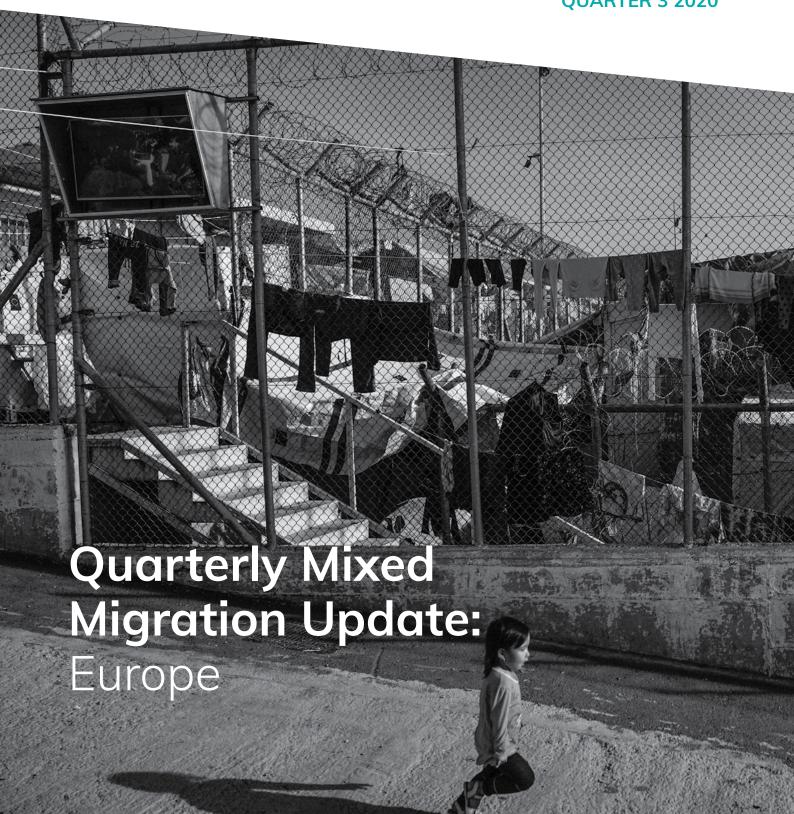




MMC Europe QUARTER 3 2020



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 <u>mixedmigration.org</u> and follow us at <u>@Mixed_Migration</u>

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:



Quarterly Mixed Migration Update: **Europe**

Quarter 3 - 2020

Key Updates

- **New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**: The long-awaited Pact was launched on <u>the 23rd of September</u> and proposes a new direction from the European Commission for the EU's asylum and migration policies.
- Moria camp burns to the ground: On the 8th and 9th of September a number of fires were started in Moria camp, the EU "hotspot" on Lesvos. As the camp burned to the ground some 13000 people were left without shelter and a "state of emergency" was declared on the island.
- From Lebanon to Cyprus: A new trend is appearing with an increase in boats leaving from Lebanon to Cyprus. At least 21 fishing vessels managed by smugglers have left for Cyprus between July and Mid-September compared to only 19 boats during all of 2019. Read more in the Thematic Section of this report.
- Tensions in North-Western Bosnia and Herzegovina: The third quarter of 2020 has seen increased tensions between the local population and transiting refugees and migrants in Una-Sana Canton. Authorities report that only half of the estimated 7000 migrants and refugees in the canton reside in official camp sites.
- **Peak in Tunisians arriving to Italy**: Especially the summer months saw an increase in Tunisians crossing the Mediterranean to Italy with more than 2.230 making their way in the month of August. The peak is presumably associated with the deteriorating economic situation in Tunisia.
- The longest stand-off in recent European maritime history: 27 refugees and migrants were left for almost 40 days on the Danish tanker Maersk Etienne in the Maltese SAR zone. They disembarked in Sicily on the 13th of September.
- Spike in channel crossings from France to the UK: During the third quarter of 2020 channel crossings
 from France to the UK increased causing the British government to enforce returns. The total figure for
 crossings in 2020 is at 6,524.

