switzerland	39,523	25,400	13,486	53 %
New Zealand	352	287	133	46 %
Italy	83,243	71,344	29,614	42 %
Greece	11,352	9,583	4,027	42 %
UK	38,878	36,557	13,902	38 %
France	74,185	79,361	21,441	27 %
South Korea	5,711	3,032	234	7.7 %
Japan	7,586	3,430	43	1.3 %

* These are the numbers from refugee status determination conducted by UNHCR, which is linked to resettlement. UNHCR selects only cases for which it sees a resettlement chance, which explains the small number of decided cases and the high recognition rate.

Note: The applications are new applications (excluding repeat claims, reopened cases and appeals). The decisions are first-instance decisions (excluding reviews and judicial appeals).

The recognition rates are not necessarily an indication of the generosity of the countries since the nationalities of the claimants differ. For example, Germany decided a high number of Syrian cases (42 percent of all decisions), who virtually all receive protection, while the share of decided Syrian cases in France was only 4 percent. Among the top countries of decided cases in France were many with low recognition rates, such as Haitians, Kosovars and Bangladeshis.¹¹

¹⁰ ESI calculations based on the separate [Annex](#), Table 9, to UNHCR, Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015, 20 June 2016.

¹¹ [Eurostat interactive database](#), First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asydcfst], accessed 24 January 2017.

World: Resettlement of refugees in 2015

Source: UNHCR¹²

Traditionally UNHCR has helped resettle refugees to countries that offer them permanent residence and integration. The beneficiaries are highly vulnerable cases whose specific needs cannot be met in the country where they find themselves. In 2015, 107,050 refugees were admitted, according to resettlement arrival statistics provided by 23 states. A total of 33 states had expressed their willingness to participate in resettlement programmes (compared with 27 in 2014).

Top eight countries admitting resettled refugees in 2015

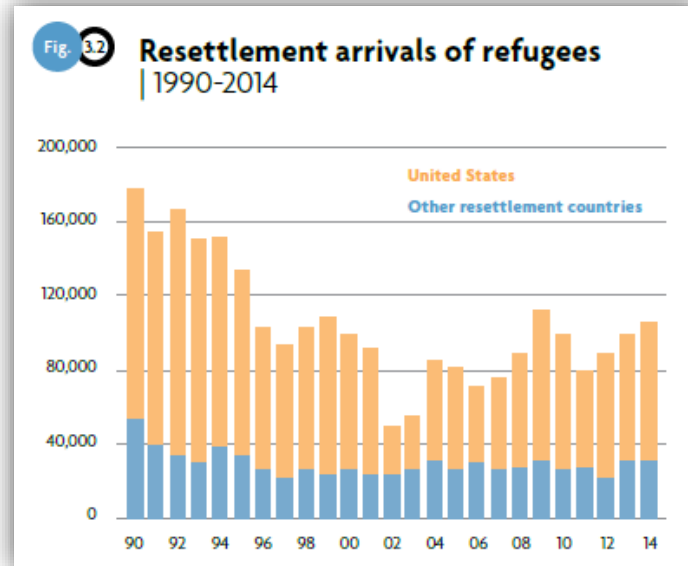
Country	Resettled refugees (arrivals)	Share
1. US	66,517	62 %
2. Canada	20,010	17 %
3. Australia	9,399	9 %
4. Norway	2,383	2 %
5. Sweden	1,902	2 %
6. UK	1,864	2 %
7. Finland	1,007	1 %
8. New Zealand	808	1 %
Others	3,161	3 %
TOTAL	107,051	100 %

Among the refugees resettled in 2015 were 19,500 citizens of Myanmar, 13,800 Syrians, 10,700 citizens of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 8,400 Somalis.

¹² UNHCR, [Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015](#), 20 June 2016, pp. 25-26, and [Annex](#) to this report, Table 23.

World: Resettlement historically

UNHCR has consistently called on states to offer resettlement places as the resettlement of refugees is a safe and legal pathway to protection. However, the number of resettled refugees per year has actually decreased since the early 1990s, with the US always accounting for the lion's share.



Source: [UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2014](#), 8 Dec. 2015, p. 43.

In recent years, there has been a slight improvement, but numbers are still very low:

Resettled refugees 2010 to 2015

Source: UNHCR¹³

Year	Resettled refugees (arrivals)
2010	98,800
2011	79,800
2012	88,600
2013	98,400
2014	105,200
2015	107,100

¹³ UNHCR, [Global Trends 2010](#); [Global Trends 2011](#); [Global Trends 2012](#); [Global Trends 2013](#); [Global Trends 2014](#); and [Global Trends 2015](#).

