

ITALY – SEA ARRIVALS

UNHCR UPDATE #2

October 2015

KEY FIGURES

141,000

Persons arriving by sea up to October.

8,900

Persons arriving by sea in October.

770

Unaccompanied and separated children arrived by sea in October.

59%

Average EU asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian protection rate of top nationalities arriving by sea in Italy (as of August).

47,500

Asylum applications up to August (including from sea and other arrivals).

46,000

Sea arrivals originate from Eritrea, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

86

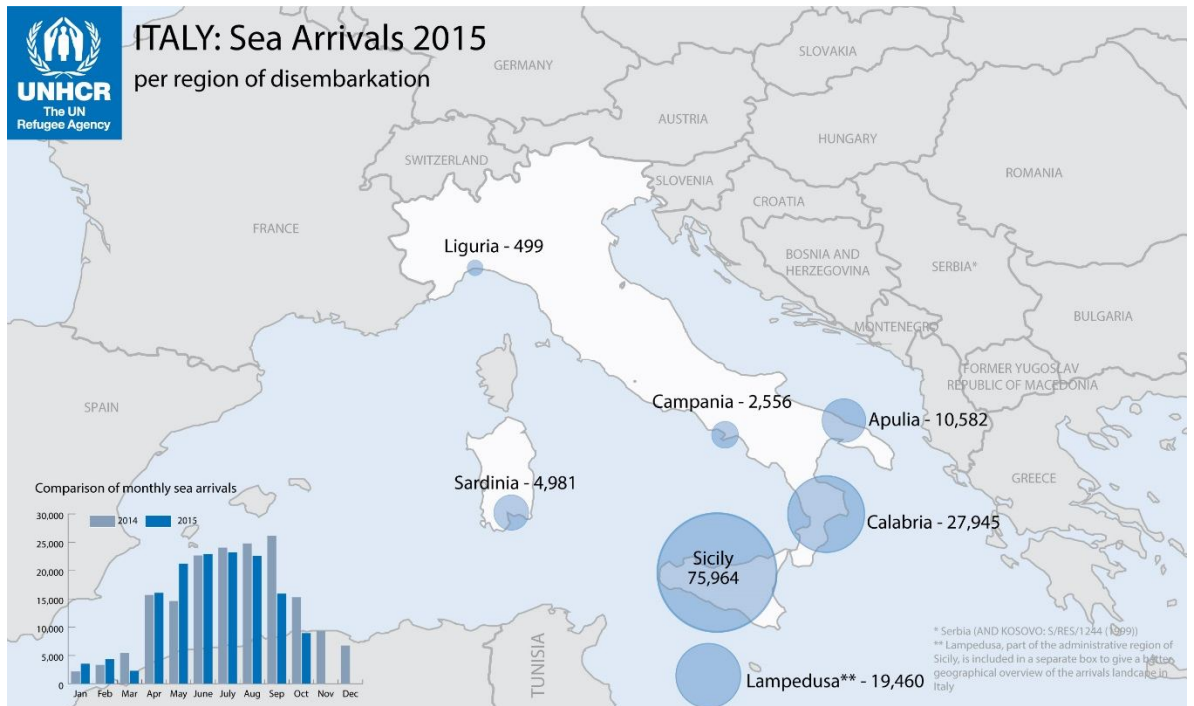
Asylum seekers relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme in October.

10

UNHCR staff positioned at key arrival points.