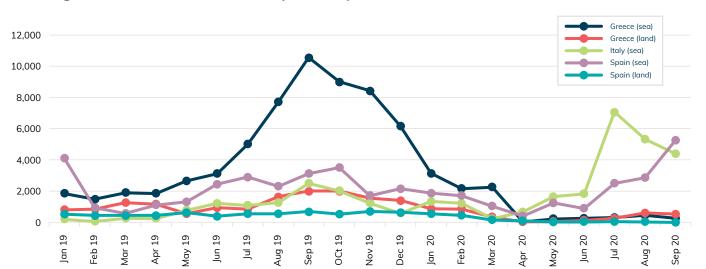


Figure 1. Number of arrivals by country

Table 1. Mediterranean route arrivals

	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	Q2 & Q3 2020 difference	
Greece (sea)	7,629	23,271	23,585	7,552	530	1,029	499	94%
Greece (land)	2,648	4,435	4,918	2,051	232	1,384	1,152	497%
<u>Italy (sea)</u>	2,255	4,854	3,838	2,794	4,149	16,777	12,628	304%
Spain (sea)	4,866	8,328	7,365	4,615	2,551	10,617	8,066	316%
Spain (land)	1,424	1,754	1,803	1,140	147	79	-68	-46%
Total	15,624	18,822	42,642	41,509	18,152	7,609	22,277	293%



^{*}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

Table 2. Sea and land arrivals to Greece

	2019 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	Q1 & Q2 2020 difference	
Greece (sea)	7,629	23,271	23,585	7,552	530	1,029	499	94%
Greece (land)	2,648	4,435	4,918	2,051	232	1,384	1,152	497%
Total	10.277	27.706	28.503	9.603	762	2.413	1,651	216%

Moria camp burns to the ground

On <u>the 8th and 9th of September</u> a number of fires were started in Moria camp and the EU "hotspot" on Lesvos burned to the ground. Some <u>13000</u> people were left without shelter and a "state of emergency" was declared on the island. <u>Greek officials</u> say the blazes were set by refugees and migrants angered by isolation orders due to the spread of COVID19.

The following days after the fire thousands of refugees and migrants protested on the streets in desperation of not being able to leave the island. In response, <u>Greek police</u> fired teargas at the protesters. Since then, some refugees and migrants have been transferred to the mainland to temporary accommodation in hotels and other facilities. Transfers to a new tented camp close to Kara Tepe started on <u>the 13th of September</u>. The camp already hosts 9000 people, leaving it in critical conditions in terms of sanitary facilities, food delivery and space for social distancing. The camp is guarded by hundreds of police officers and movements in and out are restricted. <u>On the 14th of September</u>, UNHCR called for urgent action to improve the conditions for refugees and migrants in reception centres in the Aegean islands, including in the new emergency site.

Several EU member states including Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Slovenia, Croatia, Portugal, Finland, Luxembourg and Switzerland have expressed willingness to each accept 400 unaccompanied children from the Greek islands. Germany has agreed to take in an additional 1,553 people, including 408 families with children who had already been recognised as vulnerable in Greece. As part of the release of the new EU Pact for Migration and Asylum on the 23rd of September, the EU has announced that it will create a dedicated taskforce to resolve the emergency situation in Lesvos and implement a joint pilot with the Greek authorities for new reception facilities in the coming months.

Increased and more violent pushbacks from Greece

As reported in the second Quarterly Mixed Migration Update, allegedly pushbacks of boats from Greek waters have increased and become more violent. This is confirmed by Alarm Phone, an NGO that operates a telephone line and social media network for refugees and migrants in distress, reporting a substantial increase in reports of pushbacks since the pandemic. The NGO has recorded a total of 55 cases between March and August. One of the latest examples of pushbacks, reported by the Guardian, happened on the 24th August, where eight officers on a boat, some in black masks and armed with rifles, forced a group of people on a dinghy to come aboard at gunpoint. They punctured the dinghy with knives until it sank and allegedly detained the group denying them access to toilets and drinking water. In the morning they were dispatched into a life raft in Turkish waters.

New trend: Boats leaving from Lebanon to Cyprus

With the COVID19 pandemic, general economic downturn in Lebanon and the recent explosion in Beirut there has been a significant increase in the number of people leaving in boats from Lebanon to Cyprus. At least 21 fishing vessels managed by smugglers have left for Cyprus between July and Mid-September compared to only 19 boats during all of 2019. One significant case involved 37 people found adrift on the 14th of September off the coast of Lebanon. At least 6 people died on the dangerous journey.