EU: Refugees resettled in the EU 2010-2015, by country and year

Source: Eurostat¹⁴

Although the EU belongs to the most developed regions of the world, its contribution to the global resettlement effort is modest. In 2015, the EU resettled 8,155 refugees, which accounts for 8 percent of all resettled refugees in the world. There is also a stark gap between the different EU countries, with some not resettling at all and others resettling only little.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTALS
EU28 total	4,925	4,050	4,945	4,905	6,550	8,155	33,530
Sweden	1,790	1,620	1,680	1,820	2,045	1,850	10,805
UK	720	455	1,040	965	785	1,865	5,830
Finland	545	585	730	675	1,090	1,005	4,630
Netherlands	430	540	430	310	790	450	2,950
Denmark	355	475	480	575	370	450	2,705
Germany	525	145	305	280	280	510	2,045
France	360	130	100	90	450	620	1,750
Austria	0	0	0	0	390	760	1,150
Ireland	20	45	50	85	95	175	470
Belgium	:	25	0	100	35	275	435
Spain	:	:	80	0	125	0	205
Italy	55	0	0	0	0	95	150
Portugal	35	30	15	0	15	40	135
Luxembourg	5	0	0	0	30	45	80
Romania	40	0	0	0	40	0	80
Czech Rep.	40	0	25	0	0	0	65
Hungary	:	0	0	0	10	5	15
Lithuania	:	0	5	0	0	5	10
Bulgaria	:	:	0	0	0	0	0
Croatia	:	:	:	0	0	0	0
Cyprus	0	:	:	0	0	0	0
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greece	:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latvia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Malta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	:	:	0	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norway	1,095	1,270	1,230	955	1,285	2,375	8,210
Switzerland	0	0	0	0	0	610	610
Iceland	5	0	10	0	10	15	40
Liechtenstein	:	0	0	0	5	20	25

Note that this table does not cover humanitarian admission programmes (see next page for more details).

¹⁴ [Eurostat interactive database](#), Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship, Annual data (rounded), code [migr_asyresa], accessed 26 January 2017.

EU: A new resettlement effort launched in 2015

In July 2015, EU member states agreed to increase, on a voluntary basis, the number of refugees they resettle to 18,415 over two years, and to share them between 27 EU member states (all except Hungary which refused to offer any places).¹⁵ For this, they receive financial support from the EU budget of 6,000 Euro per resettled refugee (10,000 Euro in special cases). While the commitment represents an annual increase by more than 40 percent above the 2014 level (6,550 resettled refugees), in absolute numbers it is just an additional 2,658 people per year.

The four Schengen-associated countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland pledged to resettle 4,089 people during this period, with Norway alone offering 3,500 places, so the declared overall target is “more than 22,000 resettlements in two years”.

In parallel, EU member states also committed to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey under the EU-Turkey refugee agreement of 18 March 2016.¹⁶ The number must, as a minimum, be equal to the number of refugees and migrants returned from Greece to Turkey (so far 815¹⁷), but should exceed it significantly under a Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme with Turkey, which is yet to be launched. If this scheme is implemented, it could dramatically increase the number of refugees resettled in the EU.

From around mid-2015 until 5 December 2016, EU member states had resettled 10,663 refugees of the 18,415 resettlements promised until mid-2017; or 13,887 of 22,504 if the four Schengen-associated countries are included ((see table on the next page).

Please note that several EU countries also have national admission schemes in addition to the pledges they made in the EU context. The UK intends to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees until the end of the current UK parliament in 2020, and Ireland has committed to accept 2,900 people through UNHCR or from other EU countries.¹⁸ Three German federal states also continue to admit Syrian refugees under Germany’s Humanitarian Admission Programmes (HAP) under which 20,000 Syrian refugees were resettled by the federal government and German Länder between 2013 and 2015.¹⁹

¹⁵ Council of the EU, [Conclusions of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on resettling through multilateral and national schemes 20,000 persons in clear need of international protection](#), 22 July 2015.

¹⁶ [EU-Turkey Statement](#), Brussels, 18 March 2016.

¹⁷ European Commission, [Operational implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement](#), as of 25 January 2017.

¹⁸ European Commission Communication, [Managing the refugee crisis: immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration](#), 29 September 2015, p. 4, footnote 2.

¹⁹ Pro Asyl, [Informationen zu den Aufnahmeprogrammen für syrische Flüchtlinge](#) (Information about admission programmes for Syrian refugees), updated on 16 January 2017.

Resettlement from mid-2015 until 5 December 2016

Source: European Commission²⁰

Country	Resettled	Pledge	Main countries of departure
UK	2,200 (+ 1,239)	2,200	Jordan, Leb., Turkey, Egypt, Iraq
France	1,739	2,375 ²¹	Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan
Austria	1,501 ²²	1,900	Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey
Germany	1,060	1,600	Turkey
Netherlands	803	1,000	Turkey, Lebanon, Kenya
Italy	631	1,989	Lebanon, Turkey, Sudan, Jordan
Belgium	569	1,100	Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt
Ireland	500	520	Lebanon
Sweden	491 (+ 1,900)	491	Turkey, Sudan, Kenya
Denmark	481	1,000	Lebanon, Uganda
Finland	293 (+ 140)	293	Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt
Spain	289	1,449	Lebanon, Turkey
Czech Rep.	52	400	Lebanon, Jordan
Lithuania	25	70	Turkey
Portugal	12 (+ 39)	191	Turkey
Estonia	11	20	Turkey
Latvia	6	50	Turkey
Luxembourg	0 (+ 52)	30	Turkey
Poland	0	900	-
Greece	0	354	-
Croatia	0	150	-
Slovakia	0	100	-
Romania	0	80	-
Cyprus	0	69	-
Bulgaria	0	50	-
Slovenia	0	20	-
Malta	0	14	-
Hungary	0	0	-
EU28 TOTAL	10,663 (+ 3,370)	18,415	-
Norway	2,635	3,500	Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan
Switzerland	519	519	Lebanon, Syria
Iceland	50 (+6)	50	Lebanon
Liechtenstein	20	20	Turkey
OVERALL	13,887 (+ 3,376)	22,504	Including 2,761 from Turkey

