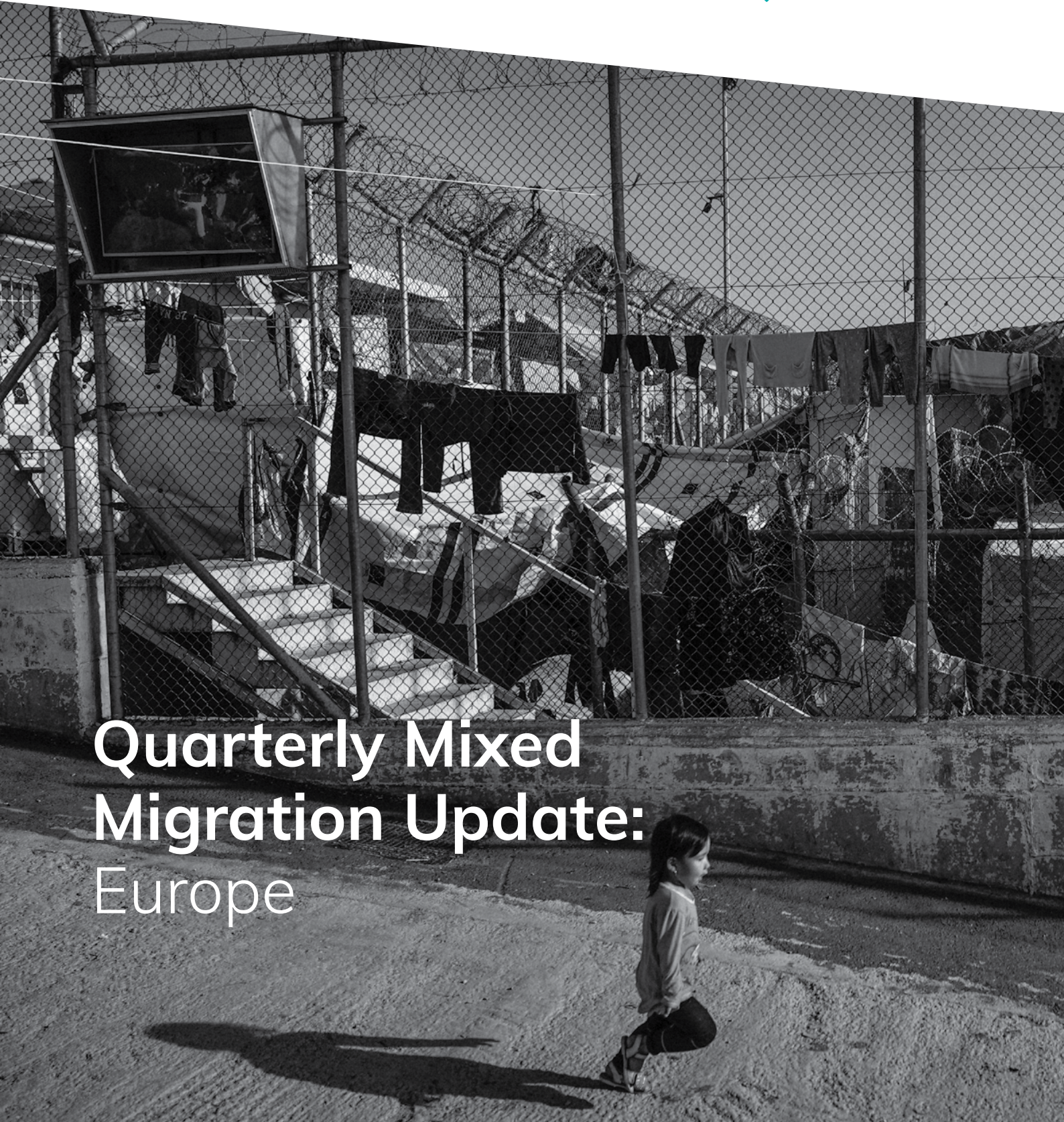


MMC Europe

QUARTER 1 2020



# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

This Quarterly Mixed Migration Update (QMMU) covers Europe. The core countries of focus are Spain, Italy, Greece and countries along the Balkan migration route. Depending on the quarterly trends and migration related updates, more attention may be given to some countries over the rest.

The QMMUs offer a quarterly update on new trends and dynamics related to mixed migration and relevant policy developments. These updates are based on a compilation of a wide range of secondary (data) sources, brought together within a regional framework and applying a mixed migration analytical lens. Similar QMMUs are available for all MMC regions.

The Mixed Migration Centre is a global network consisting of seven regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. For more information on the MMC, the QMMUs from other regions and contact details of regional MMC teams, visit [mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org) and follow us at [@Mixed\\_Migration](https://twitter.com/Mixed_Migration)

### **MMC's understanding of mixed migration**

"Mixed migration" refers to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly, and wholly, or partially, assisted by migrant smugglers.

