

# Monthly data collection on the migration situation in the EU

## March 2017 Highlights

1–28 February 2017

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**For the March 2017 focus section on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) asylum seekers, see:**

[fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/march-monthly-migration-focus-lgbti](http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/march-monthly-migration-focus-lgbti)

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***Since November 2016, FRA's monthly reports highlight key developments in 14 Member States: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. This month's report is published alongside a focus section on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) asylum seekers.***

## New arrivals

### External land and sea borders

Arrivals to Italy nearly doubled to some [8,320 persons](#), mostly coming from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Nigeria. Two persons died trying to cross the border to France by train.

Arrivals to Greece continued to decrease to fewer than 1,000 people in February. Fewer than 200 persons were apprehended at the border and within the territory of Bulgaria.

Arrivals were also rather low and stable in Slovakia, amounting to fewer than 150 persons, mainly coming from the Ukraine.

Some 770 people entered Spain by climbing over the fences in Ceuta and Melilla. While official figures on arrivals by sea are not available, more than 160 people arrived in Spain by small boats; at least two people went missing. Arrivals in 2016 mainly came from Algeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Syria – 8 % were children.

The police in Hungary prevented significantly more people (2,183) from climbing over the fence at the Hungarian border than in the preceding month (1,616). The police returned 1,050 asylum seekers apprehended within eight kilometres from the southern borders to Serbia, where they have to wait to apply for asylum in one of the transit zones. The police also apprehended 324 people within the territory. Reports continued to emerge about multiple cases of brutality and violence by the police and local vigilante groups in Hungary and a lack of investigations of such cases.

### Internal borders

Arrivals to Austria remained stable at some 2,450 asylum seekers, coming mainly from Afghanistan, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria.

An estimated 300 foreigners entered Denmark in February and about 180 persons applied for asylum.

Arrivals in Sweden continued to decrease to some 1,750 asylum seekers, including some 700 women and 590 children.

## Initial registration and asylum processing

### At the border

The United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) reported that asylum seekers applying for international

protection at the Polish border are still frequently placed in detention, including families with children and victims of torture. An appeal against detention has to be prepared in Polish – this requires legal assistance, which is not yet available systematically and continues to be the subject of a pending [public call](#). Appellants' requests to be present during the hearings on their appeals against detention are usually ignored.

Many people kept arriving in Ventimiglia, Italy, near the border with France. In the second half of 2016, an estimated 5,550 people were apprehended and transferred to southern Italy.

The Public Prosecutor of Catania, Italy started an [inquiry](#) into small NGOs engaged in save-and-rescue efforts to assess their goals, sources of funding and the impact on policies against human trafficking and smuggling.

Due to severe cold weather conditions, few asylum seekers camped at the Horgos and Kelebia border sites at the Hungarian border to await admission into the transit zones. NGOs observed some 250 people sleeping outdoors around the Serbian town of Subotica, waiting to enter Hungary. Hungarian authorities continued to admit up to 5 people a working day in each of the two transit zones, resulting in around 50 people being granted access weekly to seek asylum. The transit zones no longer accept asylum seekers on weekends.

## **Asylum**

Border guards in Poland registered 207 applications for international protection at border-crossing points, while refusing entry in more than 5,100 cases. Access to the asylum procedure remains restricted, as UNHCR and NGOs reported. Border guards regularly refuse entry to persons expressing their intention to seek asylum – many of them families with children – due to the lack of valid visas or travel documents, as asylum seekers interviewed by Human Rights Watch [reported](#).

The number of asylum applicants registered in Greece remained at a high level, exceeding 5,630 applications – lodged mainly by persons from Iraq, Pakistan and Syria.

About 1,200 applicants for international protection were relocated from Greece, mainly to Belgium, Germany and Portugal. According to the [Greek Asylum Service](#), the average time for receiving a response to a request for relocation from Member States is 29 days and tends to be increasing; another 58 days, on average, are necessary for preparing the asylum seeker's reception. By 1 February, Greece registered a total of 24,233 relocation candidates and received pledges by Member States for 15,164 – with a significant gap still to be filled.

