

Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe

Overview of Trends
January-June 2018



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arrived in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain between January and June 2018, of whom more than **4,600 (45%)** were unaccompanied or separated (UASC).



arrived in Europe in the first half of 2018. Most children arriving to Italy and Spain were unaccompanied or separated – **86%** and **65%** respectively. The majority of UASC were between 15 and 17 years old.



sought international protection in just three European countries: **Germany, France and Greece.**



for resettlement by children (**29% boys and 24% girls**) were made in Europe between January and June 2018.

Arrivals to Europe between January and June 2018¹

Between January and June 2018, **10,404** children arrived in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain of whom **4,684 (45%)** were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC).² Arrival of children overall in the first half of 2018 dropped by 37% compared to the same period in 2017 (**16,524**).

Greece

Between January and June 2018, **5,001³** children arrived to Greece by sea, including **636 (13%)** UASC. Although the overall arrival of children to Europe decreased by 37% in the first half of 2018, children arriving to Greece increased by more than two-thirds as compared to the first half of 2017 (3,020). Arrival of UASC among those children also increased by 57% compared to the first half of 2017 (409).

The majority of children, including UASC, arriving to Greece by sea were from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁴

Italy⁵

Among the **3,096** children who arrived to Italy between January and June 2018, **2,593 (84%)** were unaccompanied or separated. This is a 75% decrease compared to children arriving in the first half of 2017 (12,239). The number of UASC arriving in the first half of 2018 also decreased by 77% compared to the first half of 2017 (11,406). This decrease is mainly due to the continuous drop in the number of people crossing the Central Mediterranean since July 2017. Most children originated from Eritrea, Tunisia, Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire.

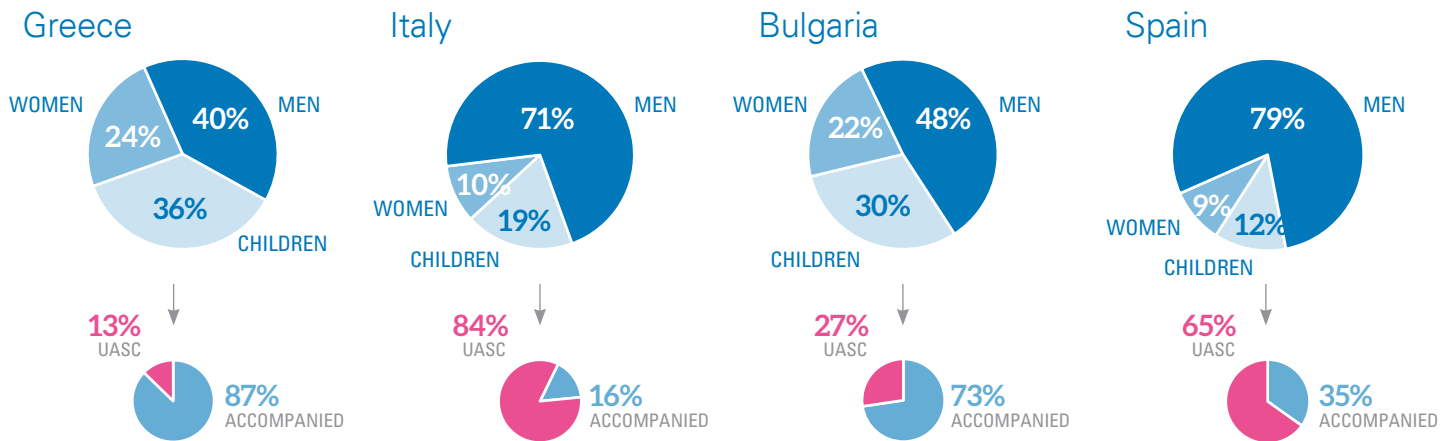
Bulgaria

Between January and June 2018, **128** children were intercepted at border crossing points and within the territory of the country, a 53% decrease compared to the same period in 2017 (270). Among those, 27% were unaccompanied or separated children (**35**) which presents a 65% decrease compared to the first half of 2017 (101). Most children, both accompanied and unaccompanied, were from Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan.

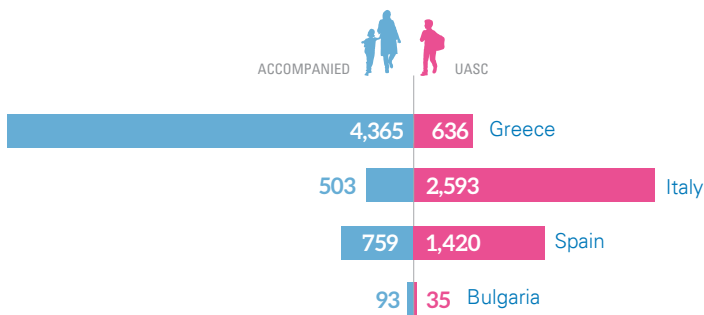
Spain

Between January and June 2018, **2,179** children arrived by land and sea. Among those, **1,420 (65%)** were unaccompanied or separated. This is 120% increase compared to children arrived in the first half of 2017 (995). Based on UNHCR estimate figures, most children, including UASC, came from Guinea, Mali, Morocco and Côte d'Ivoire.

