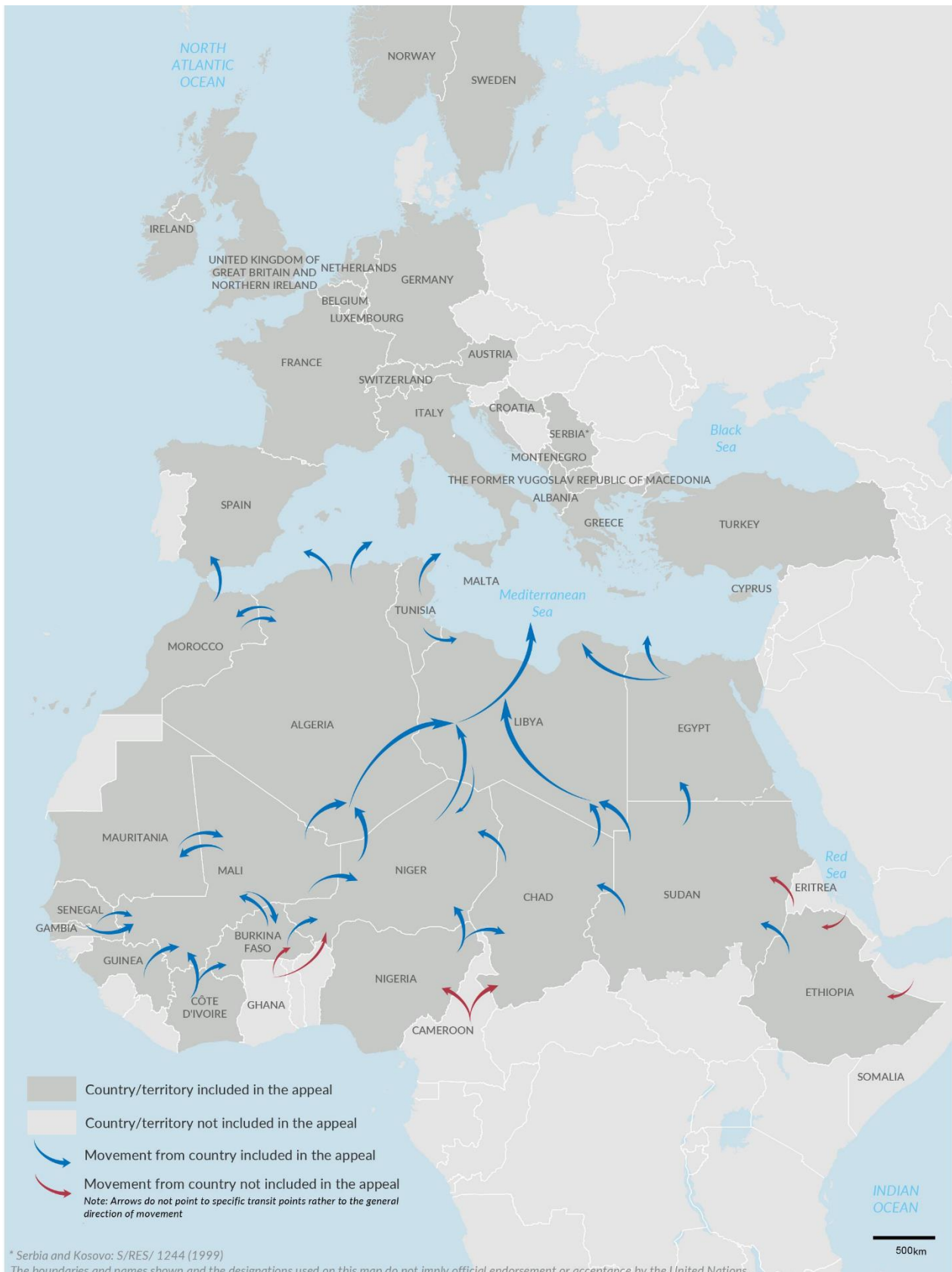# UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