Note: the numbers in brackets are resettlements under national schemes, outside the resettlements agreed in July 2015.

²⁰ European Commission, Eight report on relocation and resettlement, [Annex 3](#), 8 December 2016.

²¹ This number is in addition to France's national annual quota and previous commitments.

²² This number includes cases under the Austrian Humanitarian Admission Programme.

EU: The 2015 refugee crisis

In recent years, refugees and migrants who arrive in the EU by illegally crossing borders have used predominantly two routes: the Eastern Mediterranean route (mainly from Turkey to Greece by land or sea) and the Central Mediterranean route (mainly from Libya to Italy by sea).²³

Illegal border crossings into the EU 2009-2016

Source: Frontex²⁴

	Eastern Med. route (Greece)	Central Med. route (Italy)	Other routes*	Total*
2009	39,975 65 %	11,043 18 %	10,242 17 %	61,260
2010	55,688 84 %	4,450 7 %	6,245 9 %	66,383
2011	57,000 43 %	64,300 49 %	9,800 8 %	131,100
2012	37,200 61 %	15,200 25 %	8,200 14 %	60,500
2013	24,800 32 %	45,300 58 %	8,600 11 %	78,700
2014	50,800 22 %	170,700 74 %	9,300 4 %	230,800
2015	885,400 84 %	154,000 15 %	10,000 1%	1,049,400
2016	182,534 49 %	181,126 48 %	10,658 3 %	374,318

* In this table, the “other routes” and totals do not include detections of illegal border crossings on the Western Balkan route since virtually all refugees and migrants detected there had already entered, and then again left, Greece or Bulgaria before they reached the Western Balkans, so they would be double-counted. They also do not include the circular route from Albania to Greece, which is used by Albanians who go to Greece for seasonal work and then return again to Albania.

Frontex believes that virtually all illegal crossings of EU borders are detected.

Note that many asylum seekers and migrants reach the EU legally, on a visa or benefitting from a visa-free travel regime. They then claim asylum or stay on illegally after the expiry of the visa or the three-month period that travellers under a visa-free regime are allowed to stay in the EU.

²³ The Eastern Mediterranean route encompasses detections at the Greek sea borders, the Greek and Bulgarian land borders with Turkey, and the Cypriot sea borders. The Central Mediterranean route encompasses detections at the Italian and Maltese sea borders.

²⁴ ESI calculations based on Frontex data. For the data on detections of illegal crossings of EU borders 2011-2015, see [Annual Risk Analysis 2016](#), 5 April 2016, p. 17; for the year 2016, see [Frontex Migratory Routes Map](#), accessed 30 January 2017.

Crossings of Greek-Turkish land and sea borders 2007-2016

Source: Hellenic Police²⁵

In the Eastern Mediterranean region, pressure has been alternating between the Greek-Turkish sea border in the Aegean and the Greek-Turkish land border.

A peak in illegal crossings of the land border was reached in 2011; in August 2012 then, a combination of measures by Greece and the EU and intensified cooperation between the Greek and Turkish authorities brought the situation under control. As a result, 2013 became the year with the lowest number of crossings from Turkey to Greece in a decade. However, already then the number of crossings by sea had started rising, to reach in 2015 a record of 873,000.

From April 2016 on, the numbers started falling again as a result of the EU-Turkey refugee agreement concluded on 18 March 2016.

Year	Crossings of all Greek-Turkish borders	Of those, by sea	Of those, by land
2007	33,600	16,800	16,800
2008	44,600	30,100	14,500
2009	36,500	27,700	8,800
2010	53,300	6,200	47,100
2011	56,000	1,000	55,000
2012	34,100	3,700	30,400
2013	12,600	11,400	1,100
2014	45,400	43,500	1,900
2015	876,200	872,500	3,700
2016	182,500	174,400 (Jan.-Nov.)	3,100 (Jan.-Nov.)