Demographic of Arrivals, Including Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children



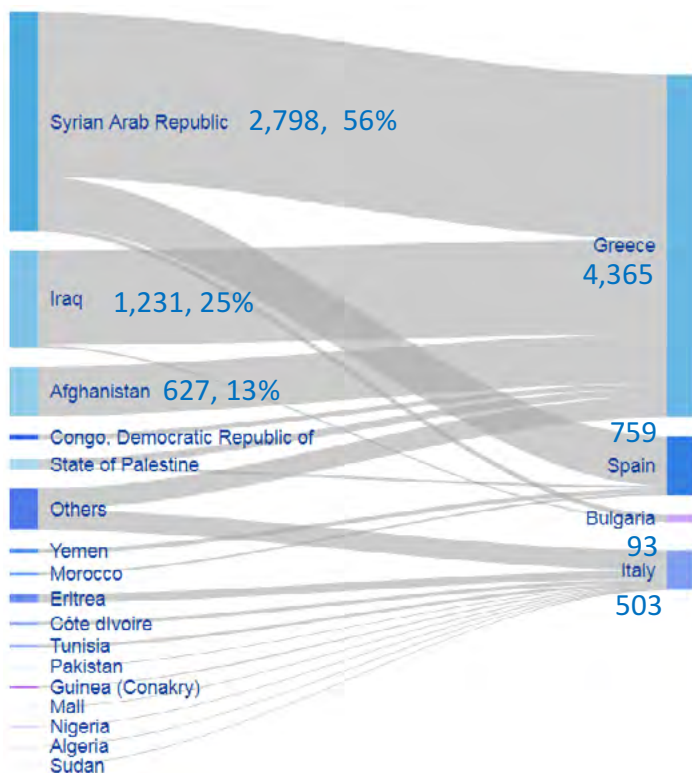
Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival



Source: Hellenic Police, EKKA, Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria State Agency for Refugees, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Spanish Ministry of Interior.

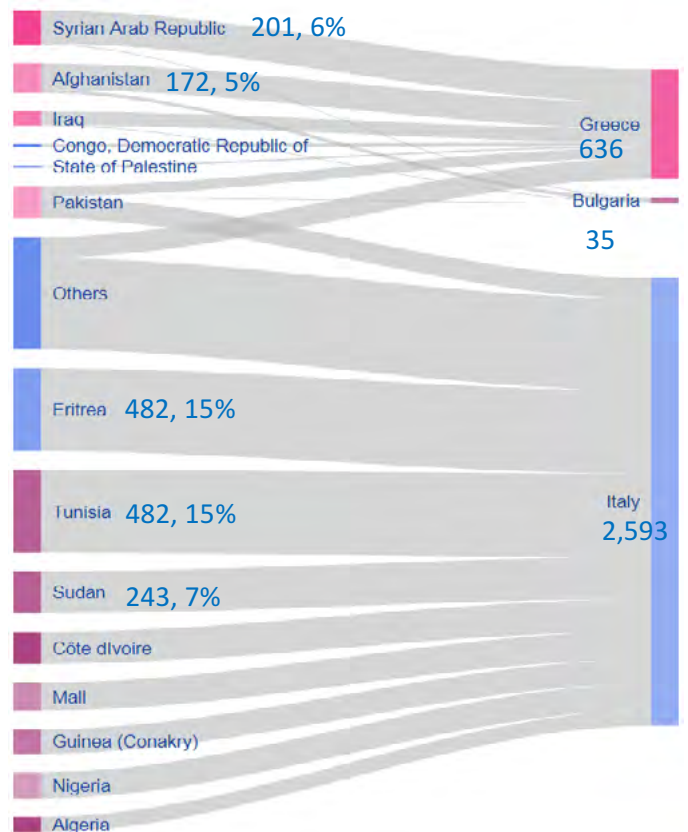
Nationality of Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

