Mixed
Migration
Centre

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 and follow us at @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:
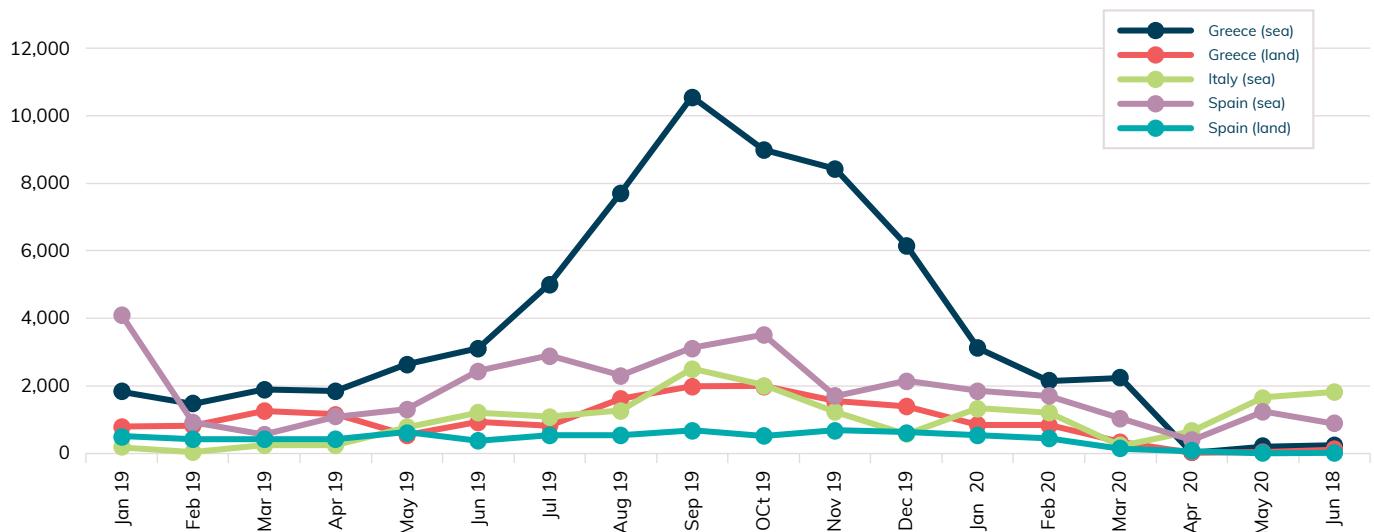Lesbos, Moria camp. Jan Krarup 2019

Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: Europe

Quarter 2 - 2020

Key Updates

- **Increase in arrivals along the Central Mediterranean**: During the second quarter of 2020, movements along the Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean have continued and even increased along the Central Mediterranean route despite the Covid-19 pandemic affecting destination countries in Europe.

- **Rescue gap in the Mediterranean Sea**: There have been multiple cases of people being stranded at sea during the second quarter of 2020 as rescue missions by volunteer groups have been shut down and countries such as Italy and Malta have declared their ports unsafe due to the spread of Covid-19.

- **New tactics to keep refugees and migrants off territory:** During the second quarter of 2020, we have also seen new measures to keep refugees and migrants off territory. Maltese officials authorised private vessels to intercept refugees and migrants from international waters that fall within the responsibility of the European coast guards. In the Aegean sea, people report being attacked by the Greek coastguard and masked men.

- **Human rights violations and pushbacks along the Western Balkan route:** Measures to contain the Covid-19 pandemic in the Balkan countries have included deployment of military forces at borders and camps, expulsions from camps and even more extreme pushback practices. In Croatia, near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, refugees and migrants have reported an increase in abuse including people being spray-painted with red crosses on their heads by Croatian police officers claiming that the treatment was the "cure against conoravirus". There has also been a restriction of access to asylum, healthcare and adequate accommodation for refugees and migrants along the route.

- **Refugees and migrants across Europe help to fight Covid-19:** Across European countries refugees and migrants have held vital roles in fighting the pandemic and keeping European economies functioning during the outbreak of Covid-19 in positions such as doctors, nurses and caretakers.