²⁵ Hellenic Police, [Statistical data on migration](#) 2007-2016 (in Greek). Frontex uses the same data. For the total of crossings in 2016, see Frontex, [Fewer migrants at EU borders in 2016](#), press release, 6 January 2017. The data on illegal crossings of the Greek-Turkish border is from the

The year 2015

The year 2015 was unique. For a few months in the second half of 2015 until early 2016, refugees and migrants enjoyed almost unimpeded passage from Turkey to countries in northern Europe such as Austria, Germany and Sweden. In fact, governments along the route and NGOs helped them travel, offering supplies and free transportation. The only obstacle was the dangerous crossing of the Aegean Sea, where 806 refugees lost their lives in 2015.

Pressure started rising earlier in the year when it became apparent that there would be no quick end to the conflict in Syria and when many of the then 1.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey decided to look for countries that would allow them to build a new future for themselves. While Turkey had generously opened its doors to Syrian refugees, the conditions there did not provide a long-term solution since Syrian refugees were not permitted to work and most Syrian children had no access to schooling.

The new left-wing government in Greece did not put up much resistance to the growing influx of refugees, simply allowing them to move on. The governments on the Western Balkan route, soon overwhelmed by the numbers, also adopted a wave-through approach. As the numbers of refugees crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece kept rising, smugglers were offering ever lower prices, and no smugglers were needed anymore to pass through the Western Balkans. This in turn attracted ever more refugees and migrants who were now setting off from countries further away such as Afghanistan. Another pull factor was a welcoming attitude in Germany for which the new term “*Willkommenskultur*” was coined. German citizens greeted arriving refugees with cheers and welcome signs and helped them settle in, and Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that Germany had to live up to its humanitarian responsibilities and would be able to master this challenge – “Wir schaffen das”, “We can do this.”²⁶

Meanwhile, refugees also used the route to Italy, but, in comparison, in much smaller numbers.

Arrivals by sea in Greece and Italy in 2015, by month

Source: UNHCR²⁷

Month	Arrivals in Greece	Arrivals in Italy
January	1,694	3,528
February	2,873	4,354
March	7,874	2,283
April	13,556	16,063
May	17,889	21,235
June	31,318	22,891
July	54,899	23,186
August	107,843	22,609
September	147,123	15,922
October	211,663	8,916
November	151,249	3,218
December	108,742	9,637
TOTAL	856,723	153,842

²⁶ Angela Merkel at the [Federal Press Conference](#), Berlin, 31 August 2016.

²⁷ UNHCR, Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response - Mediterranean, [Greece](#) and [Italy](#).

The end of the 2015 “crisis”

During the unprecedented and initially uncontrolled influx of refugees and migrants into Europe, EU leaders were scrambling for solutions – and gradually found them, some in line with international refugee law, others on the border line, some successful, others less so.

In May 2015, they agreed to establish “hotspots” in Greece and Italy (currently five in Greece and four in Italy) where incoming refugees and migrants are registered, screened and finger-printed with help from Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Europol. This is now working well. In September 2015, EU leaders agreed to relocate ultimately 160,000 asylum seekers with a high chance of recognition from Greece and Italy to other EU countries. This has been resisted by some EU countries and is not a success (see next two pages).

In the summer of 2015, EU leaders also started negotiating with Turkey about how Turkey could help stem the inflow of refugees. In the end, this led to the EU-Turkey refugee agreement from 18 March 2016.²⁸ Turkey agreed to take back all refugees and migrants, including asylum seekers, who reach Greek islands. In turn, the EU committed to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey, to provide 6 billion Euro in assistance to improve the conditions for refugees in Turkey, and to accelerate an ongoing visa liberalisation process with Turkey. Although there are many implementation problems,²⁹ the EU-Turkey deal has proven effective: numbers started dropping as soon as it was reached (see table below).

The EU-Turkey refugee deal coincided with the closure of the Western Balkan route: from 8 March 2016 on, the governments of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia had closed their borders to refugees, with Greece starting to take back all refugees that manage to reach Macedonia.

During 2015, many EU countries also reintroduced border controls within the Schengen area and tightened their asylum laws in order to deter refugees.

Arrivals by sea in Greece in 2016, by month

Source: UNHCR³⁰

Month	Arrivals	Totals
January	67,415	Jan.-March: 151,452
February	57,066	
March	26,971	
April	3,650	April-Dec.: 21,995
May	1,721	
June	1,554	
July	1,920	
August	3,447	
September	3,080	
October	2,970	
November	1,991	
December	1,662	
TOTAL	173,447	

²⁸ [EU-Turkey Statement](#), Brussels, 18 March 2016.

²⁹ See ESI paper [On solid ground? Twelve facts about the EU-Turkey Agreement](#), 25 January 2017, and ESI report [Pangloss in Brussels – How \(not\) to implement the Aegean Agreement](#), 7 October 2016.

³⁰ UNHCR, Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response - Mediterranean, [Greece](#).

The EU relocation scheme

In May 2015, the European Commission proposed to oblige EU member states to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers with a high chance of recognition from Greece and Italy.³¹ However, EU governments agreed to do this only on a voluntary basis. By July they had allocated among themselves only 32,256 asylum seekers³² – there were no “takers” for the remaining 7,744 people. In September 2015 then, as the refugee influx did not show any sign of abating, they finally agreed to make the relocation of the 32,256 refugees mandatory³³ and to relocate, also on a mandatory basis, another 66,000 (50,400 from Greece, 15,600 from Italy).³⁴ In total, this makes 98,256 relocations.