#### **Front cover photo credit:**

Lesbos, Moria camp. Jan Krarup 2019

#### **SUPPORTED BY:**



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# Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

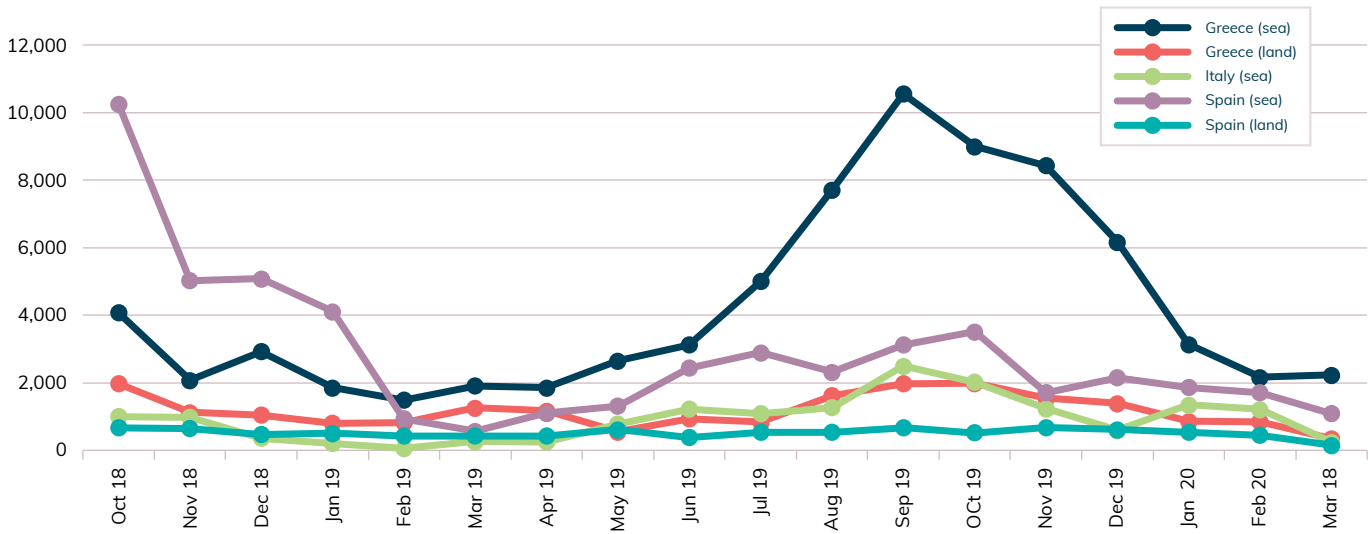
## Quarter 1 - 2020

## Key Updates

- **Decrease in arrivals across routes to Europe:** In the first quarter of 2020, there have been [18,172](#) new irregular arrivals to Italy, Spain and Greece via land and the three Mediterranean Sea routes compared to [41,509](#) in the previous quarter (-23,337 or 56% decrease). See figure 1 and table 1 below.
- **Increase in lodging of asylum applications:** [65,170 asylum applications](#) were lodged in the EU-28 in January 2020 (data for February and March not available). This is an increase of 9% compared to December 2019 and a nearly 20% increase compared to the same period last year. Syrians, Afghans and Colombians lodged the most applications.
- **Refugees and migrants refused entry at Turkey-Greece borders:** On 27 February, the Turkish government announced that it would no longer stop asylum seekers and migrants from leaving Turkish territory. Consequently, the following weeks saw [a dramatic increase](#) in arrivals at the Greek borders. However, from [18 March](#) Greek news reported that the number of migrants and refugees at the border decreased.
- **Humanitarian crisis at Greek islands:** International organisations and the EU [call for reallocation](#) of people from the camps to the mainland due to fear of spread of the Coronavirus.
- **Pushbacks at the Bosnian-Croatian border:** Daily pushbacks by the Croatian border police continue and in February 2020 the Danish Refugee Council reported the highest number of cases since May 2019.
- **Increase in Serbian-Hungarian border crossing attempts:** Reportedly, more than [3,400 people](#) attempted to cross Hungary's southern border in January 2020 compared with several hundred per month in 2019.
- **Agreement on EU naval mission in Central Mediterranean:** On 17 February [a political agreement](#) was reached by the EU Foreign Ministers on a new EU naval mission in the Central Mediterranean. The navy is deployed at least 100km off the eastern Libyan coast where "[chances to conduct rescue operations are lower](#)".

- Ruling of the European Court of Human Rights:** On the 13th of February the controversial case related to the immediate return of two men from Spain to Morocco was concluded. The [judgment](#) ruled in favour of Spain.
- EU’s new Pact of Migration and Asylum:** The Pact was expected Mid-March but has since been postponed. NGO’s call for a Pact focused on a rights-based asylum policy in [a joint NGO statement](#) published by ECRE on the 14th of February.