Compared to the number of people attempting to reach Europe via other routes covered in this QMMU, the total numbers leaving for Cyprus is still low although seen as a significant new trend given the complex situation evolving in Lebanon.

<u>UNHCR has accused</u> Cyprus of illegally pushing back the boats departing from Lebanon and Turkey on the grounds of COVID19 safety measures around the COVID19 pandemic. Cyprus has denied any wrongdoing.

Read more about refugee and migrant arrivals and integration in Cyprus in the Thematic Section of this QMMU.

The Balkan migration routes

North-Macedonia introduces crisis measures justified by increased numbers of refugee and migrant arrivals

In July, North Macedonia announced a <u>30-day</u> 'state of <u>crisis</u>' and strengthened its security measures on its northern and southern borders with Greece and Serbia. The 'state of crisis' was justified on the grounds of an increased number of migrants and refugees entering and transiting the country. Concrete data on the number of detected entries was not revealed.

Tensions in North-Western Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the third quarter of 2020 tensions increased between the local population and transiting refugees and migrants in Una-Sana Canton in North-Western Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many refugees and migrants gather in Una-Sana Canton with the hope to cross into Croatia and reach the European Union. Authorities report that there are around 7000 migrants and refugees in Una-Sana Canton and only half of them are reside in official camp sites.

The situation has created frictions with the canton's residents. In the two of Bihac, residents announced a protest on the 29th of August calling for refugees and migrants to be removed from the streets. In the town of Velika Kladusa. People have gathered to intercept buses approaching the town with the aim of stopping for refugees and migrants from entering. The police were only present to prevent violence.

On <u>the 30th of September</u> authorities moved hundreds from a migrant reception centre in Bihac to a camp site. A fight ensued among Pakistanis and Afghanis during which two people were killed and 18 injured. It is not entirely clear what caused the fight but it was likely due to frustrations and looming over the future.

Smuggled refugees and migrants found in truck in Austria

On the 16th of September, Austrian police found 38 refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq and Turkey hidden in a refrigerator truck 30 kilometres from the border with Hungary. The group included six children, some of whom almost died of suffocation inside the truck. They received medical treatment before being detained with the rest of the group. The driver, who was a 51-year-old Turkish resident in Romania was arrested on suspicion of being part of a human smuggling ring. The refugees and migrants reported that they had each paid up to 8,000 euros for the transport.

Mixed Migration to Europe along the 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 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	Q2 & Q3 2020 difference	
<u>Italy (sea)</u>	2,255	4,854	3,838	2,794	4,149	16,777	12,628	304%

Peak in number of Mediterranean Sea crossings during the summer months, especially from Tunisia

The summer months have seen a peak in refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea in attempts to reach Italy, both owing to better weather conditions during these months but also due to the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially arrivals to Italy from Tunisia have increased, with the highest numbers of arrivals observed in nearly a decade. During the months of August, more than 2.230 Tunisians reached Italy. This increase in arrivals has fuelled diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

Tunisia imposed a lockdown of the country in March, which has greatly impacted the economy and especially the informal sectors. The economic crisis is exacerbated by a period of <u>political instability</u> One way for Tunisians looking to make the journey across the sea is reportedly as <u>pilots on smaller vessels</u> <u>managed by a larger smuggling network</u>. The pilots are often young fishermen who are finding no other options as the financial viability of the fishing industry has been declining for years.

Boat crossings from Libya have included <u>many refugees and migrants from Bangladesh</u>. As an example, in July more than 500 migrants and refugees arrived on Lampedusa; 362 were Bangladeshis.

Rescue gap at sea continues as SAR operations are criminalised

Despite the continued attempts by refugees and migrants to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy, the third quarter of 2020 saw a continued rescue gap at sea, with the criminalisation of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and uncoordinated disembarkations among EU member states. As of the 24th of September, UNHCR estimates that <u>495 people have died or gone missing</u> in the Mediterranean in 2020.

On the 13th of September, the <u>longest stand-off</u> in recent European maritime history ended. A total of 27 people were rescued in the Maltese SAR zone by the boat Mare Jonio and disembarked in Sicily after having ben stranded for almost 40 days on the Danish tanker Maersk Etienne.