There is agreement in principle to distribute the remaining 7,744 places from the original 40,000, and to allocate an additional 54,000 once the envisaged 98,256 relocations have been implemented. The total of all these numbers is 160,000, which is the figure usually mentioned. However, relocations have taken place much more slowly and in far smaller numbers than foreseen, so it is not clear if and when the envisaged additional distributions will be decided.

See table on next page.

³¹ European Commission, [Proposal for a Council Decision establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece](#), 27 May 2015.

³² [Resolution of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States](#) meeting within the Council on relocating from Greece and Italy 40,000 persons in clear need of international protection, 20 July 2015

³³ [Council Decision \(EU\) 2015/1523 of 14 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece](#).

³⁴ [Council Decision \(EU\) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece](#).

Relocations from Greece and Italy from Sept. 2015 until 24 Jan. 2017³⁵

Country	Relocated from Greece	Relocated from Italy	Total (GR and IT)	Allocated quota
France	2,414	282	2,696	19,714
Germany	894	455	1,349	27,536
Netherlands	866	380	1,246	5,947
Finland	560	359	919	2,078
Portugal	631	271	902	2,951
Spain	601	144	745	9,323
Romania	513	45	558	4,180
Ireland	241	0	241	600
Lithuania	229	0	229	671
Luxembourg	165	61	226	557
Belgium	177	29	206	3,812
Latvia	184	9	193	481
Slovenia	101	23	124	567
Malta	34	46	80	131
Estonia	78	0	78	329
Cyprus	55	10	65	320
Sweden	0	39	39	3,766
Bulgaria	29	0	29	1,302
Croatia	10	9	19	968
Czech Republic	12	0	12	2,691
Slovakia	9	0	9	902
Poland	0	0	0	6,182
Austria	0	0	0	1,953
Hungary	0	0	0	1,294
Denmark	0	0	0	not applicable
UK	0	0	0	not applicable
TOTAL	7,803 (of 63,302)	2,162 (of 34,953)	9,965 (of 98,255)	98,255
Norway	78	415	493	not applicable
Switzerland	28	340	368	not applicable
Liechtenstein	10	0	10	not applicable
Iceland	0	0	0	not applicable
OVERALL	7,919	2,917	10,836	98,255

³⁵

European Commission, [Member States' Support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism](#), as of 24 Jan. 2017.

EU: Deaths in the Mediterranean 2015 and 2016

Source: Frontex and IOM³⁶

Crossing the Central Mediterranean sea and the Aegean sea is dangerous. Unscrupulous smugglers provide refugees and migrants with boats that are hardly seaworthy, and in addition they overload them. Many boats deflate or capsize, with refugees drowning. The passage from Libya to Italy is much longer so that the death toll on this route is proportionally higher.

	Eastern Med. route (Greece)	Central Med. route (Italy)
2015 arrivals	885,400	154,000
2015 deaths	806 (0.1 %)	2,869 (1.9 %)
2016 arrivals	182,500	181,000
2016 deaths	434 (0.2 %)	4,579 (2.5 %)

EU: Top nationalities of arrivals in Greece and Italy in 2016

Source: UNHCR³⁷

The nationalities of the refugees and migrants using the Eastern and Central Mediterranean migration routes are different, so closure of one route does not mean that the refugees switch to the other route. This is difficult for geographical reasons.

Greece		Italy	
Syria	47%	Nigeria	21%
Afghanistan	24%	Eritrea	12%
Iraq	15%	Guinea	7%
Pakistan	5%	Ivory Coast	7%
Iran	3%	Gambia	7%
Other	6%	Senegal	6%
		Mali	5%
		Sudan	5%
		Bangladesh	4%
		Somalia	4%
		Other	22%

³⁶ The arrivals are based on Frontex data: for 2015, see [Annual Risk Analysis 2016](#), 5 April 2016, p. 17; for 2016, see Frontex, [Fewer migrants at EU borders in 2016](#), press release, 6 January 2017. For deaths, see IOM/Missing Migrants Project, [Mediterranean](#), accessed 25 January 2017.

³⁷ UNHCR, Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response - Mediterranean, [Greece](#) and [Italy](#).