**Figure 1. Number of arrivals by country**



**Table 1. Mediterranean route arrivals**

	2018 Q4	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1
<a href="#">Greece (sea)</a>	9,075	5,241	7,629	23,271	23,585	7,530
<a href="#">Greece (land)</a>	4,146	2,886	2,648	4,435	4,918	2,051
<a href="#">Italy (sea)</a>	2,346	524	2,255	4,854	3,838	2,794
<a href="#">Spain (sea)</a>	20,351	5,609	4,866	8,328	7,365	4,657
<a href="#">Spain (land)</a>	1,785	1,364	1,424	1,754	1,803	1,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,703</b>	<b>15,624</b>	<b>18,822</b>	<b>42,642</b>	<b>41,509</b>	<b>18,172</b>

## Regional Overview\*



\*Information on the map relates to selected updates and does not represent all mixed migration flows within and out Europe.

# Mixed Migration Regional Updates

## Mixed Migration to Europe along Eastern routes

For more details on the Eastern Mediterranean route, see our [QMMU on Middle East](#)

### Decrease in arrivals by sea and land routes compared to previous quarter

Compared to the last quarter of 2019, there has been a decrease of new arrivals to Greece via sea (-16,055 or 68% decrease) and land (-2,567 or 58% decrease). Such decrease is expected mainly due to winter weather conditions although it's more significant than in the same period last year (via sea -3,834 or 42% decrease, and via land -1,260 or 20% decrease).

**Table 2. Sea and land arrivals to Greece**

	2018 Q4	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1
Greece (sea)	9,075	5,241	7,629	23,271	23,585	7,530
Greece (land)	4,146	2,886	2,648	4,435	4,918	2,051
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,221</b>	<b>8,127</b>	<b>10,277</b>	<b>27,706</b>	<b>28,503</b>	<b>9,581</b>

### Refugees and migrants refused entry at Turkey-Greece borders

On the 27th of February, the Turkish government announced that Turkey would no longer stop asylum seekers and migrants from leaving Turkish territory to reach the European Union. As a result, there was [a dramatic increase](#) in arrivals to the Greek land and sea border in few days' time. Greece's National Security Council therefore announced an [emergency legislative act](#) referring to the sovereign right of Greece to protect its integrity and the exceptionally urgent need to deal with "an asymmetrical threat" against the country's security. Hence, the Greek government temporarily suspended the lodging of asylum claims of all people entering the country through irregular means for one month and their ["immediate deportation without registration, where possible, to their countries of origin or transit"](#). To keep people from entering Greek territory, the police reportedly used extreme measures including for example [firing of teargas at the refugees and migrants](#) and more than [450 people](#) were detained on a naval vessel at the dock of Lesbos. Residents at the Greek islands tried to [block disembarkations](#). Humanitarian organisations in Greece denounced the responses of the Greek government in the [Joint Statement](#) "Protect our Laws and Humanity!" on the 6th of March and called for EU action.

The refusal of entries to Greece and rejection of due processes to determine migrant and refugees' individual protection needs was, however, seemingly carried out with the backing of the [EU](#). Neither the [press statement by the European Commission President Von der Leyen](#) at her visit to Greece on the 3rd of March, nor the extraordinary [Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting](#) on the 4th of March, stated concerns

over the legality of the suspension of asylum claims and the forceful prevention of entries. The meeting on the 4th of March did, however, result in an action plan, which was since discussed and supported at the [JHA council](#) on the 12-13th March. This includes 7 proposed actions, among others support to border management registration, rapid deployment of FRONTEX and stepping up return capacity.

The support to the Greek government and its response to the increase in arrivals at the borders was since modified by [Von der Leyen](#) saying that: "There is the obligation to protect the border, there is EU law, but there is the obligation to guarantee fundamental rights, including the rights to ask for asylum, so this is in the charter and this is what we need as a solution". Also [Commissioner Johansson](#) expressed the importance of providing access to claim asylum. During her visit to Greece on the 12th of March, she focused on two specific initiatives; Firstly, in an attempt to release pressures from the islands, a new [voluntary return scheme](#) offering 2,000 euros to those arrived before January 1st and secondly an emergency reallocation of unaccompanied minors, described in detail below.

In terms of negotiations with Turkey, President Erdogan, President Charles Michel and Von der Leyen met on the [9th of March](#) to discuss Erdogan's demand for extra financial support from the EU. The meeting did not result in any concrete agreements and as Charles Michel said: "[We had the occasion to share our different opinions.](#)" Following, on the [17th of March](#), a teleconference took place between Emmanuel Macron, Boris Johnson, Angela Merkel, and Erdoğan to discuss possibilities for a new refugee deal. Since then, there have been [reports](#) that the numbers of refugees and migrants at the borders decreased immediately and also that Turkish officials brought [approximately 6,000](#) migrants and refugees from the border to facilities in Turkey where they will be quarantined for two weeks due to the risk of spread of Coronavirus.