Accompanied Children by Country of Origin and Arrival



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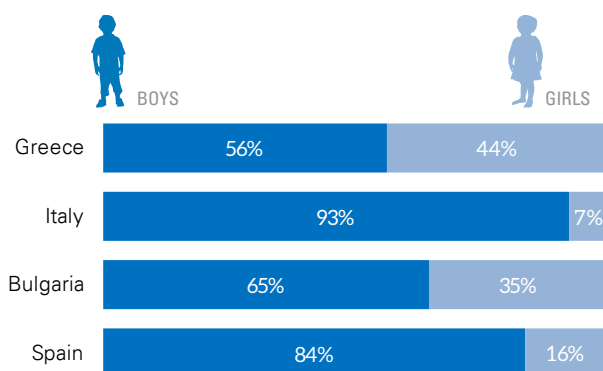
UASC by Country of Origin and Arrival



Note: For Spain, data on nationality breakdown for UASC is not provided by the Spanish Ministry of Interior.

Gender Breakdown of all Children by Country of Arrival

Overall, the proportion of boys compared to girls among arrivals remains higher. Two-thirds of children who arrived during the reporting period were boys, although the proportion of boys arriving in Italy and Spain was significantly higher than in Greece and Bulgaria.

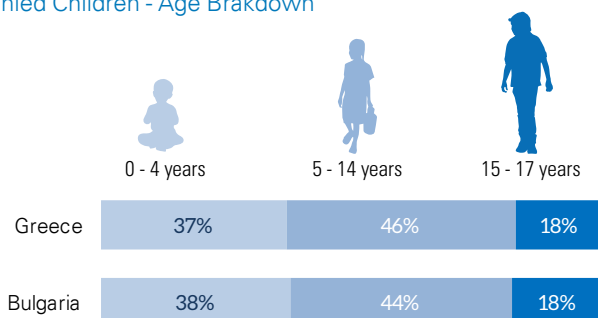


Source: [Hellenic Police, EKKA, Italian Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labour, Spanish Ministry of Interior and Social Policy, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees](#)

Age Breakdown of Children by Country of Arrival

Among the **4,458** accompanied children who arrived to Greece and Bulgaria, 37% were 0 to 4 years old, 46% were 5 to 14 years old and 18% were 15 to 17 years old. An age breakdown for accompanied children in Italy and Spain is not available.

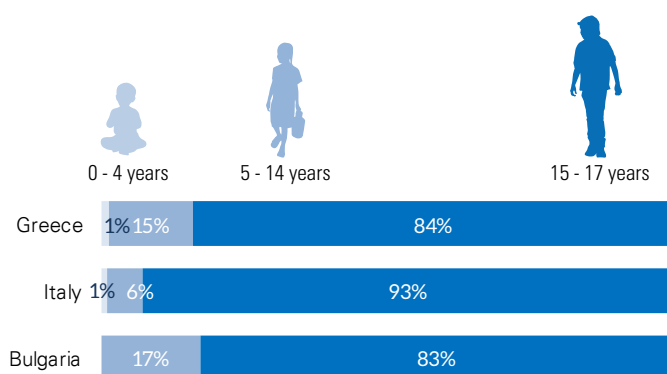
Accompanied Children - Age Breakdown



Source: [Hellenic Police, EKKA, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees](#)

The majority of UASC who arrived in Greece, Italy⁶, Bulgaria and Spain⁷ between January and June 2018 were boys between 15 and 17 years old (93% overall).

Unaccompanied and Separated Children - Age Breakdown



Reception on Arrival in 2018

Greece⁸

- An estimated 23,500 children were present in Greece as of 30 June 2018, up from 21,000 in December 2017. Of them, 49% are in urban areas (ESTIA⁹ Accommodation Scheme, hotels, etc.); 29% are in accommodation sites (camps); and 4% are in shelters, 2% in hotels¹⁰ and 1% in safe zones¹¹ for UASC. Further 15% are in Reception and Identification Centres.
- 1,135 UASC were in shelters and hotels for UASC, as well as supported independent living apartments (up from 1,101 in December 2017). Nevertheless, 2,672 UASC children remained on the waiting list for shelter (up from 2,290 in December 2017).
- A total of 349 UASC remained in Reception and Identification Centres and 149 were in protective custody/detention (three times more compared to December 2017).

Italy

- A total of 13,151 UASC (93% boys and 7% girls) were present in shelters for UASC, run by State authorities and non-profit entities at the end of June 2018. This represents a 26% decrease compared to June 2017 - mainly due to children turning 18 or leaving the system. As of June 2018, close to 4,700 children were considered untraceable.

Bulgaria

- As of June 2018, 288 children, including UASC, were accommodated in reception centres in Sofia and southern Bulgaria, a slight decrease compared to December 2017¹².