EU: Top 25 nationalities claiming asylum and their recognition rates in 2015

Source: Eurostat³⁸

Country	Claims submitted	Claims decided	Recognition rate
1. Syria	368,350	166,665	97 %
2. Afghanistan	181,415	19,310	67 %
3. Iraq	124,965	26,045	86 %
4. Kosovo	72,480	37,620	2 %
5. Albania	67,950	41,410	3 %
6. Pakistan	48,015	18,905	26 %
7. Eritrea	34,130	30,120	90 %
8. Nigeria	31,245	18,090	24 %
9. Serbia	30,065	21,860	2 %
10. Iran	26,575	8,210	65 %
11. Russia	22,235	13,325	25 %
12. Unknown	22,140	8,395	79 %
13. Ukraine	22,040	9,440	30 %
14. Somalia	21,050	8,725	63 %
15. Stateless	19,605	11,065	91 %
16. Bangladesh	18,865	11,090	16 %
17. Macedonia	15,855	8,465	1 %
18. Gambia	12,395	9,535	34 %
19. Sudan	11,175	7,900	56 %
20. Senegal	9,035	6,310	28 %
21. Bosnia	8,935	6,610	3 %
22. Mali	8,405	10,470	29 %
23. Algeria	8,280	3,670	6 %
24. Georgia	7,765	5,320	7 %
25. China	6,305	5,140	26 %
Other	124,190	79,445	27 %
All claims in the EU	1,323,465	593,140	52 %

* The net number of Kosovar claims is around 48,000 because 24,455 submitted claims in Hungary and then moved on to submit claims in Germany and, to a lesser extent, a few other EU countries.

Note: The claims include both new and repeat claims (submitted by the same person for a second or more times after the previous application/s had been rejected with all appeals possibilities exhausted or expired).

The recognition rate is the share of claims where the asylum authority at first instance granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or humanitarian protection. It does not include the outcomes of possible reviews and appeals. See explanation of the terms in the Annex.

³⁸ [Eurostat interactive database](#), Asylum and new asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asyappctza]; and First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asydcfsta], both accessed on 25 January 2017.

EU: Recognition rate for Syrian asylum claims in the EU in 2015, by country

Source: Eurostat³⁹

Even in the case of Syrians who are in clear need of protection there are differences among the recognition rates of the different EU countries.

	Recognition rate	Decisions made	Positive decisions
Cyprus	100 %	1,390	1,390
Poland	100 %	205	205
Finland	100 %	135	135
Ireland	100 %	25	25
Latvia	100 %	15	15
Slovakia	100 %	10	10
Slovenia	100 %	10	10
Lithuania	100 %	5	5
Greece	100 %	2,805	2,795
Austria	99 %	7,985	7,940
Bulgaria	99 %	5,390	5,320
Malta	98 %	275	270
Netherlands	98 %	8,010	7,850
Belgium	98 %	3,750	3,670
Sweden	98 %	18,905	18,470
Germany	98 %	103,845	101,415
France	96 %	3,225	3,110
Denmark	96 %	5,930	5,705
Luxembourg	94 %	85	80
Spain	92 %	710	655
UK	87 %	2,370	2,055
Czech Rep.	87 %	150	130
Romania	59 %	565	335
Hungary	59 %	270	160
Italy	57 %	580	330
Estonia	0 %	10	0
Portugal	0 %	5	0
Croatia	-	0	0
EU28	97 %	166,665	162,095

Note: The recognition rate is the share of claims where the asylum authority at first instance granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or humanitarian protection. It does not include the outcomes of possible reviews and appeals. See explanation of the terms in the Annex.

³⁹ [Eurostat interactive database](#), First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asydcfst], accessed 25 January 2017.

EU: Nationalities of irregular migrants detected in Greece 2010 to 2016, by year
 Compilation by ESI based on data from the Hellenic Police⁴⁰

This table shows how the number of refugees from Syria arriving in the EU rose during the past few years, but also how other nationalities in whose countries of origin the situation did not change took advantage of the open borders in 2015.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 Jan.-Nov.
Syria	n.a.	1,522	7,927	8,517	32,520	499,495	85,678
Afghanistan	28,299	28,528	16,584	6,412	12,901	213,267	43,984
Iraq	4,968	2,863	2,212	700	1,023	91,769	28,270
Pakistan	8,830	19,975	11,136	3,982	3,621	27,261	12,707
Albania*	50,175	11,733	10,602	15,389	16,751	16,910	10,592
Iran	1,133	n.a.	692	317	n.a.	23,155	6,109
Palestine	7,561	2,065	1,718	469	622	6,350	2,028
Algeria	7,336	5,398	4,606	443	n.a.	1,548	1,644
Bangladesh	3,264	5,416	7,863	1,524	1,164	4,511	1,389
Morocco	1,645	3,405	2,207	442	n.a.	7,818	1,264
Georgia	1,456	n.a.	n.a.	568	838	n.a.	809
Somalia	6,525	2,238	1,765	1,004	1,876	4,583	n.a.
Eritrea	1,628	1,172	923	726	1,019	n.a.	n.a.
Other	9,704	n.a.	n.a.	3,363	4,828	14,804	6,702

* Albanians are mostly circular migrants – they come to Greece for seasonal work, but then go back to Albania. Their numbers dropped from 2011 on because the EU abolished the short-stay visa requirement for Albanians in December 2010.

⁴⁰ Hellenic Police, [Statistical data on migration](#) (in Greek), accessed 25 January 2017.