- **Regularisation of migrant workers:** Across Southern European countries such as Spain, Italy and France the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a potential food shortage and labour crisis in particular when it comes to the agricultural sector. Various initiatives have been put in place across affected countries: In Italy a new decree was passed on the 13th May which included the regularisation of migrant workers. The decree is heavily discussed and criticised.

Figure 1. Number of arrivals by country

Table 1. Mediterranean route arrivals

	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2
Greece (sea)	5,241	7,629	23,271	23,585	7,552	530
Greece (land)	2,886	2,648	4,435	4,918	2,051	232
Italy (sea)	524	2,255	4,854	3,838	2,794	4,149
Spain (sea)	5,609	4,866	8,328	7,365	4,615	2,551
Spain (land)	1,364	1,424	1,754	1,803	1,140	147
Total	15,624	18,822	42,642	41,509	18,152	7,609

Regional Overview*

Germany: More than 600 refugees and migrants tested positive for Covid-19

France: At least 853 refugees and migrants attempted to cross the channel since the lockdown began in the UK

Italy: Increase in arrivals to North-Eastern Italy via the Balkan route and through the border between Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia

Greece: Increased reports of pushback at sea and attacks on migrant boats by masked men

Malta: 400 refugees and migrants stranded off Malta's coast for a month

Canary Islands: Increase in arrivals: 38 refugees and migrants arrived to Fuerteventura and 49 people were rescued off the coast of Gran Canaria during May 2020

Map country labels: Finland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Northern Ireland, Ireland, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Belarus, Czechia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Austria, Hungary, Moldova, Switzerland, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, France, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Italy, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Portugal, Spain, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Western Sahara

*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 of arrivals in Greece compared to previous quarter

The number of arrivals in Greece via sea and via land are lower than in the previous quarter caused by the Covid-19 outbreak and associated restrictions in freedom of movement. While there was a stark decrease in April, we do however see that numbers have increased since.

Table 2. Sea and land arrivals to Greece

	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2
Greece (sea)	5,241	7,629	23,271	23,585	7,552	530
Greece (land)	2,886	2,648	4,435	4,918	2,051	232
Total	**8,127**	**10,277**	**27,706**	**28,503**	**9,610**	**762**

Pushback at sea

The second quarter of 2020 saw an increase in reports of pushbacks at sea and attacks on migrant boats. Alarm Phone reports that they have been contacted by people in the Aegean Sea who have found themselves in distress after being attacked by the Greek coastguard and masked men. One such instance was reported on the 29th of April where a boat carrying 48 refugees from Afghanistan, Congo and Iran, including 18 children, tried to reach Lesvos Island and was pushed back to Turkish waters. A similar situation happened the following month on the 13th of May where refugees and migrants were left to float on life rafts for hours before finally being intercepted and rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard. This shows a trend in pushbacks that involve dangerous actions such as circling around boats and causing waves, threats with guns, theft of petrol and destruction of engines.

The Greek coast guards have rejected the accusations of pushbacks at sea, and in a statement asserted that their officers always act in compliance with applicable laws and that there is no practice of hiding their identities behind masks. The Greek government admitted that it engages in practices referred to as "active surveillance" in the sea.

Imposed lockdown on refugee and migrant camps

In Greece there has been an imposed lockdown on refugee and migrant camps since March and during the second quarter of 2020. On the mainland, people tested positive for Covid-19 in two camps and a hotel accommodating asylum seekers.

Overcrowding, associated difficulties with respecting social distancing and bad hygienic conditions in camps on the islands have caused great concern in terms of the risks of rapid transmission of the virus. The EU requested Greece to ease the severe overcrowding on the islands and in May Greek officials started to move the most vulnerable refugees and migrants out of Moria camp.

Relocation of unaccompanied children off the islands

The relocation of migrant children off the Greek islands started during the second quarter of 2020. The first relocation took place in April where 12 minors were transferred to Luxembourg. Portugal will receive 500 minors from the Greek islands, 18 will move to Belgium and 750 people including 350 unaccompanied minors will leave for France. In May 52 people have been reunited with their families in the UK.. Since April there have been protests across the Nederland to lobby the Dutch government to take in 500 unaccompanied children.

There are at least 5,200 unaccompanied minors living in Greece, many reside in camps on the islands under harsh conditions.