## Humanitarian disaster on the Greek islands

The dire situation on the Greek islands continue including [issues of overcrowding](#) and undignified and dangerous living conditions resulting in among others suicide attempts and self-harming among children. With the culmination of the above described EU-Turkey crisis and risks of Coronavirus, the situation in the camps is likely to deteriorate even further. The World Health Organization's guidelines for slowing the spread of Coronavirus including frequent hand washing, physical distance from others and self-isolation are impossible in the camps. Many of the refugees and migrants on the islands already have health issues and on Lesbos, hosting the largest camp 'Moria', there are only [six intensive care beds](#) available. In a [joint letter](#) a total of 121 organisations have called for authorities to immediately decongest the islands. The EU has asked Greece to work together on an [emergency plan](#).

## Preparations for Athens Conference for Unaccompanied Minors

Since the 10th of September, the Greek government has plead for the relocation of unaccompanied minors from the Greek islands with support from several [multilateral organisations](#) and NGOs. In May, a conference will be held in Athens, with support from the European Commission, to discuss and create a structured programme for the reallocation.

The Greek Migration and Asylum Minister, Notis Mitarakis, announced on the 9th of March that Greece is increasing the number of places for accommodation of unaccompanied minors with the aim to have 2,000

places by the end of spring and 4,000 by the end of the year. In terms of external support, a coalition of “voluntary” EU countries such as Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal has so far offered to take up to [1,500 unaccompanied minors](#) from the islands although this plan is [challenged by the restrictions](#) EU nation states put in place to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. Due to the increasingly dire situation, a [Joint NGO Urgent Call to Action](#) was sent on the 10th of March to all EU Member States’ Interior Ministries for more countries to commit to the emergency reallocation of unaccompanied minors off the islands.

## Syrians pushed back at sea

On the [15th of March](#) Cyprus closed its borders in response to the spread of the Coronavirus. Consequently, nearly 200 Syrians on a boat from Southern Turkey were approached by Greek Cypriot patrol vessels with the information that they could not enter Cyprus and would be pushed back. After a standoff of several hours the people were however rescued by local authorities in Northern Cyprus, the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The passengers on board are now in quarantine.

## The Balkan migration routes

### Expansion of FRONTEX in Bulgaria and on territory of non-EU states

With the Turkish government announcing on the 27th February that migrants and refugees would not be stopped on the Turkish side of the borders of Greece and Bulgaria, [60 additional FRONTEX staff](#) were installed at the Turkish-Bulgarian border, to monitor pushbacks by Bulgarian authorities.

A month earlier, on the 29th January, The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) of the European Parliament [approved the conclusion of status agreements](#) on the actions of FRONTEX in the two neighbouring non-EU states Serbia and Montenegro. A similar agreement with Albania was put into force last year on 12th of February 2019 and allow FRONTEX to undertake operations on non-EU states’ territories. Both the governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, as well as the European Parliament would still need to ratify the FRONTEX operations in the two countries.

### Increase in numbers of pushbacks at the Bosnian-Croatian border

Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH) is a transit corridor both from Bulgaria/North Macedonia and Serbia as well as Albania and Montenegro for migrants and refugees aiming to reach central and northern EU member states via Croatia. During the first two months of 2020 there has been a [36% increase](#) in arrivals to the country in comparison to the same period last year. Milder winter conditions contributed to the increased number. The daily pushbacks by the Croatian border police continue and in [February 2020](#), 1,765 people reported to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) that they had been forcibly returned to BiH from Croatia. This is the highest number of cases reported by DRC since May 2019. The number of cases reported by unaccompanied and separated children are likewise increasing from 20 cases reported in January to 106 in February. Violence during the pushbacks include theft, extortion, destruction of property, physical abuse and degrading treatment, detention and denial of access to asylum procedures. In February, 80% of the



1,765 cases reported theft, distortion or destruction of property during the pushback, 49% experienced physical abuse or assault.

By the 21st of March, all reception centers in Una-Sana Canton were closed, and additional restrictions were imposed on free movement of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants in BiH due to the Coronavirus, which significantly impact on people's attempts at onward movement.

Despite the documented pushbacks the previous EU Commission gave green light to Croatia's accession to Schengen in [October 2019](#). The green light does, however, not imply any action soon. In response, [11 NGOs](#) argued in a joined letter that Croatia's Schengen membership should be made conditional on the end of the violent pushbacks of refugees and migrants.

In light of the spread of the Coronavirus, BiH is transferring thousands of migrants in the country to a remote camp in the village Lipa, which is 25 kilometres from the border with Croatia. For the time being, the camp is reportedly to host [2,000 people](#) and will be under surveillance by the Bosnian police forces. It is feared that there will not be proper access to water, heat and electricity in the camp and that this will result in deteriorating living conditions.