WORKING ON ALTERNATIVES TO DANGEOUS JOURNEYS

UNHCR CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY

Strategy overview
May 2018

The Central Mediterranean Route

Legend:

- Country/territory included in the appeal
- Country/territory not included in the appeal
- Movement from country included in the appeal
- Movement from country not included in the appeal

Note: Arrows do not point to specific transit points rather to the general direction of movement

500km

* Serbia and Kosovo: S/RES/ 1244 (1999)
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**This map was created to portray countries along the Central Mediterranean Route officially included in the UNHCR Mediterranean Situation and Supplementary Appeal for the Central Mediterranean Route Situation.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Working on alternatives to dangerous journeys

Strategic overview

Since October 2017, UNHCR has been rolling out a three-pronged cross-regional risk mitigation strategy with broad objectives and selected activities in countries of origin, transit and destination countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and in Europe.

The comprehensive approach taken by UNHCR, covering all three geographic regions, is **unique** in that it takes into account the numerous challenges in each one of them as well as those which are cross-regional, offering concrete and mutually reinforcing measures in all operations covered by the strategy.

In line with its mandate, the whole-of-society approach underlying the New York Declaration, and taking into consideration the progress achieved in the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), strategic goals include:

- *Mitigating identified protection risks along the route and enhancing the protection space available in transit countries, including through community-based protection.*

- *Identifying effective solutions in countries of asylum, origin and transit and finding safe and legal alternatives to irregular movements.*

- *Improving communication with communities, including to inform populations at risk of movement of possible dangers along the routes and available protection options;*

- *Strengthening partnerships and coordination with States and local partners, including through targeted capacity-building activities.*

Key intervention areas

- Advocacy on anti-trafficking measures is critical. Specific recommendations have been compiled to reinforce the **protection of victims of trafficking** and enhance **anti-trafficking efforts.**

- A key component in UNHCR's **awareness raising** efforts is the increased engagement of the diaspora, as well as its leverage on migration-related issues such as remittances and mixed movement dynamics.

- In its attempts to decrease vulnerabilities and to prevent and reduce statelessness, UNHCR will advocate for and offer technical expertise to strengthen national capacities for continuous **civil status registration** and the provision of identification and travel documents. Coordination with States, ECOWAS and the EU will remain key in this area.

- UNHCR will continue actively advocating to strengthen the national capacities of countries of origin to provide **consular protection** to all people not in need of international protection who are stranded along the route to Europe.

- Jointly with relevant partners, and through systems with adequate protection safeguards, UNHCR will assist in the identification and referral of cases for whom **assisted voluntary repatriation and reintegration** is the best option.

- Specific national groups or people from specific geographical areas within a country are often more likely to embark on dangerous migratory journeys than others. UNHCR will advocate with bilateral and multilateral donors so that the underlying socio-economic **drivers of migration** are systematically included in relevant development programming, including the UNDAF.

Achievements in 2017 within the framework of the strategy

Expanding outreach, directly or through partners, to persons travelling along the routes towards Libya and enhancing the identification of persons in need of international protection;

Increasing knowledge about movements and related risks, including through consolidating available research, conducting new studies (on mixed migration in Chad, along with profiling studies conducted in Italy and Spain), and strengthening cooperation with partners to fill knowledge gaps;

Strategically approaching resettlement needs with an appeal for 40,000 places from 15 priority countries along the Central Mediterranean route[1]. This was supported by the establishment of a core group of resettlement countries under the chairmanship of France, focused on meeting the set objectives. Nearly 24,500 resettlement places have been pledges by States so far;

Nurturing protection dialogues between countries of origin and destination and key agencies, including through the facilitation of a dialogue at Chatham House[2] discussing key issues of concern along with recommendations;

Enhancing efforts to **map and address information and analysis gaps**, as well as improving data sharing.

Stepping up UNHCR's advocacy for increased national, regional and international measures **to combat trafficking in persons and protect victims of trafficking**.[3]

Advocacy for concrete and effective measures to enhance the protection of children on the move and facilitate the swift identification of lasting solutions in accordance with their best interest, including family reunification for specific groups.

Providing urgent protection and solutions for extremely vulnerable persons of concern stranded in Libya by establishing an **Emergency Transit Mechanism to Niger** for evacuation and processing for resettlement and solutions in third countries;

1,342

Extremely vulnerable persons were evacuated from Libya to Italy and Niger with UNHCR's assistance between November 2017 and February 2018.

A flight is scheduled for 8 May to evacuate an additional 150 persons.

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[1] http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/9/59b6a5134/central-mediterranean-situation-unhcr-calls-additional-40000-resettlement.html

[2] https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Default/RecordView/Index/172447

[3] *See for example,* http://www.unhcr.org/admin/hcspeeches/59fb25ad4/statement-united-nations-security-council.html; https://twitter.com/cochetel/status/922725779288535040 *or UNHCR Recommendation to Enhance the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Related Abuses of Persons along Routes to Libya and Italy, of October 2017.*

Implementation challenges in 2017

Regarding challenges, **security** remained concerning throughout 2017, with no conflicts on the African continent being brought to a peaceful conclusion, with the exception of that in The Gambia.

In many countries of origin and transit, the security situation deteriorated, impacting on humanitarian access and prospects for sustainable reintegration processes, as well as contributing to displacement and cross-border movement.
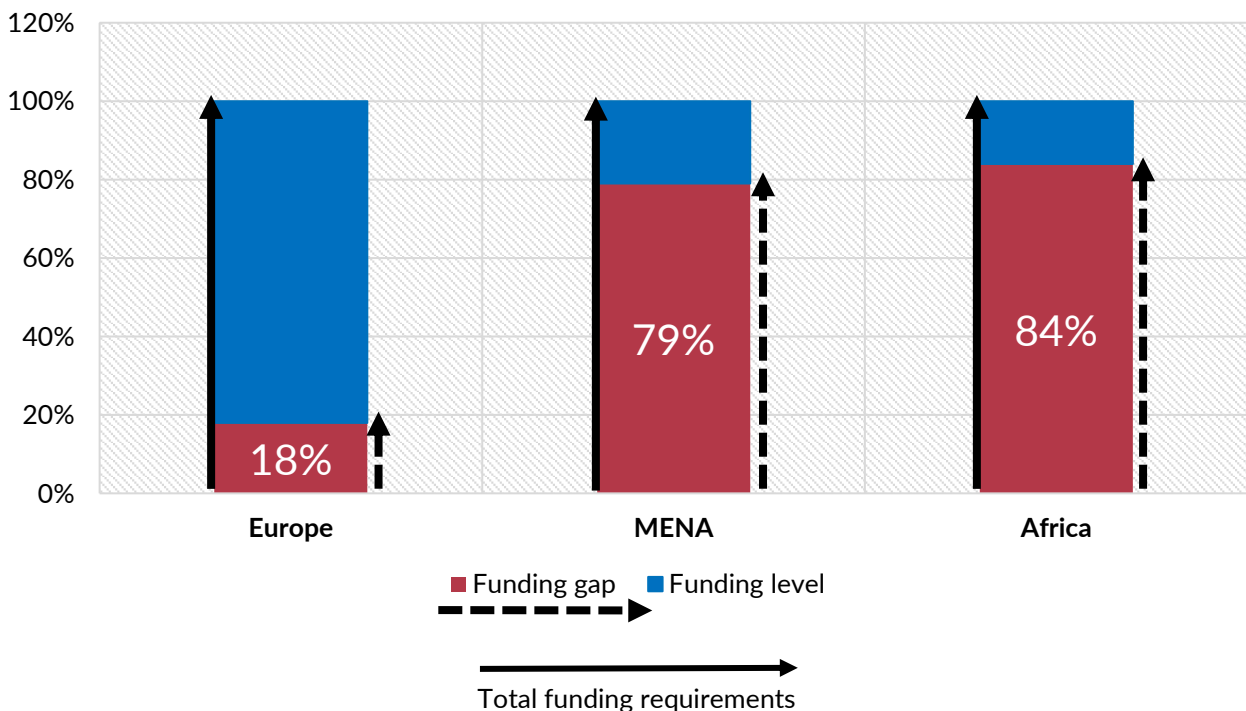
The absence of protection safeguards for some of the nationalities assisted to voluntarily return from Libya raised the concern that some people returned to their country of origin from Libya may face secondary displacement or renew efforts to move across border to seek asylum in a different country.

Resource mobilization also posed a significant constraint in 2017. Although contributions at the country and regional level were significant and were met with the highest appreciation by UNHCR, the levels of unearmarked or more broadly earmarked contributions, which allow for critical flexibility in response implementation, were still insufficient.

Underfunding where needs are highest, coupled with reduced WFP food assistance in some countries affected by mixed migration flows, increases risks of irregular movement.

Lack of funding has also impacted on UNHCR's ability to increase reception capacity for asylum-seekers in key transit countries linked to movements towards Libya.
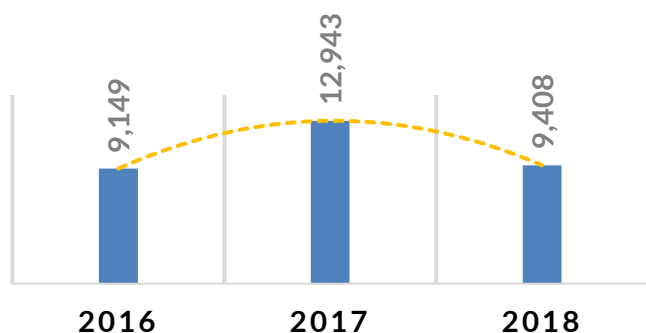
Earmarked funding levels for UNHCR Central Mediterranean Route Situation in 2017

Outlook of situation in 2018

Data for early 2018 arrivals to Italy by sea suggests that the lower trend in numbers may continue into this year due to various factors, including increased rescue at sea and interceptions by the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG).

Sea arrivals to Italy between January and April

| 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |

9,149 — 12,943 — 9,408

Despite the lower trend in arrivals between January and April 2018 as compared to the previous years, crossings of the Central Mediterranean Sea during Ramadan (May-June) may increase. In addition, political instability and recurrent low-level military activities in countries of transit can trigger major outflows at any point in time, as well as lead to a diversification of routes and backflow to Niger.

The tightening of border controls initiated in 2017 in several concerned countries upstream has already led to shifts in the directions taken by mixed flows, and circumstantial evidence points at alternative routes being used instead of direct movements from Niger to Libya. In particular, movement to Libya via Algeria has been identified as an alternative route.
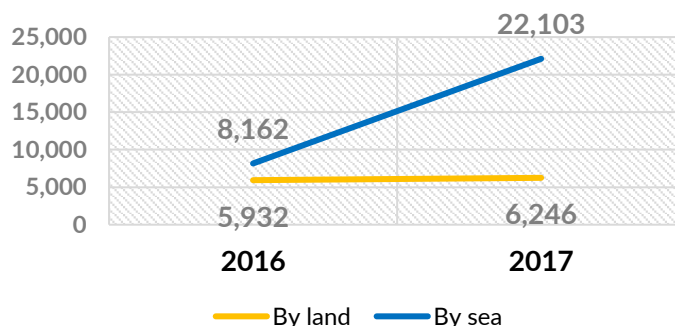
Movement to Morocco has also experienced an increase in the first quarter of 2018. This is likely associated with growing onward movements to Spain, not only of North African nationals but also Ivorians, Guineans and Gambians, pointing at a diversification of routes taken from these countries to Europe.

In North Africa, an increase of arrivals of asylum-seekers coming from/transiting through Sudan to Egypt was also observed in 2017 and is expected to continue throughout 2018.

Although this might not be exclusively associated with onward movement towards Libya and across the Mediterranean, some of the most common nationalities arriving in Egypt are also seen arriving in significant numbers in Italy, such as Eritreans and Sudanese. Movements from Eritrea and Ethiopia to Sudan saw a decrease by 50% in the first months of 2018 due mainly to reinforced border control measures which are likely to be remain in place in the rest of the year

In Europe, although Italy saw a 34% decrease in the number of arrivals by sea in 2017 as compared to 2016, Spain witnessed a 101% increase in the number of arrivals by sea and land combined, with arrivals by sea increasing drastically (although the top two nationalities were Moroccans and Algerians).

Arrivals to Spain 2016-2017, Land and Sea

	2016	2017
By sea	8,162	22,103
By land	5,932	6,246

— By land — By sea

This route diversification trend is expected to continue and raises significant concerns, as the use of alternative routes are likely associated with travel through more remote areas, where conditions are harsher, protection risks greater, and humanitarian access severely constrained.

In addition to route diversification and associated dangers, the situation in Libya remains a concern, with the protection space still restricted despite improvements regarding security.

Although the UN's evacuation status has been lifted and international humanitarian agencies and NGOs are expected to continue scaling up their presence, access to persons of concern in some parts of the territory and in detention remains unpredictable.

UNHCR estimates that at least 2,000 persons of concern are currently in detention in Libya, in addition to the 51,000 registered refugees. Contrary to the past, the release of persons of concern (POCs) in detention to UNHCR's care is now contingent upon their evacuation out of the country, which is not always possible.

Access to POCs also continues to be impacted by the seven nationalities restriction, which is applicable not only in detention centres but also urban contexts and disembarkation points. This is of significant concern, as the Libyan Coast Guard remains increasingly involved in SAR operations. In 2016, roughly 181,000 people crossed the Central Mediterranean Sea to Italy and 14,300 were intercepted or rescued by the LCG. In 2017, although arrivals to Italy dropped to approximately 119,000, the LCG increased interceptions or rescues to over 15,300 people.

This slow but growing trend of LCG disembarkations is expected to continue: between 1 January and 27 April 2017, 3,500 individuals were intercepted or rescued by the LCG, while during the same period in 2018, over 5,000 individuals were disembarked.

NGOs conducting search and rescue (SAR) efforts in the Central Mediterranean have expressed concerns for the way responsibility for rescue operations is being assigned. On a number of occasions, NGOs have been directed by the Italian MRCC to search for a vessel in distress, only to later be informed that the Libyan Coast Guard would be responsible for the search. In situations where the LCG is involved, some people have chosen to jump in the water as to avoid return to Libya.

Among the various groups likely to move, UNHCR notes with concern an increase in the number of Libyans having left their country by boat with a 39% increase between 2016 and 2017.

So far in 2018, this trend has continued: 240 Libyans arrived in Italy between January and March, compared to 88 for the same period in 2017.

Voluntary repatriation movements from Chad to Sudan (Darfur) will continue in the course of 2018, subject to availability of funding and improvements of the security situation in areas of return.