EU: Asylum claims & recognition rates in the EU 2010 to 2016

Source: Eurostat⁴¹

Year	Claims received	Decisions made	Recognition rate
2010	260,835	223,790	25 %
2011	309,820	237,975	25 %
2012	336,015	289,035	31 %
2013	432,055	323,980	33 %
2014	627,780	367,435	46 %
2015	1,323,465	593,140	52 %
2016	1,192,275 (incomplete ⁴²)	755,760 (Jan.-Sept.)	61 % (Jan.-Sept.)

The recognition rate has been rising due to the increasing share of asylum seekers who qualify for protection such as Syrians, Iraqis and Eritreans.

Note: In 2015 and 2016, there is a wide gap between the number of claims received and the number of asylum seekers who arrived in the EU in these two years. In 2015, the asylum authorities of the most popular destination countries were not able to receive and process the claims of all the arriving asylum seekers; Germany, for example, recorded the arrival of 890,000 asylum seekers in 2015,⁴³ but its asylum authority was able to accept only 441,900 claims, the remaining 450,000 claims were processed in 2016 unless the asylum seekers had moved on. The number of claims received in 2016 is therefore far higher than the number of refugees who arrived in the EU in that year.

The claims cited here include both new and repeat claims (submitted by the same person for a second or more times after the previous application/s had been rejected with all appeals possibilities exhausted or expired). The decisions are only decisions at first instance, excluding decisions in review and appeal cases. The recognition rate covers the granting of refugee status in line with the Refugee Convention, subsidiary protection and different forms of humanitarian protection. See explanation of the terms in the Annex.

⁴¹ [Eurostat interactive database](#), Asylum and new asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asyappctza]; Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex, Monthly data (rounded), code [migr_asyappctzm]; First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asydcfstq]; and First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex, Quarterly data (rounded), code [migr_asydcfstq], all accessed on 23 January 2016.

⁴² This is the total of monthly applications in 2016, but only two out of 28 EU countries had submitted their data for December, 13 for November, and 26 for October.

⁴³ German Interior Ministry, [890.000 Asylsuchende im Jahr 2015](#) (890,000 asylum seekers in 2015), press release, 30 September 2016.

EU: Asylum claims 2010 to 2016, by EU country and year
Source: Eurostat⁴⁴

This table shows that asylum seekers are not equally shared among the EU's member states.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 (incomplete ⁴⁵)
Germany	48,590	53,345	77,650	126,995	202,815	476,620	745,265
Italy	10,050	40,355	17,350	26,620	64,625	83,540	112,190
France	52,725	57,335	61,455	66,265	64,310	76,165	69,265
Austria	11,060	14,455	17,450	17,520	28,065	88,180	39,535
Greece	10,275	9,310	9,575	8,225	9,435	13,205	36,765
UK	24,365	26,940	28,895	30,820	33,010	40,410	32,405
Hungary	2,105	1,695	2,155	18,900	42,775	177,135	28,805
Sweden	31,940	29,710	43,945	54,365	81,325	162,550	26,940
Netherlands	15,100	14,600	13,100	13,095	24,535	44,970	16,940
Belgium	26,560	32,270	28,285	21,215	22,850	44,760	16,875
Bulgaria	1,025	890	1,385	7,145	11,080	20,365	18,605
Spain	2,745	3,420	2,565	4,495	5,615	14,785	12,260
Poland	6,540	6,890	10,755	15,245	8,025	12,190	11,055
Denmark	5,100	3,985	6,075	7,230	14,715	20,970	5,930
Finland	3,675	2,975	3,115	3,220	3,625	32,345	5,315
Cyprus	2,875	1,770	1,635	1,255	1,745	2,265	1,920
Luxembourg	785	2,155	2,055	1,070	1,150	2,505	1,775
Ireland	1,940	1,290	955	945	1,450	3,275	1,765
Malta	175	1,890	2,080	2,245	1,350	1,845	1,630
Romania	885	1,720	2,510	1,495	1,545	1,260	1,315
Slovenia	245	360	305	270	385	275	1,305
Czech Rep.	790	755	755	710	1,155	1,525	1,280
Portugal	160	275	295	505	445	895	1,230
Croatia	:	:	:	1,080	450	210	955
Lithuania	495	525	645	400	440	315	415
Latvia	65	340	205	195	375	330	260
Estonia	35	65	75	95	155	230	180
Slovakia	540	490	730	440	330	330	125
EU28 total	260,835	309,820	336,015	432,055	627,780	1,323,465	1,192,275

⁴⁴ [Eurostat Interactive Database](#), Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex, Annual aggregated data (rounded), code [migr_asyappctza]. For 2016: Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex, Monthly data (rounded), code [migr_asyappctzm], both accessed 26 January 2017.

⁴⁵ This is the total of monthly applications in 2016, but only Germany and Slovenia had submitted their data for December, 13 out of 28 EU countries for November, and 26 for October. The data for the remaining months was complete.