Recognised refugees to exit the Greek reception system within a period of 30 days

On the 1st of June approximately 9,000 recognised refugees had to exit the Greek reception system and in the coming months another 11,000 refugees recognised by asylum authorities will have to transit from assistance for asylum seekers to general social welfare in the country.

This transition is due to a new law adopted in Greece in March 2020 that reduces the period of organised accommodation and basic support to independent living for recognised refugees from six months to 30 days. The change is tied to a need to make accommodation available for asylum seekers waiting in the crowded reception facilities on the Greek Aegean islands. UNHCR has expressed concern that the assistance for many recognised refugees is ending prematurely and before they have effective access to employment and social welfare schemes. As such, there is a risk that problems may just shift from the islands to the mainland with people being pushed into poverty and homelessness.

Call for EU investigation into shots at Greek-Turkish border

More than [100 Members of the European Parliament](#) have called for a formal investigation into the possible involvement of Greek authorities in the shooting of a migrant at the Greek-Turkish border earlier this year when thousands of refugees and migrants gathered at the border. The Greek authorities have denied their involvement in the case and said that no live ammunition was used to protect their border.

The letter is addressed to the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Preliminary legal assessment not released by The European Commission

The European Commission has so far refused to release the preliminary legal assessment into Greece's decision to temporary shelve asylum applications earlier this year. The commission says that it first needs to further study the measure and that ["the frankness, objectivity and comprehensiveness of the legal advice would be seriously affected if legal advice on highly sensitive subjects, as in the present case, would be disclosed"](#).

The Balkan migration routes

Covid-19 and tightening measures for refugees and migrants

During the second quarter of 2020, the Balkan countries have also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has [impacted](#) refugees and migrants travelling along the western Balkan routes.

Measures to contain the virus have included deployment of military forces at borders and camps, expulsions from camps and even more extreme pushback practices. There has been a limiting in access to asylum, healthcare and adequate accommodation for refugees and migrants.

Establishment of temporary camps in Serbia

In Serbia, the state of emergency was declared on the 15th of March 2020. Hereafter, we have witnessed an increased military presence in camps around the country and refugees and migrants have not been allowed out of transit and asylum centers unless it was to seek medical care or with a special permission. There has been an [increase in violent incidents](#) within these now closed camps.

With the state of emergency, the Serbian government also established or re-opened three new camps to manage overcrowding in others. The new camps, Morović, Subotica and Miratovac, house approximately 1,500 people, mostly from [Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan](#).

Frontex operations at the EU-Serbia and EU-Montenegro borders

On the 26th of May, the European Parliament voted to approve two new agreements allowing the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) to operate outside the EU. The operations will be placed along the borders between the EU and Montenegro, an agreement which will enter into force on the 1st of July, and between the EU and Serbia where conclusion procedures are yet to be finalised.

Refugees and migrants moved from Hungarian transit zone

On the 14th of May, the Court of Justice of the European Union concluded that the placement of people in the transit zone on the border between Hungary and Serbia is an unlawful detention. Following, Hungarian authorities moved the 300 people from the zone to semi-open facilities on the 21st of May.

As such, the Hungarian government announced that it will comply with the judgement and abolish the transit zone although they disagree with the the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The transit zone has been in place since 2015.

Human rights abuses in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina Covid-19 has resulted in further human rights abuses during the second quarter of 2020 as the government on the 16th of March put into force "a complete restriction on the movement of migrants outside the temporary centres". The state of emergency in Bosnia and Herzegovina also gave officers the right to use physical force on people that tried to leave the centers ordered by the Crisis Staff of the Una Sana Canton's Health, Labour and Social Policy Ministry.

In April, Bosnian authorities moved hundreds of refugees and migrants living in squats and other improvised accommodation from the border town of Bihac to a nearby emergency tent camp, which was set up during the Covid-19 pandemic. Issues of overcrowding however remain. In Sarajevo people living on the streets have also been moved by the police.