Similarly, an Open Arms rescue vessel carrying 278 people including 56 unaccompanied children was left at sea during the third quarter of 2020 after Malta refused to let them disembark. As a result, 70 people

jumped overboard in desperation on the 17th of September followed by 48 others on the 18th of September.

Italian authorities <u>impounded</u> the boat Sea-Watch 4 based on the justification that saving lives was not in accordance with the ship's registration and that it had too many life vests on board.

The rescue vessel Alan Kurdi, reached Sardinia on the <u>25th of September</u> after a rescue mission on the 19th of September in which no European maritime rescue coordination centre took over the coordinating role for days. Alan Kurdi carried among others 62 minors.

The third quarter of 2020 also saw a new rescue vessel in the Mediterranean Sea, <u>Louise Michel</u>, funded by the British street artist Banksy and named after a French feminist anarchist.

In Italy, the third quarter of 2020 marks the country's first trial over a push-back, in which a captain of an Italian-flagged vessel faces charges for allegedly pushing back 101 refugees and migrants to Libya.

Political debate in Italy: refugees and migrants targeted as COVID19 carriers

In Italy, right-wing politicians continue to fuel the debate about refugees and migrants by claiming they are bringing COVID19 to the country. In response, the <u>government</u> has pointed out that new arrivals are a smaller part of the problem while complexities remain in terms of managing existing centres in the country and ensuring isolation and quarantine periods among people in poor living conditions. In early August, <u>256</u> out of <u>293 migrants and refugees</u> were infected in a centre in Treviso in Northern Italy, making this case one of the country's biggest COVID19 clusters during the third quarter of this year.

According to Italy's National Health Institute, <u>25 percent</u> of new infections registered in the country during the first two weeks of August were imported from abroad. Over half of those were Italians who had travelled abroad, and many others were foreigners who already lived in Italy and were returning to the country. Less than 5 percent of the total were newly arrived refugees and migrants.

Chain pushbacks from Italy and along the Balkan route

With an increase in the number of crossings from the Slovenian border to North-East of Italy, the Italian Interior Minister has announced intensified border controls along the Balkan route. Since the beginning of 2020, more than 3,000 people reportedly crossed the Slovenian border to Italy irregularly.

Along this route, we also see an increase in heavily <u>criticised</u> practises of chain pushbacks, which has resulted in the the push back of more than <u>400 people since the beginning of 2020</u>. These chain push backs are series of pushbacks that are continued from Slovenia and Croatia to Northern Bosnia and onwards to <u>Serbia by Bosnian police forces</u>.

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 Q2	2019 Q3	2019 Q4	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	Q2 & Q3 2020 difference	
Spain (sea)	4,866	8,328	7,365	4,615	2,551	10,617	8,066	316%
Spain (land)	1,424	1,754	1,803	1,140	147	79	-68	-46%
Total	6,290	10,082	9,168	5,755	2,698	10,696	7,998	296%

Arrivals to Canary Islands at their highest level

Arrivals to Canary Islands continue and <u>reach their highest in decades</u>. As reception centres find themselves at capacity on Gran Canaria, the island receiving most arrivals, more than 200 people were forced to camp on the dockside.

The Atlantic route from the West African coast is long and dangerous: <u>215 people have reportedly died</u> on this route between 1st of January and 30th of September 2020, and many more have gone missing.

The increase in people seeking to reach Europe via the Atlantic should be seen in light of the <u>intensified</u> <u>patrols at Morocco's Mediterranean shores</u> supported by EU funds. Subsequently, arrivals to the Spanish mainland have decreased while people are pushed to longer and even more dangerous routes.

168 refugees and migrants attempt to reach Spain on makeshift rafts

On <u>the 9th and 10th of September</u>, 168 migrants and refugees attempted to reach Spain with makeshift rafts but were stopped by the Moroccan coast guard and returned to Morocco.

While there are still attempts like the above, the number of refugees and migrants that try to reach the Spanish coast via the Western Mediterranean has <u>significantly decreased compared to 2019</u>.

Other updates on Mixed Migration to and within Europe

Spike in boat arrivals from France to the UK

During the third quarter of 2020 there was a spike in channel crossings from France to the UK causing the British government to enforce returns while 100 civil society groups in the UK demand solutions for safe and legal routes. By the 16th of September, 1.487 people had crossed the Channel that month. The total figure for crossings in 2020 is at 6.524.