## Spike in Serbian-Hungarian border crossing attempts and launch of new anti-immigration campaigns

In the first quarter of 2020, Hungary has reported a spike in refugees and migrants attempting to enter the country. According to an advisor to the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban, more than [3,400 people](#) attempted to cross Hungary's southern border in January 2020 compared with several hundred per month in 2019. At the border, migrants and refugees stay in tents despite the cold winter weather demanding to be let in and [some people report](#) that excessive forces have been used against them by the Hungarian police to avoid border crossings from Serbia. On the [1st of March](#) Hungary suspended all admission of migrants and refugees to the country with a justification that there is a connection between the spread of Coronavirus and irregular migration.

Meanwhile in Serbia, an anti-immigration campaign was launched mid-February 2020 by the right-wing opposition party Dveri, arguing that Serbia risks becoming the "[biggest migrant centre in this part of Europe](#)". This is despite the fact that most refugees and migrants only pass through Serbia on their journey to Western Europe.

## Mixed Migration to Europe along Central Mediterranean route

For more details on the Central Mediterranean route, see our QMMU on North Africa & West Africa

### Decrease in arrivals compared to previous quarter

During the first quarter of 2020, Italy witnessed a decrease in arrivals by sea compared to previous quarter (-1,044 or 27% decrease), as indicated in the table below.

**Table 3. Sea arrivals to Italy**

	2018 Q4	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1
Italy (sea)	2,346	524	2,255	4,854	3,838	2,794

### EU naval mission: designed not to save lives

On the 17th of February a [political agreement](#) was reached by the EU Foreign Ministers on a new EU naval mission in the Central Mediterranean. The primary objective is enforcing the arms embargo, but the agreement also includes “fighting the organised crime responsible for migration and training the Libyan coast guard and navy”. It officially ends Operation Sophia, the anti-smuggling mission set up in 2015. The navy is deployed at least 100km off the eastern Libyan coast, where “[chances to conduct rescue operations are lower](#)”. The agreement is thus, as argued by Human Rights Watch, carefully [designed not to save lives](#) and is bowing to pressure from Austria and Hungary.

### Italy: Refugees and migrants rescued at sea

On the [1st of February](#), the Spanish charity boat ‘Open Arms’ was granted permission to enter the Sicilian port of Pozallo, after having been repeatedly denied permission to dock by both Italy and Malta. Finally, the crew reported that they would soon run out of food. After a conference in Malta on the 23rd September - where pledges were made to share the responsibility for refugees and migrants among European Union nations - the new Italian government has granted permissions to allow charity ships to disembark rescued migrants and refugees at its ports on several occasions. Other recent examples are ‘Ocean Viking’ given permission to disembark 274 migrants and refugees on the [23rd February](#) and Sea-Watch-3 on the [27th February](#). In both cases the migrants and refugees were immediately put in quarantine in reception centres upon arrival due to the ongoing outbreak of the Coronavirus. There have been no humanitarian rescue missions operating in the Central Mediterranean for weeks due to fear of Coronavirus, except ‘[Alan Kurdi](#)’, a German rescue ship, which is back in service after several weeks and operating again along the Central Mediterranean route.

The recent disembarkations stand in sharp contrast with the actions of the previous Italian government and the then-Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, who refused permission to private rescue ships to disembark in Italian ports.

Although this happened in April and does not fall within the first quarter of 2020, as of the [7th of April](#) Italy declared its ports “unsafe” due to the Coronavirus. The [decree published by the Italian government](#) states that the country is currently not able to guarantee an absence of any threat to the lives of rescued people after landing in Italy.

## Criminal case against former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini

Following the above, a trial against the former Interior Minister Matteo Salvini took place on [the 12th of February](#), authorised with backing from the Senate. Salvini is accused of preventing 131 migrants and refugees from disembarking from a coast guard ship. In response to the accusation Salvini replied: “I want to go to a courtroom with my head held high. Defending the borders was my duty. I am proud of what I have done, for my children and for the children of this country. Let’s have a judge decide if I’m a criminal or if I was just doing my job.”

## Pullbacks from Maltese waters to Libya

On the [15th of March](#) the Libyan coastguard pulled back a boat to Libya from Maltese waters containing 49 migrants and refugees. The action follows a [secret government deal](#) between Malta and Libya (including the Armed Forces of Malta, coordinating with the Libyan coastguard to intercept migrants and refugees headed towards the island) and is seen as violating international law.

## Mixed Migration to Europe along Western Mediterranean route

For more details on the Western Mediterranean route, see our QMMU on North Africa & West Africa

## Arrivals along the Western Mediterranean route

Arrivals to Spain during the first quarter of 2020 reached a total of 5,797. This is a decrease compared to previous quarter (-3,371 or 37% decrease). Although numbers are still low, the first quarter of 2020 also saw boat arrivals to Portugal with [11 men](#) arriving from Morocco to Monte Gordo in January following [8 men](#) that arrived to the same city last year in December.