On the 12th of May, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants published a report based on an official visit to Bosnia and Herzgovina last year during the 24th of September to 1st of October. This report assesses existing laws, policies and practices in relation to migration governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their impact on the human rights of migrants. It provides several recommendations to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Refugees and migrants robbed and beaten by Croatian police officers

In April alone, 1641 push back cases to Bosnia & Herzegovina were recorded by the Danish Refugee Council out of which 891 reported being subject to violence and physical assault. The pattern of abuse of refugees and migrants also included people being spray-painted with red crosses on their heads by Croatian police officers who claimed that the treatment was the "cure against conoravirus".

Journalists, civil society organisations and the UNHCR have been calling for an investigation into the abuses of refugees and migrants by the Croatian police while the EU for long has not intervened. However, on the 12th of June a spokesperson from the commission announced that a monitoring mission is planned "to ensure that the activities of the Croatian border guards remain fully compliant with the respect of fundamental rights".

Increase in arrivals to Northeast Italy via the Balkan route

During the second quarter of 2020, there has been an increase in arrivals to the Italian province Trieste through the border between Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia. According to figures from the regional government 150 refugees and migrants arrived in Trieste in just one week between April and the start of May.

The situation has been complicated due to the spread of Covid-19 and as a result there has been a reduction in border management and lack of appropriate facilities and interpreters to manage the arrivals.

Mixed migration to Europe along Central Mediterranean route

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

Table 3. Sea arrivals to Italy

	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2
Italy (sea)	524	2,255	4,854	3,838	2,794	4,149

Rescue gap in the Central Mediterranean Sea despite increase in number of boat departures from Libya

Fewer people attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Italy in March due to a combination of bad weather conditions and the Covid-19 outbreak in Italy. But since April the number of boat departures went up again. There have been multiple cases of people being stranded at sea during the second quarter of 2020 as rescue missions by volunteer groups have been shut down and countries such as Italy and Malta have declared their ports unsafe due to the spread of Covid-19.

In April, there was only one active search and rescue vessel: 'Alan Kurdi' operated by the German NGO Sea-Eye. The vessel completed two rescues on the 6th of April, including 150 people. The rescued refugees and migrants were transferred to a ferry close to Palermo 12 days after being rescued to spend 14 days in quarantine.

We have also witnessed an increase in boats being intercepted and returned to Libya during the second quarter of 2020. In Libya, many people disappear into informal detention centres.

Nonetheless, Italy has seen the arrival of small ships from Libya and Tunisia, as for instance in Lampedusa and Sicily.

The fact that both Italy and Malta have declared their ports unsafe due to the spread of Covid-19 has been criticised, among others, by Human Rights Watch saying that "It's pretty clear that Covid-19 is serving as an excuse to do something that many politicians and government leaders have been trying to do in one way or another for years now". The European Commission has said that it would not comment on the legality of the two countries' decision to close their ports.

Several NGO rescue boats resumed work during June: the Mare Jonio and the Ocean Viking, led by the Italian NGO Mediterranea, the Astral, led by the NGO Proactiva Open Arms and the German Sea-Watch 3. On the 25th of June, 118 people were rescued by the Ocean Viking. 93 refugees and migrants were intercepted off the Libyan shore on the 27th of June as they tried to reach Europe. Six people died along the way. 43 people were rescued by the Mare Junio on the 29th of June.

Refugees and migrants stranded off Malta's coast

Since the 30th of April, more than 400 refugees and migrants were stranded off Malta's coast, living on cruise vessels for more than a month. As mentioned above, Malta announced with the onset of the Covid-19 virus, that the country was unable to rescue refugees and migrants during the health crisis. Since then, Malta has refused to let the rescued refugees and migrants disembark stating that other European Union nations have failed to keep promises to take in refugees and migrants already brought to the island.

NGOs and UN agencies have continuously appealed to the Maltese government to bring the stranded refugees and migrants to land. At the end of May, the ECRE Member Aditus, Jesuit Refugee Service Malta and Integra Foundation filed 3 complaints with 1) the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants, 2) the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and 3) the European Commission concerning the breach of fundamental rights, including the right to liberty, the right to asylum and the right to an effective legal remedy of those stranded at sea.

Early June, Prime Minister Robert Abela let the refugees and migrants disembark, allegedly after a violent incident on board one of the vessels. Luxemburg, Portugal and France agreed to take in 425 refugees and migrants.