The Home Office is allegedly focused on <u>increasing the number of return flights</u> of refugees and migrants to both France, Italy and Germany as reported by InfoMigrants. <u>On the 3rd of September</u>, the Guardian reported that eleven Syrian asylum seekers had been abandoned outside the airport in Madrid after a Home Office charter flight

On the 18th of September, the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee published a report criticizing the Home Office for, among other reasons, not being able to document return efforts of recent years One example is that the UK has blocked access to public funds for those not meeting criteria for asylum, something the Committee argues is not necessarily proven to impact people's return decisions.

Evictions of refugees and migrants.

On <u>the 19th of September</u>, the Guardian reported that the UK Home Office has announced in a letter that thousands of refused asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation are facing eviction from the country, if they do not have an outstanding appeal. They were provided with hotel accommodation by the Home Office and charity organisations when the COVID19 lockdown began in the UK.

EU policy updates

A new Pact on Migration and Asylum

The new <u>Pact on Migration and Asylum</u> was launched on the 23rd September and proposes a new direction from the European Commission for EU's asylum and migration policies. Altogether it's a package of 9 instruments including legislative proposals, recommendations and guidance¹.

The Pact overall focuses on facilitating fast screening processes including quick return of those not qualifying for international protection, strengthening support to external EU borders, building partnerships with non-EU countries and the establishment of a <u>flexible solidarity mechanism</u>. One of the key elements in the Pact is the replacement of the Dublin III Regulation with a new <u>Asylum and Migration Management Regulation</u>, according to which Member States are obligated to contribute solidarity measures. These measures would allow Member States to choose how to fulfill their 'solidarity quota' <u>by receiving asylum seekers, aiding returns or providing logistical support</u>.

Solidarity among EU member states has for long been a tense issue. Issues include finding a compromise between for example countries that are averse to mandatory quotas (e.g. Poland, Hungary and Austria) and providing support to southern European countries (e.g. Greece, Italy and Malta) receiving people arriving via the Mediterranean. In this regard, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has said that the new pact strike a "reasonable balance" with all member states sharing the "benefits" and "burdens". However, a number of EU anti-migrant states have already opposed the proposal.

In general, the Pact has been received with mixed feelings also from civil society. <u>ECRE noted</u> that while it's positive that Commissioner Johansson emphasized the importance of access to asylum and a calm rather than crisis approach to asylum and migration, there seems to be a "disconnect between the positive framing and the proposed legislation" focused on preventing arrivals. The Pact's strong focus on externalization, borders, detention and deportation has been equally criticized.

For the Pact to become a reality both the European Council and Parliament will have to adopt the full set of legislations, which most likely will turn into a cumbersome process. Meanwhile, civil society organizations are working on a detailed analysis of the proposal as well as on responses to influence the process and decision making.

¹ The 9 instruments are: 1) A new Screening Regulation, 2) An amended proposal revising the Asylum Procedures Regulation, 3) An amended proposal revising the Eurodac Regulation, 4) A new Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, 5) A new Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation, 6) A new Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint, 7) A new Recommendation on Resettlement and complementary pathways, 8) A new Recommendation on Search and Rescue operations by private vessels, 9) New Guidance on the Facilitators Directive

Thematic Focus: Zooming in on refugee and migrant arrivals and integration in Cyprus

One of the critical elements in the new <u>EU Pact on Migration and Asylum</u> is, as mentioned above, a new system for responsibility sharing among EU member states to take pressure off countries at the EU's borders. This proposed system has been heavily debated and <u>opposed by EU states with a clear anti-migrant stance</u>. The failure of EU states to agree on such a system to share the management of refugee and migrant arrivals to the EU is felt among border countries –not only in Spain, Italy and Greece, but also in smaller countries like Cyprus. Despite the relatively low number of arrivals to Cyprus compared to other EU countries, the country struggles with issues around refugee and migrant arrivals and integration.