Serbia

- A total of 700 children were present in the country in June 2018, a 40% decrease compared to January 2018 and 32% decrease compared to March 2018.
- Children comprise 25% of the total number of refugees and migrants in the country. 93% of whom were accommodated in state reception and accommodation centres, including 69 unaccompanied and separated children.

Spain

- Unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in Spain are accommodated in regionally-managed state reception centres across the country. Yet, most UASC are currently hosted in Andalusia, Melilla, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Madrid (in descending order).

The reception systems still vary greatly in quality across and within countries, sometimes even posing protection risks. There are increasing reports of children who are not in shelters and find themselves destitute on the streets or in informal accommodation.

Sources: [EKKA-Greece, Ministry of Social Affairs- Italy, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, UNHCR, UNICEF](#)

Refugee and Migrant Children's Journey to Europe

Between June 2017 and March 2018, IOM interviewed 409 children (age 7 – 18) in Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. The survey focused on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the children, experiences during the journey, perceptions of danger, health problems (headache, lack of appetite, stomach aches, sleep difficulties), perceptions of conditions at reception centres and reception staff capacity at reception centers. 201 of the interviewed children reported travelling alone and the remaining 205 were travelling in a group (67% with family members and 33% in a group of non-family members). Below are summary findings based on the analysis of different nationality groups.

Journey

Children interviewed from West Africa were more likely to travel alone in comparison to other nationality groups. 82% of children from West Africa were unaccompanied versus 42% of children from South Asia and 4% of children from the Middle East. Moreover, half of the children from West Africa who were interviewed reported that they became separated from the group of family and non-family members they were travelling with during the journey in comparison to only 4% of children from Middle East and Gulf states and 2% of those from South Asia. Boys were much more likely to travel alone compared to girls (90% vs 27%). Separation often occurred due to lack of funds to continue the journey as a group.

Secondary Migration

Approximately 20% of all children surveyed engaged in secondary migration, and spent at least one year in a country other than their country of origin before making their way to Europe. This was reported by 27% of the children from the Middle East, 25% of the children from South Asia, and 13% of the children from West Africa.

Conditions in reception facilities

According to the survey, 67% of 75 children interviewed in **Greece** perceived that the general living conditions in the accommodation facilities were satisfactory (most children interviewed were accommodated in facilities on the mainland). However, 83% reported they did not feel safe. 83% of 128 children surveyed in Italy reported being satisfied with the general conditions in reception centres, and 90% claimed they felt safe. Among 34 children interviewed in **Bulgaria**, 25 reported that their accommodation was not clean nor comfortable, 29 said they did not feel safe in their accommodation. 53% of the 120 children interviewed in **Croatia** reported that the conditions in the reception facilities were not good enough and 54 percent reported that they did not feel safe in the facility where they're staying. Five out of 14 children interviewed in **Slovenia** reported their accommodation was clean and comfortable, however, the majority (9) said they felt safe at the accommodation facility. Across all the countries, although children generally had positive interaction with the staff present, this was often hindered by the lack of interpreters.

Children's well-being

Most of the children interviewed reported being in fear (always or multiple times) during the journey, e.g. when travelling by boat, walking long distances, travelling by car as part of the transportation organized by agents/smugglers or while waiting in transit areas to continue the journey. Children traveling from West African countries were more likely to have experienced difficult health conditions – 53% versus 31% of children coming from South Asia and 21% of children from Middle East. Less than a quarter of children in any of these nationality groups had a health screening during the journey (11%, 12% and 23% respectively), which in most cases happened only upon arrival in Europe.

Sources: [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\) Flow Monitoring Surveys Analysis \(FMS\)- Child Specific Module \(2018\)](#)