EU: Return of irregular non-EU nationals 2008-2015

Under EU law, authorities must issue return decisions to non-EU nationals staying illegally on their territory, including failed asylum seekers, if they want to terminate their stay and return them to their countries of origin or other countries willing to accept them. They must also provide them with a period of 7 to 30 days to leave voluntarily.⁴⁶ A return decision is “an administrative or judicial decision or act, stating or declaring the stay of a third-country national to be illegal and imposing or stating an obligation to return”.⁴⁷ Most voluntary departures are financially assisted. If an individual under order to leave fails to do so, they can be deported.

According to the available data, only 42 percent of all return orders have resulted in the departure of the individuals concerned in recent years.

An average 86 percent of all return decisions concerned return to a country outside the EU, the remaining 14 percent to another EU country.

Return orders and actual returns, 2008-2015

Source: Eurostat⁴⁸

	Non-EU nationals ordered to leave	Departures (voluntarily or forced)	Percentage
2008	603,360	241,965	40 %
2009	594,600	252,790	43 %
2010	540,080	225,415	42 %
2011	491,310	194,110	40 %
2012	483,650	206,675	43 %
2013	430,450	215,885	50 %
2014	470,080	192,280	41 %
2015	533,395	226,800	48 %
TOTAL	4,146,925	1,755,920	42 %

⁴⁶ [Directive 2008/115/EC of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.](#)

⁴⁷ [Returns Directive](#), Art. 3, point 4.

⁴⁸ [Eurostat interactive database](#), Third country nationals ordered to leave - annual data (rounded), [migr_eiord], and Third country nationals returned following an order to leave - annual data (rounded), [migr_eirtn], both accessed 27 January 2017.

Returns from EU member states in 2015 by country and type of return

Source: Eurostat⁴⁹

EU countries use different ways to verify whether a non-EU national under obligation to leave has actually left their territory. They use data from the agencies assisting voluntary returns and carrying out forced returns, but they usually also request the leaving individuals to provide evidence of their departure either by handing in a specific document at the border or, upon arrival at the destination, at a consulate. If they do not, they threaten to impose a Schengen-wide entry ban. However, some EU countries are not able to separate those who had assistance from those who were returned by force, this is why the data on voluntary and enforced return is not available for all EU countries.

	Persons returned	Voluntary return	Enforced return	Type of return unknown
Germany	55,340	-	-	55,340
UK	50,590	-	-	50,590
France	18,245	5,920	12,325	0
Greece	14,390	-	-	14,390
Spain	13,315	2,355	10,960	0
Poland	12,930	12,080	850	0
Sweden	9,830	7,285	2,545	0
Netherlands	8,620	-	-	8,620
Hungary	5,975	210	5,765	0
Belgium	5,835	3,310	2,525	0
Austria	5,275	-	-	5,275
Italy	4,670	1,015	3,655	0
Finland	3,365	-	-	3,365
Denmark	2,655	170	2,480	0
Romania	1,995	1,810	180	0
Croatia	1,940	1,250	690	0
Cyprus	1,840	-	-	1,840
Lithuania	1,720	-	-	1,720
Czech Rep.	1,715	-	-	1,715
Slovakia	1,230	670	560	0
Latvia	1,030	695	340	0
Slovenia	840	90	110	640
Bulgaria	735	180	555	0
Luxembourg	720	545	175	0
Portugal	610	240	370	0
Estonia	560	475	85	0
Malta	465	285	180	0
Ireland	365	115	250	0
TOTAL	226,800	38,700	44,600	143,495

⁴⁹ [Eurostat interactive database](#), Third-country nationals who have left the territory by type of return and citizenship, code [migr_eirt_vol], accessed 27 January 2017.

Annex: Terminology concerning international protection in the EU

Refugee status - in response to persecution - is the highest form of international protection. Under EU asylum legislation, which is based on the 1951 UN Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, EU member states are committed to offering refugee status to foreign nationals that have "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group" in their home country".⁵⁰

Subsidiary protection - in response to risks of serious harm - is accorded to people who face "risks of serious harm" in their home countries, but who do not meet the UN/EU definition of refugee. The relevant EU Directive defines "serious harm" as "(a) death penalty or execution; or (b) torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of an applicant in the country of origin; or (c) serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict."⁵¹

Humanitarian shelter: Some asylum seekers are allowed to remain in an EU country "for reasons not due to a need for international protection, but on a discretionary basis on compassionate or humanitarian grounds".⁵² As it is at the discretion of EU member states to grant this status, it is regulated by national legislation. Most often it is offered to people with medical problems that cannot be treated in their home country. Eurostat does not have complete data on it since not all member states offer this type of protection or because it is granted by authorities other than the asylum authorities.⁵³

At first instance, asylum claims are decided by administrative bodies, that is the asylum authorities. Some EU countries offer the possibility of an administrative review if a rejected asylum seeker wishes to pursue it. All rejected asylum seekers also have a right of appeal before a court, so this is the next instance. In some EU countries, this is the final instance, while others offer the possibility of one or more appeal against the first court decision, depending on their judicial systems.

⁵⁰ [Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted.](#)

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ In Eurostat there is no data on humanitarian protection from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia.