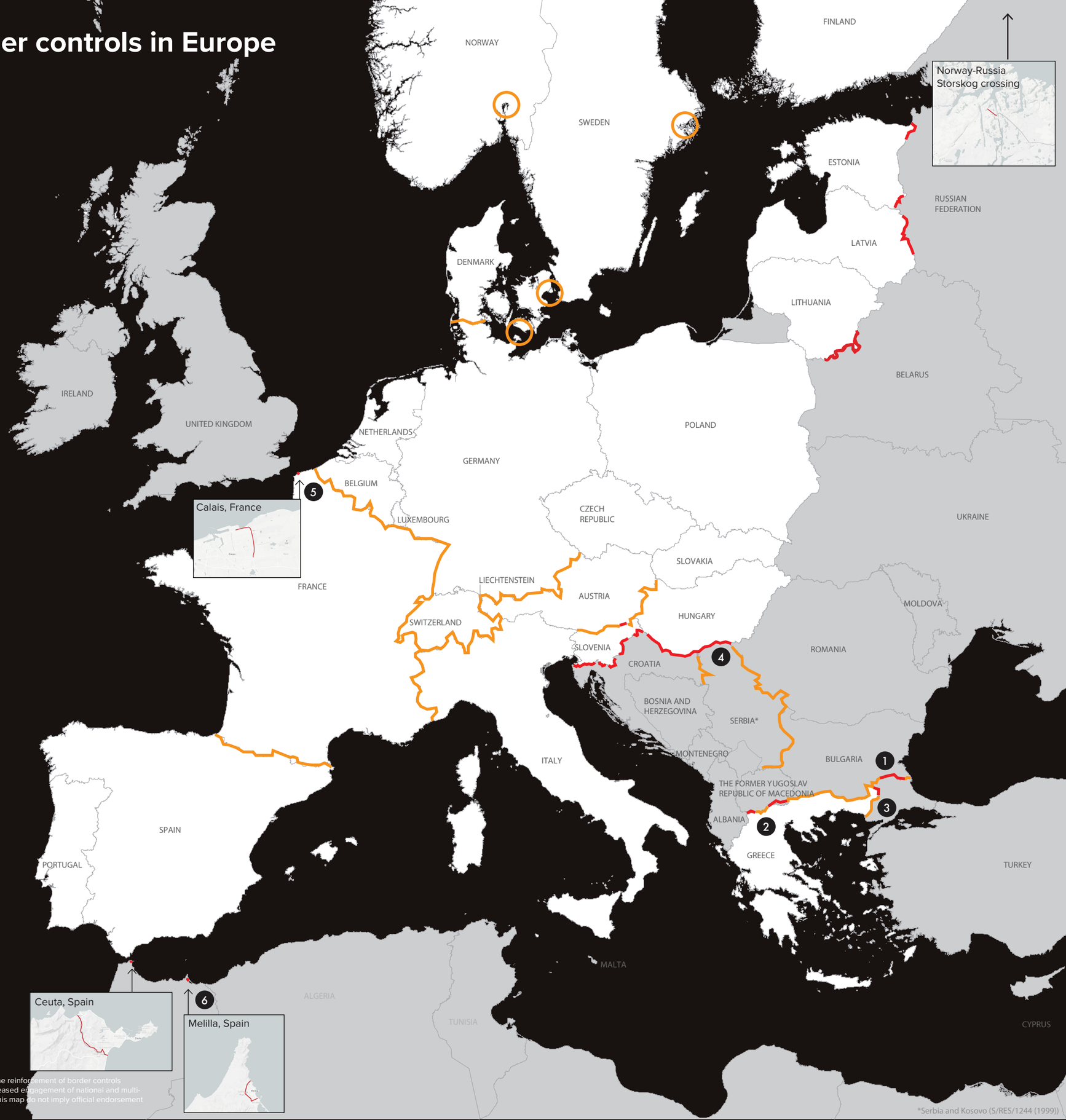
Border fences and internal border controls in Europe

March 2017

In response to concerns regarding increased numbers of refugees and migrants arriving at their borders, several European States, including European Union (EU) Member States, have constructed fences along their borders and increased border controls, including internal border controls within the Schengen area*. While States have the right to determine who enters their territory, they also have obligations under international, regional and national law to ensure that persons have the opportunity to seek asylum and are not turned away without an individual assessment of their claim by designated authorities. In many places, fences and barriers may result in denying access to protection to people fleeing conflict or human rights violations. As a result of such restrictions, people seeking international protection increasingly rely on smugglers or use more dangerous routes thus putting their safety even more at risk. UNHCR has long advocated with national and regional authorities for protection-sensitive border policies and practices, including support to protection-sensitive legislation and procedures as well as training efforts, to help authorities identify, provide information to, and refer to adequate protection procedures those apprehended at borders who may be in need of international protection as well as those with specific needs (such as unaccompanied or separated children).

*For some, border fences and controls serve other purposes as well as those related to immigration control.



SCHENGEN AREA

BORDER FENCE

TEMPORARY BORDER CONTROL

PHOTO CREDIT: 1.©UNHCR/SHUBHASH WOSTEY 2.©UNHCR 3.©UNHCR/ACHILLES ZAVALLIS 4.©UNHCR/MARK HENLEY 5.©UNHCR/JOEL VAN HOUDT 6.©JOSE PALAZÓN OSMA

This map does not depict efforts by the EU and non-EU Member States to prevent irregular departures including from neighbouring states or the reinforcement of border controls through the deployment of additional personnel to EU external borders (including national, bilateral or Frontex deployments as well as the increased engagement of national and multi-lateral army resources including NATO and EUNAVFOR Med deployments). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Fence depictions are for information purposes only and may not correspond to actual locations.

*Serbia and Kosovo (S/RES/1244 (1999))