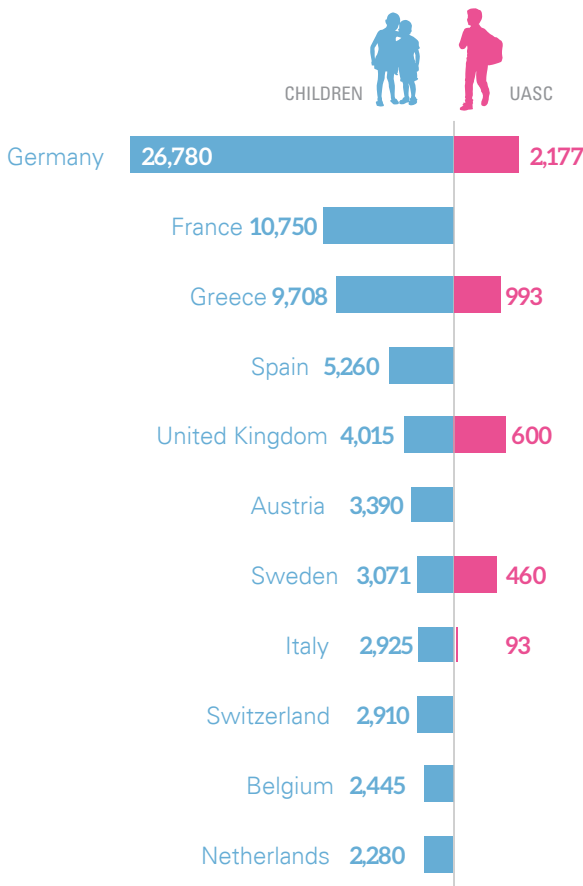
Asylum Applications and Decisions

Between January and June 2018, European countries recorded **77,864** new child asylum applicants, which is a 20% drop compared to the same period last year.

Children make up **28%** of all new asylum seekers across Europe. In 2018, 40% of child asylum seekers continued to come from the Syrian Arab Republic (23%), Iraq (9%) and Afghanistan (8%), with increased numbers from Eritrea (5%) and Venezuela (3%). A total of 44% of all child asylum seekers are girls.

Similar to previous years, Germany remains the top destination for asylum-seeking children, receiving half of all child asylum applications in 2018 (**38,454** children of whom **2,423** UASC). France, Greece, Spain and the United Kingdom also recorded large numbers of child asylum claims (10,750; 9,708; 5,260 and 4,015 respectively). Greece has the highest number of first-time applicants relative to the population.

Asylum Applications Lodged by Children, including Unaccompanied and Separated Children, between January and June 2018 – by Country of Asylum



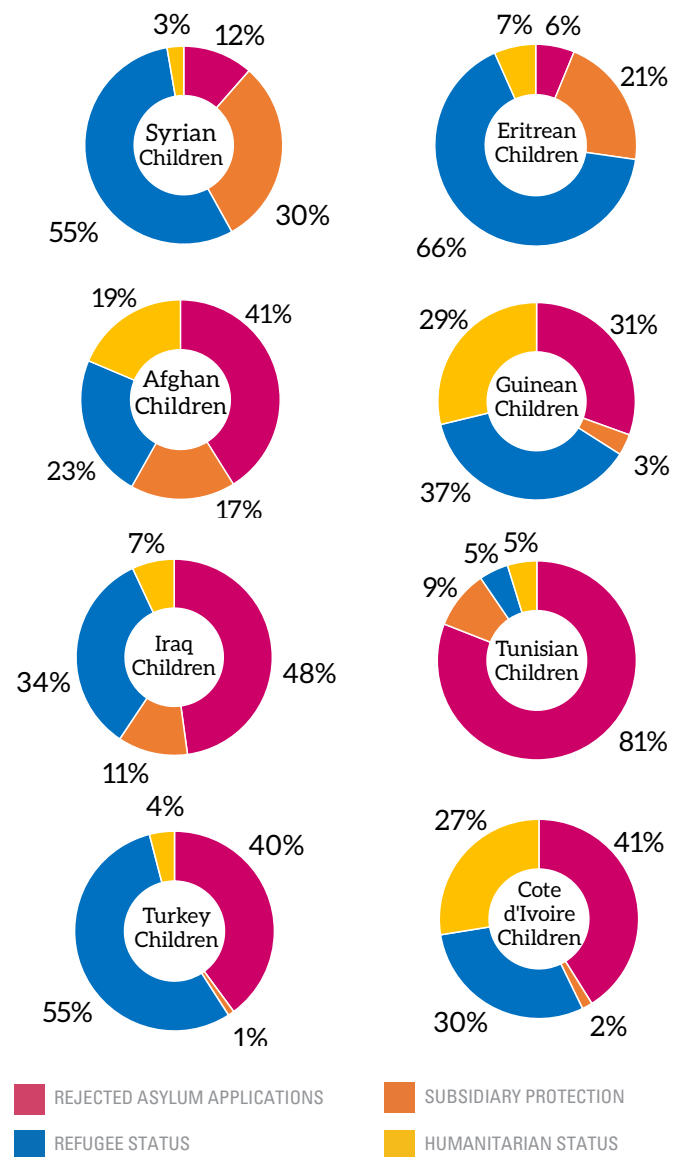
In January-June 2018, a total of **94,975** decisions on asylum claims by children were issued by national authorities. Yet, due to accumulated backlog in national asylum systems, a total of 224,600 asylum applications by children were still registered as pending in June 2018.

Of all decisions taken in 2018, **55%** were positive and **45%** negative. There is a steady decrease in the proportion of positive decisions compared to 2017 and 2016, when respectively 62% and 67% of children received position asylum decisions. Among children with positive decisions during the reporting period, **57%** received refugee status (up from 50% in 2017 and 53% in 2016), **23%** were granted subsidiary protection (down from 33% in 2017) and **20%** received humanitarian status (up from 18% in 2017).