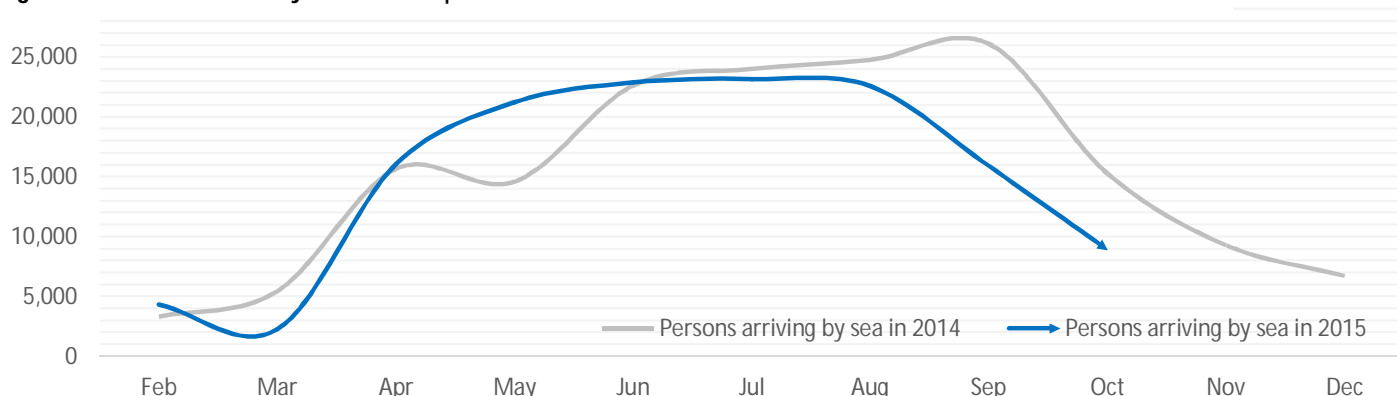
HIGHLIGHTS

- Besides observing a seasonal decrease of refugees and migrants arriving by sea, Italy witnessed a 41% drop of sea arrivals over the last month, compared to October 2014.
- Arrival trends for October include the steady decrease of Syrians arriving by sea, a slight drop of Sudanese as well as a continuing proportional increase of Nigerian nationals.
- On 9 October, a first group of asylum-seekers was relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme. The departure of the group officially started the relocation scheme, which foresees the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece. During October, a total of 86 Eritrean and Syrian asylum seekers were relocated to Sweden and Finland.



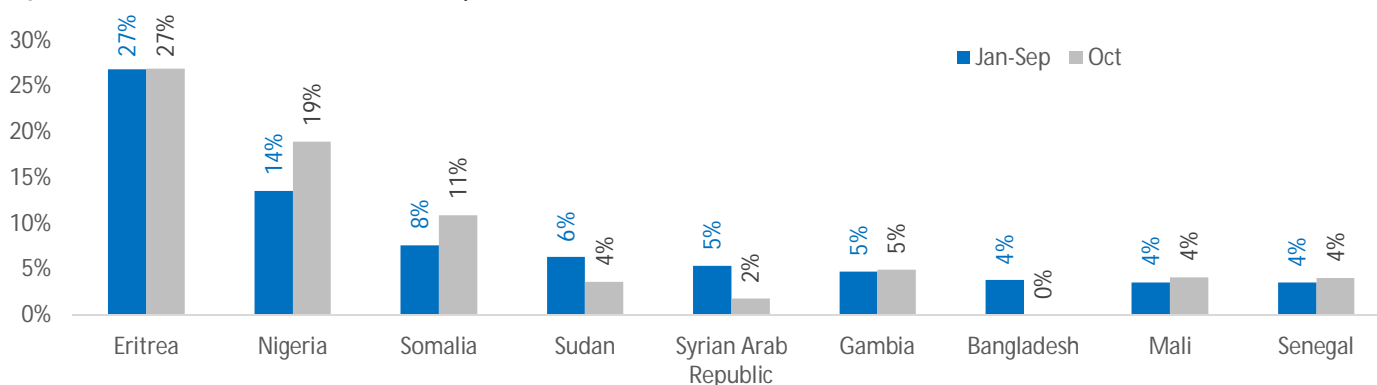
SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 1. Trends of monthly sea arrivals | Jan 2014 – Oct 2015



At the end of October 2015, the total number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea stands at around 141,000 persons, corresponding to an 8% decrease compared to the same period last year. Besides observing a seasonal decrease of refugees and migrants arriving by sea, **Italy witnessed a 41% drop of sea arrivals over the last month, compared to October 2014**. A similar trend was noticed in September and may be related to the preference of some nationality groups for the [Western Balkan route](#), with an [exponential growth in sea arrivals to Greece](#). Key disembarkation points in October remain ports which have been identified as hotspots (but not all operational as hotspot), including Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Taranto (all 10%), Augusta (9%) and Trapani (8%). In addition, disembarkations took place in Reggio Calabria (21%), Catania (10%) and Palermo (7%). UNHCR has ten staff positioned at key arrival points, to support authorities with the provision of information on international protection. Activities are conducted in cooperation with IOM, which provides information to migrants. Up to October, **3,415 persons have lost their lives or gone missing** in the Mediterranean Sea whilst trying to reach European shores, compared to 3,500 during the whole of 2014. Search and rescue operations continue to take place under the overall coordination of the Italian Coast Guard. UNHCR and OHCHR jointly facilitate pre-deployment trainings on human rights and international protection, for search and rescue personnel operating under the EUNAVFOR MED operation. In October, around 20 staff participated in the trainings.

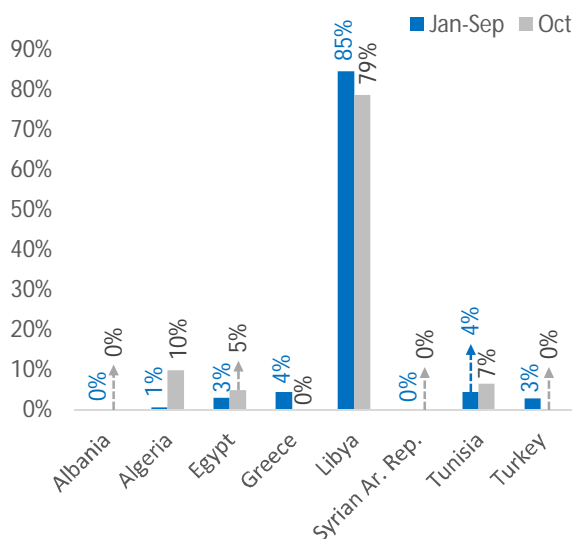
Figure 2. Top nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan-Sep compared to Oct 2015



During 2015 **persons originating from over 65 different countries arrived in Italy**. The trend of decreasing numbers of Syrian sea arrivals continued into October. Overall an 80% **reduction of Syrian arrivals in 2015** has been observed compared to the same period in 2014. The introduction of visa requirements for Syrians by some North African countries in early 2015, as well as the deteriorating security in Libya, might have contributed to use the Eastern Mediterranean Route to reach Europe. Another noticeable trend is the increase of arrivals of Nigerian nationals since July 2015. On the other hand, sea arrivals from Sudan dropped in October after a peak of arrivals in July. Bangladeshi arrivals saw a sharp peak in July when they constituted up to 10% of the total sea arrivals, but have dropped to almost zero arrivals in October. Whilst numbers remain small, an increase in Moroccans was noticed in October as well.

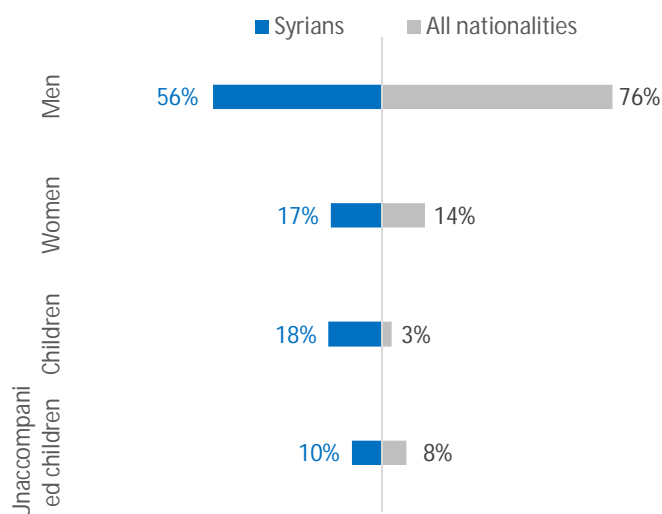
SEA ARRIVALS TO ITALY

Figure 3. Countries of departure of sea arrivals | Jan-Sep compared to Oct 2015



The large majority of sea arrivals continue to leave from Libya with main departure points from the Tripoli area, including Zuwara, Garabulli, and Subratha. **Abuse and ill treatment during transit in Libya** continue to be reported, committed by smugglers, security forces and armed groups. The limited safe and legal pathways for refugees to reach Europe, drives population movements underground, leading to risks of new human rights violations and abuses during the journey. **Arrivals departing from Libya reduced during October.** This may be related to the current security situation and tightening of border controls in Zuwara, which serves as one of the main departure points in Libya. At the same time, **October observed an increase in arrivals departing from Algeria.** Whilst the number of persons was limited, the number of boats departing from Algeria doubled to 13 compared to only 7 in September. In view of the changing dynamics along the Western Balkan route, UNHCR is monitoring possible trends of sea arrivals to Italy from Albania, Greece and Turkey. In October no arrivals were observed to have taken these routes.

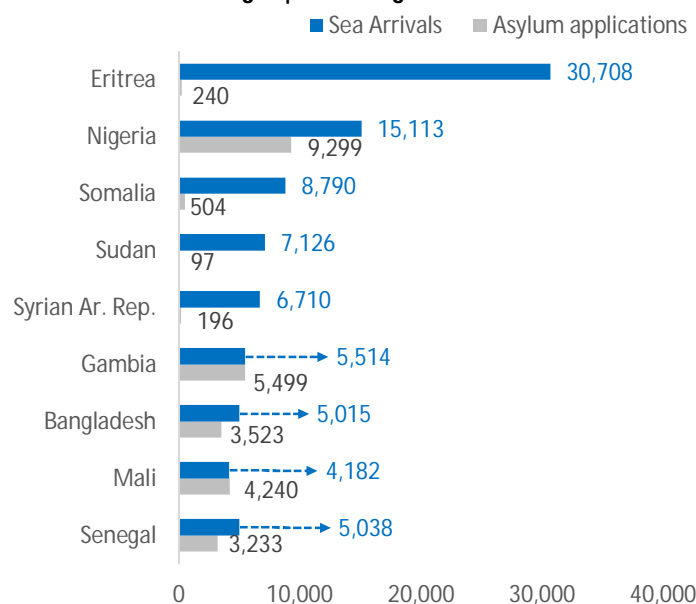
Figure 4. Demographic profile of Syrians compared to all nationalities of sea arrivals | Jan – Oct 2015



More than two third of all persons arriving by sea are male adults. However, the demographic profile of Syrian sea arrivals differs significantly and more regularly include large families with young children and elderly family members. During post disembarkation processes, ten UNHCR staff support authorities with the identification of persons with specific needs, particularly persons with medical conditions, pregnant women and Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC). UNHCR continues to strengthen capacity to identify other persons with specific needs, such as persons suffering from trauma, victims of torture or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). The number of women and UASC has risen slightly in October. **In October 770 UASC arrived, amounting to 9% of the arrivals,** with the majority originating from Egypt (191), Gambia (108), Eritrea (88) and Nigeria (84). Approximately 90% of UASC are male and/or 15 years or older. Despite the high degree of protection offered in Italian legislation, reportedly large groups of **Eritrean, Syrian and Somali UASC continue to consider Italy as a transit country** with the intention to travel onwards to other European countries. Five UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support information provision for UASC at arrival points and in reception structures.

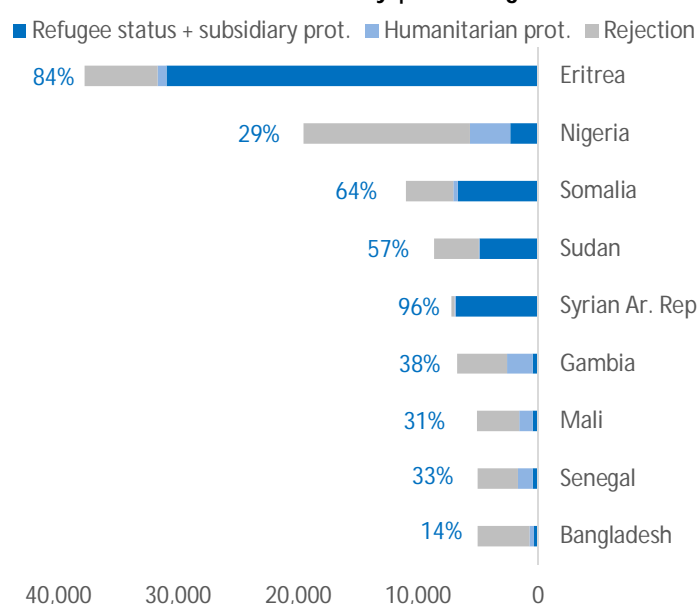
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN ITALY

Figure 5. Asylum applications in comparison to sea arrivals - Main countries of origin | Jan – Aug 2015*



*Asylum application figures also include asylum seekers who do not arrive by sea. Furthermore, applications are usually recorded at different periods after arrival, varying from a few weeks to over a month. Therefore, the chart merely provides an indicative comparison.

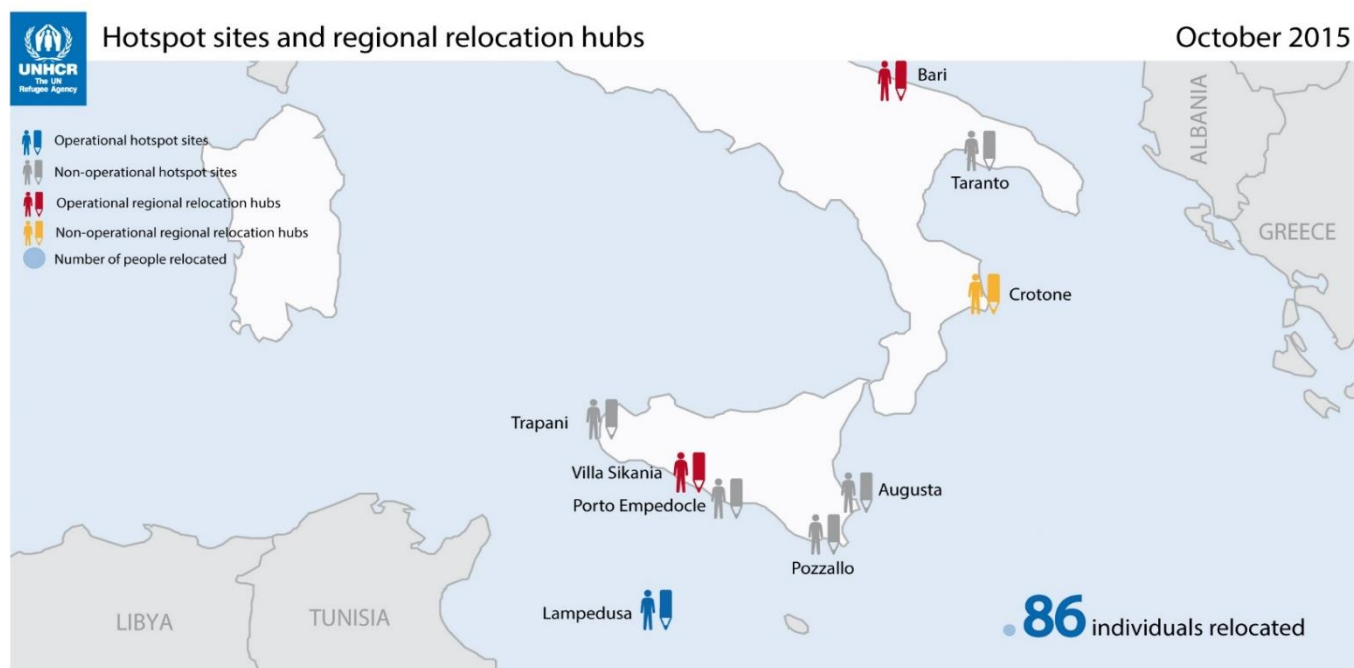
Figure 6. Average first instance recognition rate in EU - Main countries of sea arrivals to Italy | Jan – Aug 2015*



*Percentages reflect the total number of persons granted refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection in the [EU in the second quarter of 2015](#).