Malta's latest tactic to keep refugees and migrants off their territory

On the 12th of April, the three boats Dar Al Salam 1, the Salve Regina and the Tremar departed Malta to intercept refugees and migrants at sea to bring them back to Libya. Several people had already died when the three boats intercepted them, and the survivors were returned to Tripoli. In Libya, they were taken to a detention centre run by a pro-government militia know to torture refugees and migrants, held for ransom and sold to other militias.

The incident is perceived by maritime experts as a new strategy by Maltese officials, in which private vessels are authorised to intercept refugees and migrants in international waters that fall within the responsibility of European coast guards.

In May after a visit by the Maltese Prime Minister, Robert Abela, Home Affairs Minister, Byron Camilleri, and Foreign Affairs Minister Evarist Bartolo to Tripoli, it was announced that Malta and Libya have agreed to "set up coordination units in each country to assist in operations against illegal migration".

Migrant boat sinks off Tunisian coast: at least 61 people die

A shipwreck occurred between the 4th and 5th of June off the Tunisian coast resulting in the death of at least 61 refugees and migrants. Authorities were only alerted on the 9th of June, after a fisherman spotted the floating bodies at sea. The boat with refugees and migrants had attempted to reach the Italian coast from Tunisia: a trend that according to UNHCR has increased by 150% in the first four months of the year compared with the same period in 2019.

Regularisation of migrant workers in Italy

As a consequence of the severe outbreak of Covid-19 in Italy, the country faces a potential food shortage and labour crisis in particular when it comes to the agricultural sector. This sector is largely supported by migrant workers, many of whom travel to Italy from Eastern Europe for seasonal work and others from Africa and other non-European countries who are living and working in Italy without regular status

On the 13th of May, Italy passed a new decree backed by the Minister for Agriculture, Teresa Bellanova, to regularise the legal status of migrant workers in Italy. The decree has been heavily debated and criticised by government opposition parties, humanitarian agencies and trade unions. For more information see the Thematic Focus section below on the regularisation of migrant workers in Italy.

Mixed migration to Europe along the Western Mediterranean route

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

Table 4. Sea and land arrivals to Spain

	2019 Q1	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2
Spain (sea)	5,609	4,866	8,328	7,365	4,615	2,551
Spain (land)	1,364	1,424	1,754	1,803	1,140	147
Total	**6,973**	**6,290**	**10,082**	**9,168**	**5,755**	**2,698**

Overall decrease in arrivals to Spain but an increase in arrivals to the Canary Islands

Overall migrant arrivals to Spain have dropped in 2020 compared to the previous year. We also witness a decrease in arrivals in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the previous quarter. However, there has been an increase of arrivals to the Canary Islands with the majority coming from West African countries. On the night between the 15th and 16th of May 38 refugees and migrants arrived to Fuerteventura and on the 17th of May Spanish authorities rescued 49 people off the coast of Gran Canaria. The refugees and migrants were tested for Covid-19 and then ordered a 14-day quarantine period.

260 people tried to jump the fence between Morocco and the Spanish enclave Melilla

On the 6th of April, 260 people tried to enter the Spanish enclave Melilla, 53 managed to get through. Spain has been under nationwide lockdown due to Covid-19 and an increased police force has been put in place to control the movement of people.

Migrant workers' job losses during the Covid-19 crisis in Spain

Spain is the main fruit and vegetables producer in the EU with a large agricultural sector in the South relying on migrant workers mainly from Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa. During the second quarter of 2020, during which Spain has been severely affected by Covid-19, migrants have lost jobs in the agricultural sector. Foremen were unable to pick up workers from the nearby towns and dwellings for work, due to the rules imposed during the pandemic limiting the number of passengers travelling in one car. Due to loss if income, many people had to rely on NGOs distributing food and masks in the dwellings.

Those that managed to have continued access to work have feared the conditions as they work closely side-by-side on the farms. At the dnd of April, a coalition of 27 NGOs called for a regularisation of migrant farm workers and their proper protection from Covid-19.

138 asylum seekers in a hostel in Portugal infected by Covid-19

On the 19th of April, asylum seekers hosted at a hostel in Lisbon were evacuated after one person was tested positive for Covid-19. They were moved to the city's Central Mosque where 138 people out of the 175 eventually were tested positive. The few that did not test positive were taken back to the hostel.

Portugal's initiatives to support refugees and migrants during the crisis

Despite the above mentioned Covid-19 cases, Portugal has otherwise moved quickly to contain the virus since the end of March by implementing multiple initiatives: migrants and asylum seekers have received temporary residence to ensure access to health care during the time of the crisis, as reported in the first Quarterly Mixed Migration Update for 2020. On the 7th of April, refugees and migrants were moved out of Lisbon's airport detention centre to limit the risk of spreading the virus.

Issues remain with regards to the tens of thousands of undocumented workers, including refugees and migrants, who areunable to access social welfare support without a job contract and risk falling deeper into poverty because of the economic effects of Covid-19. Similar issues are seen across Southern European countries, such as Spain, Italy and France as discussed above and reported in greater detail in the Thematic Focus section of this report.

Other updates on mixed migration to and within Europe

Increase in channel crossings between UK and France

During the second quarter of 2020, there has been an increase in channel crossings from France to the UK partly due to the restrictions linked to the Covid-19 lockdown in the UK from the 23rd of March. Since then, at least 853 refugees and migrants attempted to cross the channel. These included among other Iranian, Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Syrian and Afghan nationals. An official in the home office has stated that the UK government is in the process of "stepping up action to stop the crossings, [and] going after criminals perpetrating these heinous crimes and prosecuting them for their criminal activity".

Alarming situation in informal camps in France

In Northern France Covid-19 has been spreading quickly through the makeshift camps where people live without proper sanitation, water supplies or food. The few civil society organisations left in the camps have assisted by moving people to accommodation centres. The centre's capacity is only for approximately 400 people while about 1,500 refugees and migrants live in the informal camps.

Leilani Farha, the UN's special rapporteur for housing, has urged France to act on the dire living conditions in the informal camps.

Refugees and migrants tested positive for Covid-19 in Germany

In Germany, refugees and migrants have been tested positive for Covid-19: At least 70 people at a home near Bonn were tested positive in May and nearly half of the 600 people at a camp in Baden-Württemberg were tested positive in April.

NGOs in Germany have called for asylum-seeker accommodation centres to be shut down, as residents are at risk of being exposed to Covid-19 due to the centre's living conditions.

EU policy updates

EU's new Pact on Migration and Asylum postponed

The Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced in March that the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum would be ready after Easter. However, the Pact has now been [delayed](#) until after the summer and until EU leaders reach a deal on the long-term budget.

It is not the first time that the new Pact is delayed, illustrating how contentious its contents remain but also how the European Union struggles to move forward on other fronts while still dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. One of the key contentious issues is still solidarity among the EU nation states: Eastern European nations as Hungary, Poland and others oppose any mandatory plans to redistribute asylum seekers, whereas Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain and Greece insist on this aspect.

Multiple organisations, such as the [Danish Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee](#) have voiced how Covid-19 in many ways has served to expose the shortcomings in EU's migration and asylum policies. As such, the Pact is a unique opportunity for the EU to turn the tide and stand up for the values it has been founded upon, including protecting those in need, and supporting human rights and human dignity in its cooperation with partner countries.

Thematic Focus: Regularisation of Migrant Workers in Italy

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, Italy has been facing a potential food shortage and labour crisis in particular when it comes to the agricultural sector. 25 percent of the workforce of this sector consists of migrant workers coming from Eastern Europe and travelling to Italy for seasonal work. Due to implications of Covid-19 many are currently either not able to travel or choosing not to. Other migrant workers originate from Africa and other non-European countries and have entered Italy irregularly, many via the Mediterranean.

In total, there are approximately 560,000 undocumented migrant workers in Italy and many have faced issues of labour exploitation for years, working long hours for low salaries and living in slum and informal camps with few to no rights. They have been and are expected to work in the field even during the outbreak of Covid-19 in Italy, without water to wash their hands and no homes to practice self-isolation in. In the past six years, approximately 1,500 agricultural workers have died due to their living conditions.

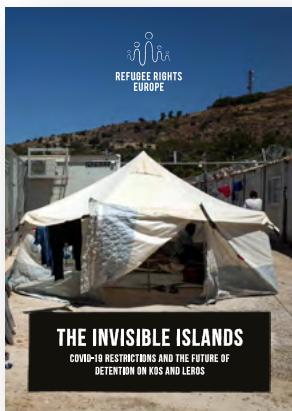On the 13th May, 2020 Italy passed a new decree pushed for by the Minister for Agriculture, Teresa Bellanova, to include the regularisation of migrant workers. This means that irregular migrant workers can apply for a 6 months legal residency permit between 1st of June and 15th of August. The opportunity applies to people working in the agriculture sector and domestic helpers only. They can obtain a regular status following two different procedures: 1) they can themselves apply for a six-months residence permit to look for a job if they can document that they have been in Italy without a valid residence permit since October 2019, 2) employers can apply to regularise their foreign and Italian workers without a regular contract by putting in place proper employment contracts.

The decree has been heavily discussed and criticised by both government opposition parties, trade unions and humanitarian groups. Politicians on the right for example claim that the decree will create a pull factor increasing immigration to the country and that the Covid-19 outbreak is being utilized to give amnesty to migrants with an irregular status

The decree was at first regarded as a positive step towards migrant's rights by trade unions and humanitarian groups. However, this perception of the decree soon changed. On the 21st May a union representing farmworkers launched a demonstration criticising the decree for focusing on economic interests only and for being limited to people working in sectors of the economy deemed "essential" during the Covid-19 As such, it has been criticised for being temporary only and that it thus will do little to address the widespread exploitation of migrant labour in Italy.

During the first two weeks of June, nearly 32,000 people had submitted their application for regularisation to the Italian interior ministry. Most of the applications concern domestic workers (16,469 applications), followed by caregivers (4.960) and farmworkers (2,233). Most domestic workers and carers who filed applications are from Morocco, Egypt and Bangladesh. Most applicants who work in agriculture come from India, Albania and Morocco.
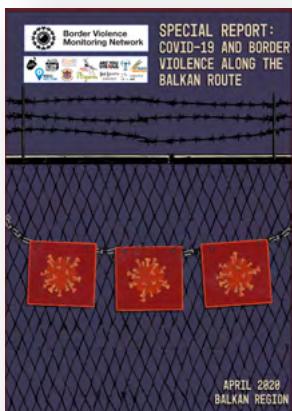
Highlighted New Research and Reports

The Invisible Islands. Covid-19 restrictions and the future of detention on Kos and Leros
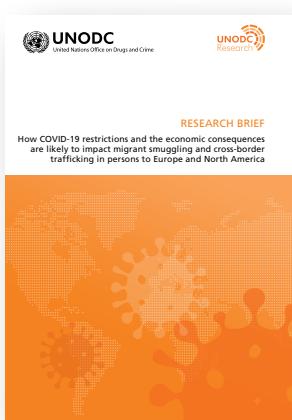
Refugee Rights Europe | 2020

The report provides first-hand insight into the situation in the hotspots on Kos and Leros during the spring of 2020. It raises serious concerns not only regarding the material living conditions, but also the impact of Covid-19 related restrictions and detention practices.

Special report: Covid-19 and border violence along the Balkan Route

Border Violence Monitoring Network I April 2020

The report looks at the intersection of health restrictions and border violence for people travelling along the Western Balkans and Greece. It discusses how Covid-19 and related lockdowns and states of emergency have resulted in sharpened inequality, further limited access to asylum, healthcare, adequate accommodation, and safety from collective expulsions.

How Covid-19 restrictions and the economic consequences are likely to impact migrant smuggling and cross border trafficking in persons to Europe and North Africa
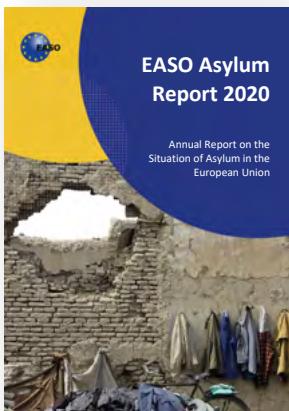
UNODC I May 2020

The report analyses possible scenarios of how cross-border smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons to North America and Europe may be affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

The European benchmark for refugee integration – Evaluation 1: Summary Report 2020