Contrary to 2017, when there was a clear increase in the granting of subsidiary protection rather than refugee status, in 2018 a smaller proportion of children received this type of international protection. This is particularly visible among Syrian children, for whom refugee status decisions increased from 49% in 2017 to 55% in 2018, while subsidiary protection decisions dropped from 46% to 30%.

Nonetheless, many children saw their asylum claims rejected, including those from Iraq (48%) followed by Afghanistan and Cote d'Ivoire (41% each) and Turkey (40%).¹³

Decisions on Child Asylum Applications between January and June 2018



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Source: Eurostat, Date: 13 September 2018

Relocation

Between October 2015 and June 2018, a total of **34,694** persons benefited from the EU relocation scheme, which ended officially in September 2017, however, the transfer of those registered for the programme continued until April 2018. The above figure includes **11,094** children, out of whom **585** UASC (391 from Greece and 194 from Italy).

More than half the children relocated from **Greece** were transferred to **Germany** (24%), **France** (20%) and the **Netherlands** (8%). Another 25% were relocated to Sweden (7%), Finland (7%), Spain (6%) and Portugal (5%).

One third of all children relocated from **Italy** departed to **Germany** (33%). 18% of children were transferred to the **Netherlands**, 11% to **Sweden** and 10% to **Switzerland**.

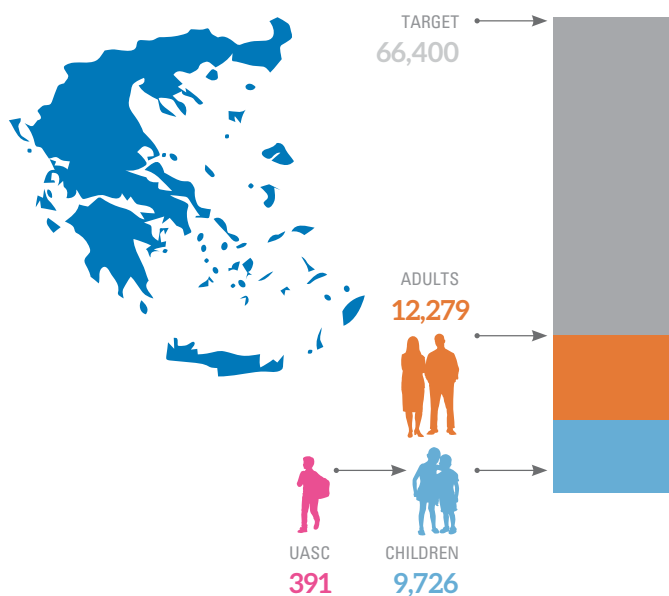
Almost a quarter of all relocated UASC since the programme started in 2015 were transferred in the first half of 2018. Between January and April 2018, 120 UASC were relocated from Italy (97) and Greece (23). This is slightly higher than the 109 transfers that took place in the first half of 2017. There was a difference in the dynamics between the two countries – at the end of the second quarter of 2017 almost all (103) UASC were relocated from Greece and only 6 UASC were transferred from Italy.

In addition to the EU Emergency Relocation scheme, a total of **14** unaccompanied children were transferred from France (7), Greece (6) and Italy (1) to the UK through a UK Government supported program.¹⁴

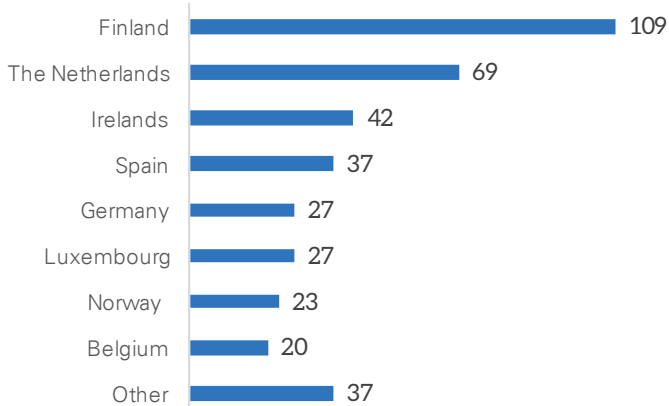
Greece

By the end of April 2018, a total of **22,005**¹⁵ people were relocated from Greece to other EU Member states (including 296 who were relocated between January and April 2018). Among those, 44% were children - **9,726** in total, including **391** UASC.