From January to August 2015, Italy received 47,500 asylum applications. The main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Italy are Nigeria (20%), Gambia (12%), Pakistan (12%), Senegal (9%), Mali (9%) and Bangladesh (7%) – thus differing largely from the main countries of origin of sea arrivals (see figure 5). As a result, UNHCR is not able to fully inform all sea arrivals who may have the intention to apply for asylum. Certain nationalities for which high numbers of sea arrivals are observed, rarely apply for international protection in Italy. Particularly Eritreans, Somalis, Sudanese and Syrians usually travel to other European countries to lodge their applications, where they may have relatives/community members and expectations of better integration prospects. Despite the trend of onwards travel of certain nationalities, **asylum applications increased around 35% during the first eight months of 2015, compared to 2014.** The number of asylum applications by persons from Pakistan and Bangladesh went up during August, a trend which started in July generating the highest peak in applications for the second month in a row. On the other hand, the number of applicants from Ukraine decreased. On average of the sea arrivals in Italy, **59% would be entitled to refugee status, subsidiary and humanitarian protection in the EU,** highlighting the mixed migratory nature of sea arrivals into Italy (see figure 6). UNHCR participates in first instance refugee status determination procedures, which are conducted by the decentralized Territorial Eligibility Commissions. Direct participation of more than 40 staff allows UNHCR to continue to monitor the asylum-procedure and to contribute to ensuring reasonable protection levels and pursue efforts to improve procedural standards.

HOTSPOTS AND RELOCATION



On 9 October, a first group of asylum-seekers was relocated from Italy under the EU relocation scheme. The departure of the group officially started the relocation scheme, which foresees the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece over the course of the next two years. **During October, 86 Eritrean and Syrian asylum seekers were relocated to Sweden, Germany and Finland.** Implementation of the relocation scheme is supported through the “hotspot approach”, whereby Italian authorities channel arrivals through selected disembarkation ports where health screening, identification, registration and fingerprinting are carried out. The hotspot in Lampedusa is currently fully operational, with Villa Sikania and Bari serving as regional relocation hubs. In the hotspots, Frontex, EASO and Europol and Eurojust are providing operational support. As foreseen in the Roadmap developed by the Italian Ministry of Interior, UNHCR supports information provision and targeted individual counselling in the hotspots procedure and relocation on Lampedusa and in the regional relocation hubs, in close cooperation with EASO. Whilst Lampedusa remains the only operational hotspot, identification of asylum seekers to take part in the EU relocation scheme is undertaken in reception facilities nationwide.

Protection concerns related to the hotspot approach

UNHCR observed some initial concerns related to the roll-out of the hotspot approach, particularly with regards to the increased limitations to the systematic provision of information to some new arrivals by UNHCR and obstacles in access to the procedure, primarily related to screening procedures. Moreover, the legal procedures for persons from refugee producing countries who do not apply for protection in Italy, still needs to be clarified. More recently the Italian NGO discussion forum “Tavolo Nazionale Asilo” also expressed some serious concerns related to the hotspot approach. UNHCR continues to engage with Italian authorities to address these issues as well as to advocate for strengthened coordination and the development standard operating procedures in hotspots, particularly regarding information provision.