Looking at new risks and aggravated vulnerabilities

Decreasing food security for refugees, IDPs and host communities is expected to play an increasingly role in terms of potential internal and external displacements as well as secondary movements in and from fragile states in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The intensification of military activities in the Mali, Nigeria, and Lake Chad situations may create additional displacement and hamper voluntary repatriation movements in the short-term.
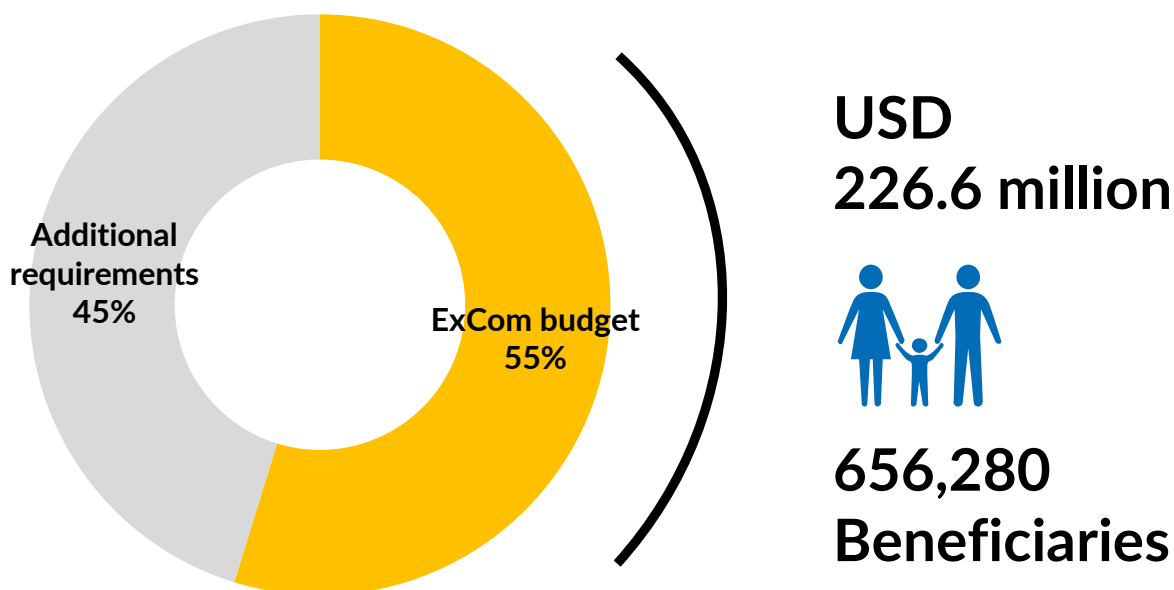
Low level intensity armed clashes in southern Libya and continuous abuses faced by sub-Saharan Africans may continue to provoke "back flows" to Niger.

Deportations from Algeria to Niger and Mali will create additional pressure on both countries to manage mixed migration flows.

Financial requirements

UNHCR Executive Committee's (ExCom) budget for the Central Mediterranean Route Situation in 2018 was set at USD 124.1 million in October 2017. As protection needs of people of concern within the framework of this situation continued to grow, UNHCR launched in March 2018 a supplementary appeal[4], which presented USD 102.5 million worth of additional needs. Therefore, the total revised 2018 requirements for the Central Mediterranean Route Situation now amount to USD 226.6 million, including support costs.

Additional requirements 45%

ExCom budget 55%

USD 226.6 million

656,280 Beneficiaries

Priorities for resource mobilization are[5]:

- **Unearmarked funding:** allows UNHCR the critical flexibility in determining how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

- **Broadly earmarked at the situational or regional level:** funding that can be used across the range of countries and activities in a given region or situation in accordance with the priorities and activities identified by UNHCR.

- **Earmarked at the country or operational level:** allows UNHCR to allocate funding to its planned activities within a country in a context specific manner.

Ideally, all funds raised should be flexible in their implementation period, as to allow UNHCR to carry funds into the following year. This enables smooth continuation of activities, make operations more predictable, and avoid situations of UNHCR receiving funds it may not able to spend within the calendar year.

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[4] *While the Greece remains part of the situation, it has not been included in this appeal, as the majority of its needs are expected to be covered by earmarked contributions. UNHCR 2018 ExCom budget for Greece amounts to USD 232.7 million.*
[5] ***Earmarked to the sectoral or thematic level*** *is the most restrictive level of funding.*