More than a quarter (109) of UASC were transferred to Finland, 69 to the Netherlands, 42 to Ireland, 37 to Spain, 27 to Germany, 27 to Luxembourg, 23 to Norway, 20 to Belgium, 15 to Switzerland, 9 to Portugal, 5 to France, 4 to Romania, 2 to Croatia, 1 to Lithuania and 1 to Malta. In terms of relocations of UASC during the reporting period, 23 were transferred in 2018.¹⁶

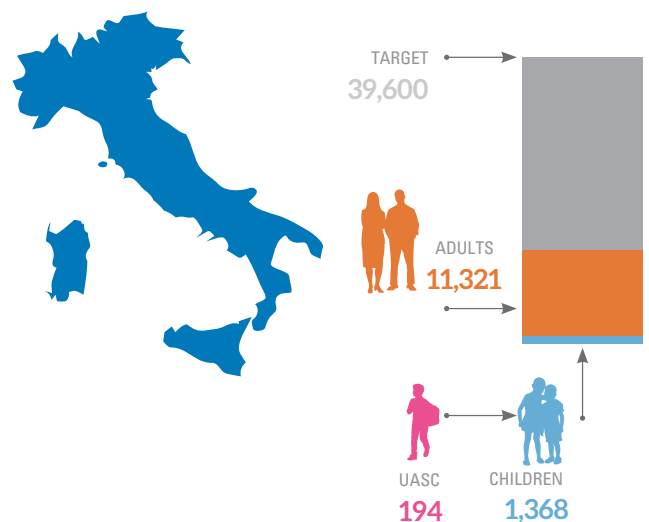


UASC Relocated from Greece to other EU Member States

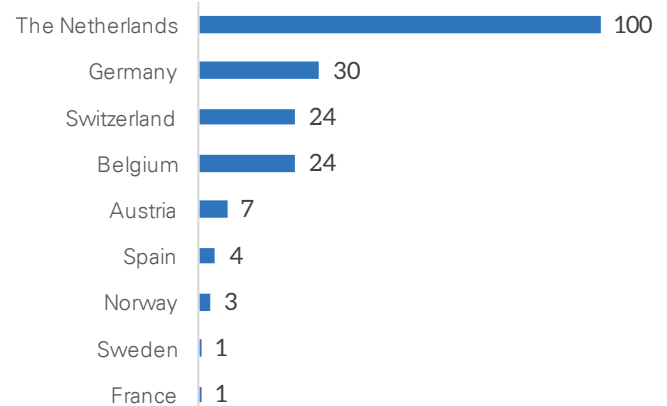


Italy

By the end of April 2018, a total of **12,707** refugee and migrant were relocated from Italy to other EU Member States. Among those, 11% (**1,368**) were children, of whom **194** were UASC. Among all the UASC relocated so far, 97 were relocated between January and April 2018. More than a half of UASC were transferred to the Netherlands (100), 30 to Germany, 24 to Belgium, 24 to Switzerland, 7 to Austria, 4 to Spain, 3 to Norway, 1 to France and 1 to Sweden.



UASC Relocated from Italy to other EU Member States



Returns from Greece to Turkey

Of the total returnees (1,650) from Greece to Turkey under the EU - Turkey statement since the start of 2016 until the end of June 2018, 79 (5%) were children. All of them were returned with their families.

Source: *Returns from Greece to Turkey*

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) for Children and UASC¹⁷

Between January and June 2018, IOM provided AVRR support to more than **28,000** migrants (25% less than 38,019 supported during the same period in 2017). **21%** of migrants availing AVRR support were children, **4%** of whom were UASC.

61% of the AVRR beneficiaries returned from the European Economic Area and Switzerland (half of them from Germany). Children accounted for 23% of the beneficiaries returning from the European Economic Area and Switzerland, among them 2% were UASC.

Family Reunification

In the first six months of 2018, IOM assisted **4,882** refugees and migrants with family reunification in the European Economic Area (EEA).

The people assisted were primarily nationals of Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia, Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire who re-united with their family members residing in EEA. The majority of cases were processed in Italy (30%), the United Kingdom (22%), North European countries (Finland, Iceland and Sweden comprised 29% of the total) and 13 different countries in the EEA.

Children Resettled to Europe

Of the total number of resettlement submissions to Europe in 2018 (**22,998**), **50%** were children (27% boys and 23% girls). Most children in Europe were resettled to the United Kingdom, France, Sweden, Germany and Netherland. During the year, **16,526** resettled refugees departed to European countries.¹⁸

Sources: *Hellenic Police, Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Spanish Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, BAMF-Germany, IOM, UNHCR resettlement portal and UNICEF*

Definitions:

A **"separated child"** is a child separated from both parents or from his/her previous legal or customary primary care-giver,

but not necessarily from other relatives. This may, therefore, mean that the child is accompanied by other adult family members.