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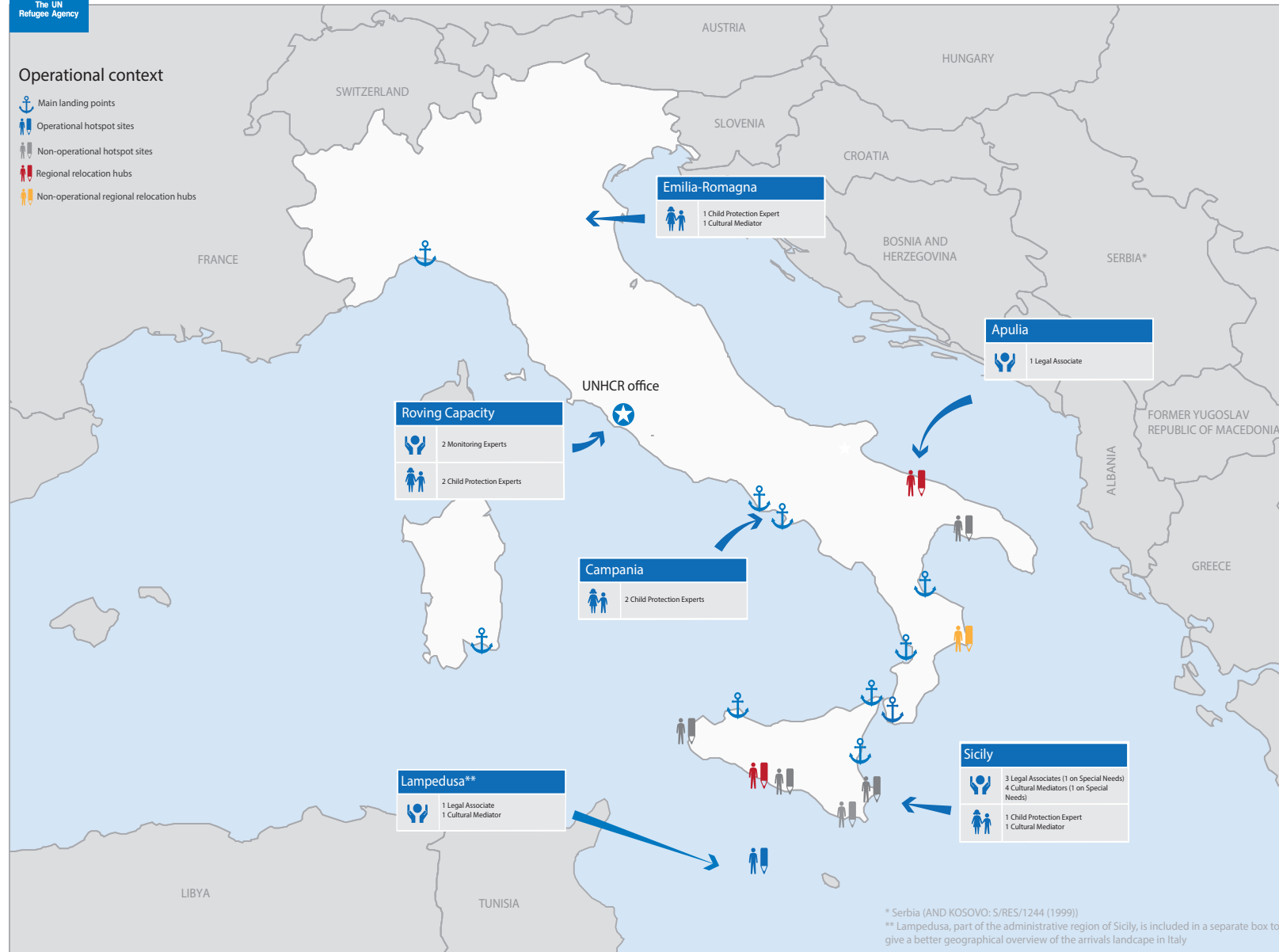
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Links: [Regional web portal](#) [UNHCR Italy webpage](#) [Twitter: @UNHCRItalia](#) [Facebook UNHCRItalia](#)

Sources: UNHCR, Ministry of Interior, Eurostat - **unless indicated otherwise, figures included reflect the period up to 31 October.**

Operational context

- Main landing points
- Operational hotspot sites
- Non-operational hotspot sites
- Regional relocation hubs
- Non-operational regional relocation hubs



UNHCR response to sea arrivals

UNHCR advises key governmental counterparts on policy formulations and legislative developments, through its participation in the National Coordination Group. UNHCR participates in first instance refugee status determination procedures, which are conducted by the the decentralised Territorial Eligibility Commissions. Direct participation of more than 40 staff allows UNHCR to continue to monitor the asylum-procedure and to contribute to ensuring reasonable protection levels and pursue efforts to improve procedural standards. Additionally, UNHCR provides technical support to the authorities in ensuring the quality, fairness and efficiency of the procedure.

Access to Territory

UNHCR has ten staff positioned at key arrival points to support authorities with the provision of information on international protection and to identify persons with specific needs and refer them to specialised services. This is conducted in partnership with IOM. UNHCR also monitors conditions in first and second line reception facilities.

Relocation

UNHCR carries out information activities in hotspot sites and regional relocation hubs as well as in reception facilities and informal transit sites nationwide. UNHCR operates in close cooperation with EU Agencies, under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Interior.

Child Protection

Six UNHCR child protection experts work with authorities to promote good practices on Best Interest Assessment and Determination and support legal information services for UASC in first reception structures.

18 landings assisted in October 2015

5,649 sea arrivals benefitted from information session on international protection and asylum in October 2015

27 sea arrivals with specific needs referred to specialised services in October 2015

821 information session on relocations supported in October 2015

60 monitoring visits to reception facilities conducted in October 2015

1,600 unaccompanied and separated children impacted by technical support of UNHCR child protection experts by October 2015