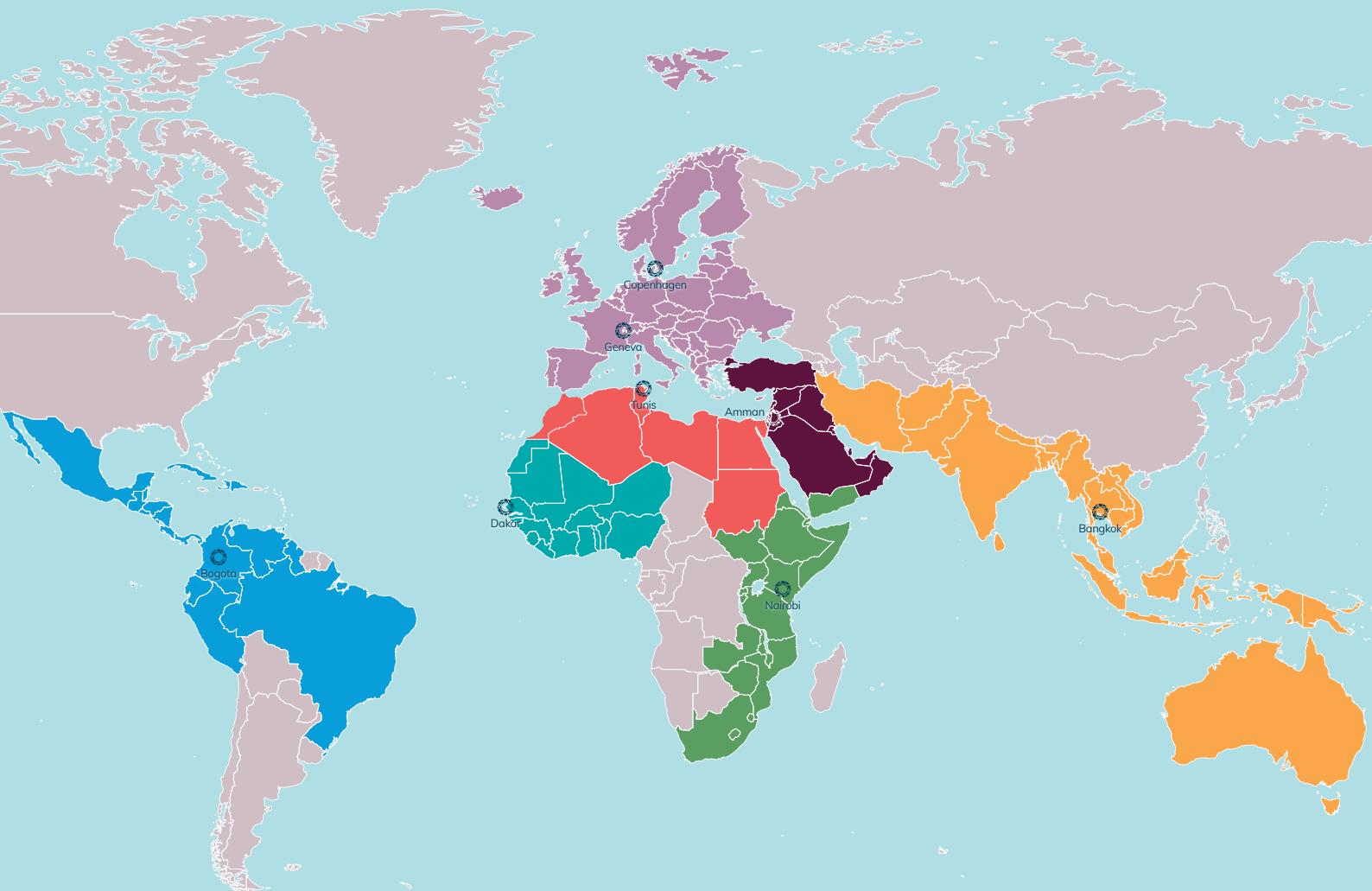**Institute of Public Affairs and Migration Policy Group I May 2020**

The report analyses the state of refugee integration in 14 participating countries in 2019 looking at national refugee integration frameworks and a variety of legal and policy indicators.

Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union

EASO I June 2020

The report provides an overview of key developments in international protection and the functioning of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

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.

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