An **"unaccompanied child"** is a child separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by any other adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. [\[Source\]](#)

A **"refugee"** is a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (Article 1 A 1951 Refugee Convention).

An **"asylum seeker"** is a person who is someone who has applied for asylum and is waiting for a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee.

Determination of refugee status can only be of a declaratory nature. Indeed, any person is a refugee within the framework of a given instrument if he meets the criteria of the refugee definition in that instrument, whether he is formally recognized as a refugee or not (UNHCR Note on Determination of Refugee Status under International Instruments) [\[Source\]](#)

A **"migrant"** refers to any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is. [\[Source\]](#)



Limitations

There is no comprehensive data on arrivals (both adults and children) in Europe, especially by land and air, as such movements are largely irregular and involve smuggling networks, which are difficult to track. Where collected, data is rarely disaggregated by nationalities, risk category, gender or age.

Reliable data on the number of UASC either arriving to, or currently residing in, different European countries is often unavailable. The number of asylum applications filed by UASC is used to provide an

indication of trends but does not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the caseload due to backlogs in national asylum systems, onward irregular movements or not applying for asylum at all. In addition, due to different definitions and national procedures and practices, collecting accurate data on separated children specifically is very challenging (e.g. separated children being registered as either accompanied or unaccompanied).

Endnotes

- 1 Data on arrivals is partial due to the large scale of irregular movements and reflects only sea arrivals for Greece and Italy. It does not reflect recent sharp increase of land arrivals in Greece. Data for Spain includes both sea and land arrivals and is based on UNHCR estimates, pending provision of final figures by Spanish MOI. Figures for UASC are only available for arrivals by sea (not for Ceuta or Melilla).
- 2 Separated children are children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. Unaccompanied children are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. (IASC)
- 3 Arrival figures for Greece are collected in the framework of UNHCR border activities and are provided by Hellenic Police.
- 4 During the same period of time, a total of 3,242 referrals were made to the Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) based on children identified on islands and mainland Greece, including near the land border with Turkey in January-June 2018.
- 5 Data on arrivals in Italy is provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior. The information on nationality breakdown provided in this report is based on the nationality declared by migrants as reported by the Italian Ministry of Interior.
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 For Spain, this is based on UNHCR estimates, pending provision of final figures by Spanish MOI.
- 8 Accommodation sites refer to open temporary reception facilities operate on the Greek mainland to provide collective temporary housing to asylum seekers, refugees or persons who are exempted from the return procedure/ or whose removal has been postponed. Most are camp-like facilities with housing units (containers), while some are in buildings.
- 9 Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation System in Greece.
- 10 Hotels for UASC are emergency accommodation spaces being used as a measure to care for UASC in light of the insufficient number of available shelter places. Priority is given to UASC in Reception and Identification Centers.
- 11 Safe Zones are designated supervised spaces within accommodation sites which provide UASC with 24/7 emergency protection and care. They should be used as short term (maximum 3 months) measures to care for UASC in light of the insufficient number of available shelter places. Safe Zone priority is given to UASC in detention as well as other vulnerable children, in line with their best interests.
- 12 The disaggregated data by the type of children (UASC/AC) and accommodation is not available.
- 13 Decisions on child asylum claims do not directly correlate to the data on new arrivals presented in this report; the number of decisions made include those for child asylum applications lodged prior to 2018, and will include children who arrived by land and air who are not included in the new arrival figures in this report. Furthermore, newly arrived children and families may claim asylum months after arrival, and some may not apply for asylum at all.
- 14 The UK Government committed to transferring approximately 300 vulnerable unaccompanied and separated children from France, Greece and Italy to the UK between 1 October 2017 and 31 March 2019. IOM is responsible for providing health assessments, pre-departure orientation and movement management.
- 15 This number reflects all relocations since the launch of the EU relocation scheme in late 2015.
- 16 For reference, 103 transfers took place between January and June 2017.
- 17 The data provided here is provisional and should therefore be considered as an estimation.
- 18 Figures for submissions and departures only include those that UNHCR assisted.

About the factsheet

This factsheet is jointly produced by UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM with the aim to support evidence-based decision-making and advocacy on issues related to refugee and migrant children.

The document provides an overview of the situation in Europe with regards to refugee and migrant children (accompanied and UASC). It compiles key child-related data based on available official sources: arrival, asylum applications, asylum decisions, profiling of arrivals,

relocation from Greece and Italy under the EU relocation scheme, as well as returns from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement.

The present factsheet covers the period from January to June 2018 and is produced every six months to provide up-to-date information on refugee and migrant children, including unaccompanied and separated children.

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