**Table 4. Sea and land arrivals to Spain**

	2018 Q4	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1
Spain (sea)	20,351	5,609	4,866	8,328	7,365	4,657
Spain (land)	1,785	1,364	1,424	1,754	1,803	1,140
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,136</b>	<b>6,973</b>	<b>6,290</b>	<b>10,082</b>	<b>9,168</b>	<b>5,797</b>

## On which territory? Spain accused of illegal pushbacks to Morocco

The NGO 'Caminando Fronteras' together with 60 other human rights organizations accused Spanish authorities of illegally returning 42 sub-Saharan refugees and migrants from Morocco only hours after reaching Spanish soil on [the 3rd of January](#) and call for an investigation of potential human rights violations. The Spanish government delegates confirmed that approximately 40 migrants and refugees were returned to Morocco but argued that the migrants and refugees were not actually on Spanish territory but rather rescued by Moroccan authorities at sea.

## Controversial ruling of the European Court of Human Rights

On the 13th of February the controversial case related to the immediate return of two men to Morocco six year ago on the 14th of August 2014 was concluded. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights published its [judgment](#) and ruled in favour of Spain, arguing that the country acted lawfully when it summarily deported the two men that tried to scale the border fence of the Melilla enclave. The two men from Mali and Ivory Coast argued that they were never given the chance to explain their personal circumstances before they were returned. However, the Court found that there was no violation of the European Convention of human rights and concluded that "the lack of individual removal decisions could be attributed to the fact that the applicants – assuming that they had wished to assert rights under the convention – had not made use of the official entry procedures existing for that purpose, and that it had thus been a consequence of their own conduct." With this conclusion, [human rights groups](#) have expressed fear that the ruling will set a dangerous precedent across European Union nation states and further allow Spain to continue immediate returns.

## Spanish proposal for a reform of asylum law

Considering the above described ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in Spain's favour, a proposal for a [reform of the country's asylum law](#) is being fleshed out. Among others, this proposal includes new measures to speed up asylum procedures, extends the grounds for refusal of applications, limits access to protection in detention centres and incorporates EU's conception of 'internal flight alternatives' and 'safe country' into Spanish law.

## Restricted movements due to Coronavirus: Spain releases people in detention

On the [16th of March](#) the Spanish police decided to release 8 people from a detention centre in Valencia following the failure to return a Colombian citizen due to the restricted international movements related to risks of spreading the Coronavirus. Hence, Spain recognises that standard return procedures are currently impossible, and the release of detainees is expected to operate shortly at national level.

## Portugal guarantees the rights of asylum seekers in times of Coronavirus

The Portuguese government has announced that they are granting temporary citizenship rights to all migrants and asylum seekers in the country until at least 1st of July allowing people to access social security and health care. The action is seen in light of the spread of the Coronavirus with the Portuguese Minister of Internal Affairs, Eduardo Cabrita, saying that it's ["important to guarantee the rights of the most fragile, as is the case of immigrants"](#).

## Other updates on mixed migration to and within Europe

### Germany: Doctors with migrant background called upon to battle Coronavirus

As Germany struggles to handle the spread of the Coronavirus, doctors from the [migrant community](#) in the country are asked to assist even if not having gained a licence to practise. This is despite earlier critique when Chancellor Angela Merkel accepted large number of migrants and refugees to the country in 2015.

### UK seeking to bring in agricultural workers

The UK is in urgent need of [90,000 agricultural workers](#) to pick crops that will otherwise die in the fields. Hence, efforts are made to bring in labour from eastern Europe, although this is significantly challenged by the spread of the Coronavirus. There had been a decline in workers already before the outbreak of the virus due to a tightening labour market, Brexit and booming domestic economies of eastern Europe, where many of the seasonal labour migrants in the UK originate from.

### Concern over increased numbers of people crossing from France into UK

Despite the above need for agricultural labour in the UK, [the Border Force](#) has identified a surge for migrants and refugees attempting to cross the Channel between France and UK due to fear of people entering the country irregularly. The action is seen in light of the French police scaling back their protection of the coast as they are diverted to tasks related to the spread of the Coronavirus.

## EU policy updates

### EU's new Pact on Migration and Asylum

The new Pact on Migration and Asylum, which is the framework for legislative reform proposals in the coming legislative period replacing the European Agenda on Migration, was expected Mid-March but has since been postponed.

In the time leading to the finalisation of the Pact, efforts have been made by the civil society to advocate for proposals that focus on a rational and rights-based asylum policy in Europe rather than a heavy focus on border management and return procedures as some fear could be the case. In the joint NGO statement [“The new Pact on Asylum and Migration: An Opportunity Seized or Squandered?”](#) published by ECRE on the 14th of February, emphasis is on the need for a large-scale increase in safe and legal channels for people fleeing persecution, war and conflict or are moving for other reasons to reach safety without having to rely on smugglers. The statement points to an increased compliance with existing asylum law rather than reform, except for the Dublin III Regulation. In more detail, gaps in the existing system such as inadequate reception provision, barriers to registration and poor and inconsistent decision-making in asylum determinations should be addressed and a harmful and inefficient use of the Dublin Regulation should move towards solidarity and responsibility sharing.

### Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa

The European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has on the 9th of March proposed the basis for [a new strategy with Africa](#) including partnerships in 5 key areas, one of which is 'migration and mobility'. The new strategy is to be endorsed at the European Union – African Union Summit in October 2020. Concord has since published [‘10 points for building a real partnership’](#) and a [joint statement](#) by civil society groups advocating for a people-centred approach and the importance of bringing in the civil society to ensure a democratic, transparent and accountable process.

# Thematic Focus: Refugees in Italy – Decrease in Services and an Increased Politicization

Italy was the first country in Europe dealing with a sizable outbreak of the Coronavirus with the first cases officially declared on the [21st of February](#). Following, on the [9th of March](#), the Italian government enforced a government decree with strict quarantine measures and mandatory lockdown to limit the spread of the virus. These measures have not only had significant impact on the lives of Italian citizens, but also on vulnerable and marginalised groups such as refugees and migrants on the move to Italy or already in the country.

On the Central Mediterranean, there have been no humanitarian rescue missions operating for weeks due to fear of Coronavirus, except '[Alan Kurdi](#)', a German rescue ship, which is back in service after several weeks. This poses a risk of losing lives at sea and cases have been identified of migrant vessels pushed back to Libya, something UNHCR [has expressly advised](#) against due to the dangers third-country nationals face there. The two last boats disembarking at Italian ports were 'Ocean Viking' and 'Sea-Watch-3' on the [23rd of February](#) and 27th of February respectively and the migrants and refugees on board were quarantined in reception centres for two weeks following the measures outlined by the government. On the [7th of April](#), the Italian government closed its ports stating that the country is currently not able to guarantee an absence of any threat to the lives of rescued people after landing in Italy.

Additionally, in Italy, hundreds of vulnerable asylum seekers live on the streets after the previous government and the then-interior minister Matteo Salvini in November 2018 passed the so-called "[migration and security decree](#)". These people face severe challenges in living up to the government measures and people are afraid of accessing health care services when needed, should their documents be checked. [The Italian courts are closed](#) resulting in the government suspending interviews for refugee status determination and hearings for appeals of asylum request denials. Integration services for migrants and refugees across the country have been suspended or heavily reduced including employment and legal assistance.

Further, the Coronavirus makes the large numbers of migrant farmworkers in the country even more exposed. These workers, originating mostly from [Africa and Eastern Europe](#), live in overcrowded tent camps picking fruit and vegetables and are key to fill the Italian supermarket shelves. While they are still [employed in the fields](#), they have no water to wash their hands nor proper homes to isolate in. Due to border restrictions because of the Coronavirus Italy witness a shortfall in farm workers and hence looks towards [regularisation of non-EU migrant workers](#).

While some citizens in Italy show a [growing empathy](#) for migrants and refugees as they can suddenly relate to their situation when they seek refuge in regions less affected by the virus, the situation has also been used for political purposes. Matteo Salvini, leading the far-right League party, has purposely created a link between the movement of people and the spread of the virus and on the [21st of February](#), he suggested shutting the borders to migrants to protect Italians. Also a former League candidate for the European

parliament, Antonio Mazzeo suggests that local residents must take priority and [“migration policies should take the back seat”](#).

On the contrary, NGOs call for the government to do more to protect vulnerable migrants and refugees during this period and published a [joint statement](#) calling for 1) the shutdown of large migrant reception centres to reorganise the system and distribute migrants more evenly throughout the country, 2) access to the international protection system for minors even if they are excluded by the security decree mentioned above, 3) accept homeless people and those living in makeshift rural settlements into appropriate facilities and 4) stop new admissions to hotspots and create alternatives to detention.



# Highlighted New Research and Reports



## [Op-ED: The wrong side of history? A missed opportunity to lead on a human-rights-led response to mixed migration between Turkey and Greece](#)

### **The Mixed Migration Centre | March 2020**

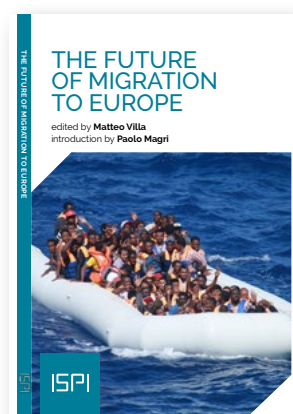
The Op-ED discusses the recent situation at the Greece-Turkey borders in the context of the EU-Turkey deal negotiated in 2016. Further, it poses questions as to how the situation may be yet another example of a broader, more concerning, downward spiral of moral responsibility and the derogation of international obligations in the management of migration.



## [Impact on public attitudes to migration on the political environment in the Euro-Mediterranean region – second chapter](#)

### **ICMPD / OPAM – EUI | February 2020**

The research provides an overview of public attitudes to migration in Southern Partner Countries and considers their effects on migration politics and policies in the region over the past 20 to 30 years. The objective is to understand what the political effects of public attitudes to migration are in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.