Just <u>726</u> people have arrived irregularly by sea this year to Cyprus, compared to more than 12,000 in Greece and almost 22,500 in Italy. Traditionally, most people arriving to Cyprus enter by plane or ferry to the north of Cyprus accessible from the Turkish mainland. However, as reported earlier, in recent months there has been an increase in boats from Lebanon linked to the COVID19 pandemic, economic downturn in Lebanon and the recent explosion in Beirut. At least <u>21 fishing vessels</u> have left for Cyprus between July and Mid-September compared to only 19 boats during all of 2019.

In addition, there are around 32,000 <u>recognised refugees</u> and people with <u>pending applications</u> in Cyprus. While these numbers might sound small, it accounts for about four percent of the entire population of around 800,000 people. Germany's refugee and asylum seeker population account for around <u>2.4 percent</u> of its population.

The country hasn't had an integration plan since 2016 and the migration system in general is outdated. As such, Cyprus is facing significant issues with integration of refugees and migrants on the island. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic and its economic impact: there is rising unemployment, a housing crisis and rising instances of xenophobia. Recently, on the 29th of September, a Syrian asylum seeker was abducted and eleven Syrian men were eventually arrested and charged for murder. As the case was covered, Syrians and other Muslims were pictured as coming from fundamentally alien cultures steeped in violence and with little hope for assimilation. UNHCR has since expressed that they are "very concerned with the increasingly xenophobic attitude" among "segments of the society".

This rising frustration over migration can be attributed to a failure of Cypriot authorities to adopt a comprehensive national integration strategy. However, the broader failure may also be ascribed to EU states as there has been no <u>regularised system to share refugee hosting</u>. It is now yet to be seen if and how the new Pact in practice may change such matters if the new <u>Asylum and Migration Management Regulation is adopted</u>.

Highlighted New Research and Reports



Malta: Waves of Impunity. Malta's Human Rights
Violations and Europe's Responsibilities in the
Central Mediterranean

Amnesty International | September 2020

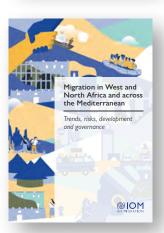
The report looks at how Maltese authorities have failed to respect and protect the rights of refugees and migrants at sea and how this is part of a wider EU regional strategy, which traps refugees and migrants in Libya. This report describes how the strategy work and the impact it is having on human lives.



A Reluctant Welcome: Exploring Issues of
Pushbacks, Treatment in Detention, and Living
Conditions for Displaced People in Detention

Refugee Rights Europe I 2020

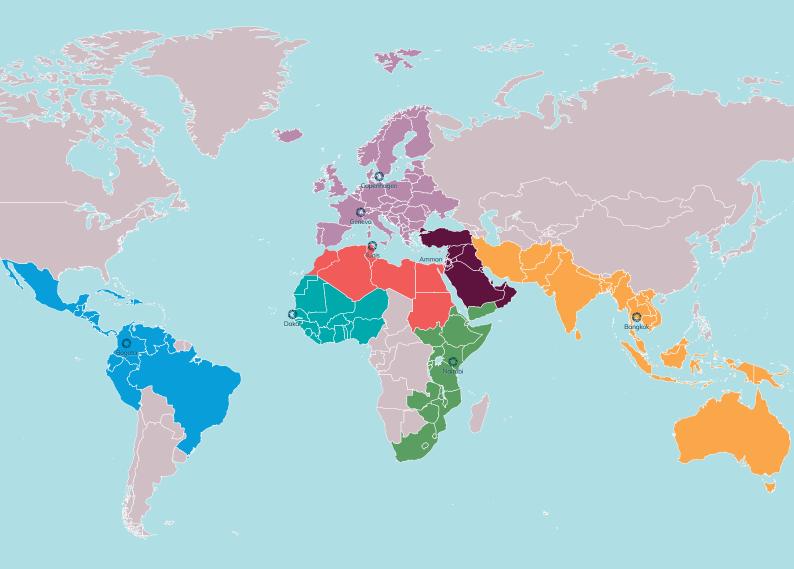
The report looks at Italy's engagement in pushbacks to Slovenia from where people are further pushed back to Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia. It also looks at Italy's renewed agreement with Libya and closure of seaports during COVID19.



Migration in West and North Africa and Across the Mediterranean

IOM GMDAC I September 2020

The report seeks to enhance understanding of what contributes to migrants' resilience and development in countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as how policies and programmes interact with and affect such realities.



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:

mixedmigration.org and follow us at @Mixed_Migration