## [The future of Migration to Europe](#)

### **ISPI | February 2020**

The report analyses the structural trends underlying migration flows, the interaction between migration and specific policy fields (including development, border management, and integration), and the policies to put in place for safe and orderly migration.



## [Op-ED: Mistaken metaphor: the 'root causes' approach to migration is both dishonest and ineffective](#)

### **The Mixed Migration Centre | March 2020**

The Op-ED looks at the narrative around 'root causes' and critically discusses the idea that displacement and irregular migration will fall when root causes are addressed.



## [Experts around the globe told us 10 ways to make migration policy more humane](#)

### **The Correspondent | February 2020**

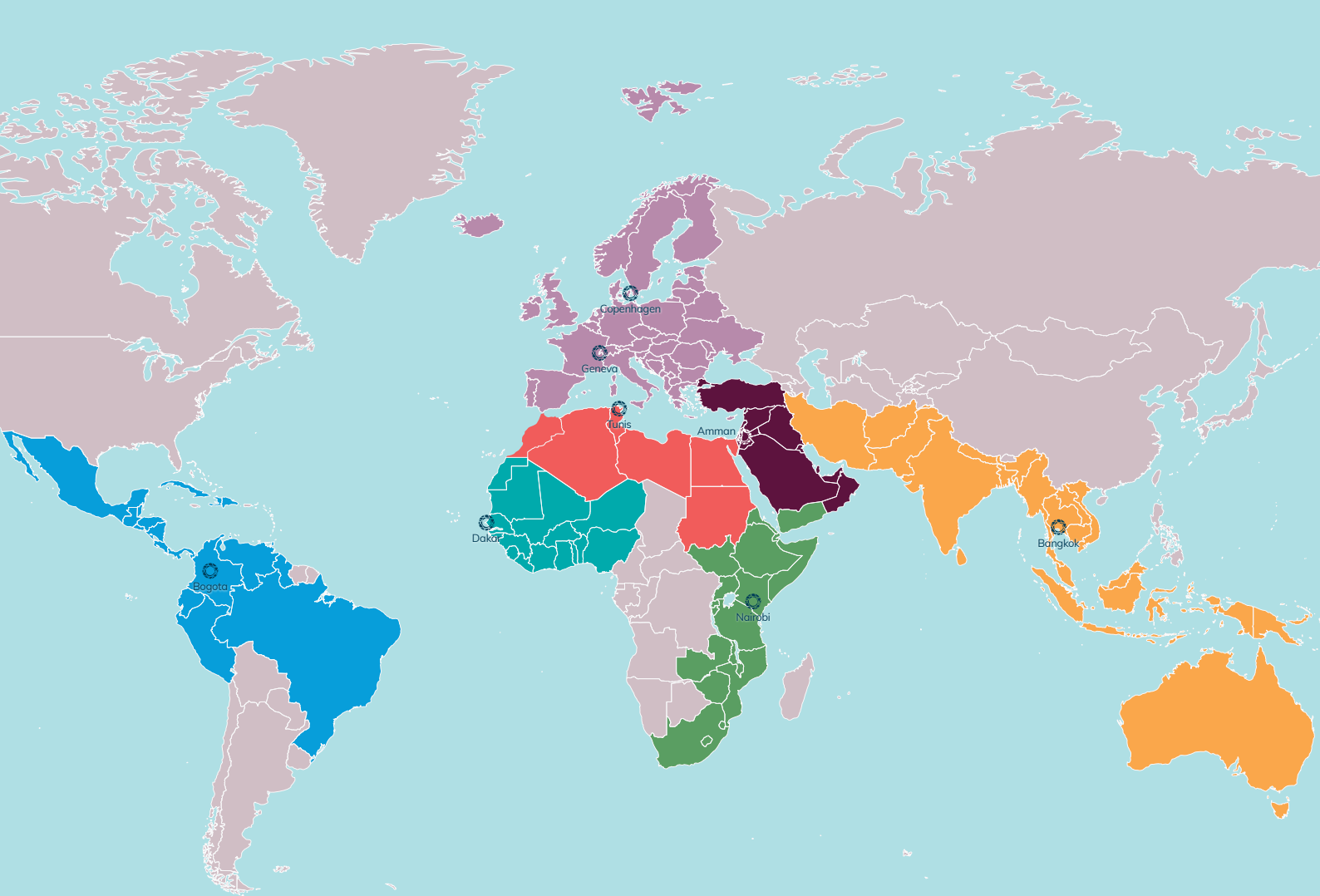
This article by The Correspondent provides an overview of an online discussion – in which MMC participated - between migration experts around the world on how to develop a more humane migration policy.



## [Places of safety in the Mediterranean: The EU's policy of outsourcing responsibility](#)

### **Henrich Böll Stiftung | February 2020**

The report looks at EU's policy of outsourcing responsibility of saving lives at Sea from a legal point of view including discussions of "regional disembarkation platforms" and the role of NGO rescue vessels.



The MMC is a global network consisting of seven regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

**For more information visit:**

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