The staff of the Greek Asylum Service went on strike on 13 February to request immediate payment of the wages of employees covered by the limited time service agreement, which had been delayed following a transfer of competence to the newly established Ministry of Migration Policy.

Some 385 persons applied for asylum in Bulgaria, including more than 120 children.

The Slovak Migration Office recorded 20 new asylum applications, mainly from Afghan, Iraqi, Nigerian and Syrian applicants. In addition, Slovakia received 16 relocated asylum seekers (of an agreed 100 asylum seekers in total).

Asylum applications in Germany continued to decrease in January, to fewer than 18,000 applications; more than 30 % of these were submitted by children. Applications came primarily from Afghan, Iraqi and Syrian citizens. Some 390,000 applications were still pending in February.

More than half (56 %) of the asylum applications assessed in Italy in 2016 were decided negatively; 5 % were given refugee status, 14 % subsidiary protection and 21 % humanitarian protection, according to a [hearing](#) of the National Commission for the Right to Asylum before a parliamentary inquiry commission. The territorial commission in Brescia [reportedly](#) rejected almost all (97 %) applications in the past three months.

By 7 February, about 3,200 applicants for international protection had been relocated from Italy, of some 7,600 pledged and against some 34,950 formally committed. They were mainly relocated to Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Germany has agreed to relocate 500 asylum seekers from Italy each month.

Some 2,500 Syrians [reportedly](#) applied for asylum in Melilla, Spain, in 2016.

Spain received 107 asylum seekers relocated from Greece, including 57 children, bringing total relocations to Spain to some 850 persons; the country had accepted some 290 resettled asylum seekers by 23 February.

Asylum applications continued to decrease in the Netherlands. Some 2,700 persons applied for asylum in January, mainly from Eritrea, Syria and stateless persons, and including some 170 unaccompanied children.

Asylum case officers in Austria are increasingly calling into question the authenticity of documents from Syria, according to NGOs. The authorities are not obliged to substantiate the reasons for their doubts, making it difficult to file complaints against decisions deeming documents fraudulent. Similarly, NGOs stated that case officers have more frequently questioned the existence or authenticity of marriages.

Asylum applications in Hungary continued to decrease to some 430 applications, including 120 persons who applied in a police procedure on apprehension. However, more than 150 asylum seekers reported to UNHCR that they were denied the opportunity to apply for asylum upon apprehension. The Immigration and Asylum Office rejected 908 asylum applications and issued 13 positive decisions. More than 600 applications were closed because the applicants had left the country.

## Return

Some 450 persons voluntarily returned from Greece; 825 were removed forcibly.

Several German federal states continued to raise [concerns](#) about returns to Afghanistan, and suspended returns or only conducted these for prosecuted criminals.

On 22 February, Germany returned 18 rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan, [some](#) were arrested at their work place without a chance to pack, and including an ill and paralysed person who required immediate medical treatment upon arrival. According to the Jesuit Refugee Council, removals of seriously ill persons from Germany are suspended less often than in the past.

While attempting to avoid being returned, a Tunisian citizen fell off a terrace at the Fiumicino airport in Italy and died.

'Hot returns' of people climbing over the fences in Ceuta and Melilla without initiating any official procedure continued. There are no practical instructions or protocols in place to help the Guardia Civil ensure that such returns are implemented in accordance with basic human rights law, such as the principle of non-*refoulement* or the rights of the child. A senator's [question](#) to the Minister of the Interior on the lack of instructions remained unanswered. Amnesty International [reported](#) excessive force and unlawful expulsions in Ceuta and Melilla.

## Reception conditions

### Hotspots

Despite transfers to the mainland, most of the Reception and Identification Centres on the Aegean islands remained overcrowded. Incidents of self-harm, suicide attempts and panic attacks were regularly reported on Samos. Overcrowding, cold and wet weather, and poor sanitation conditions have been of particular concern at the Vathy centre.

Italy announced the opening of five additional hotspots, i.e. in Crotone, Reggio Calabria, Palermo, Messina and Corigliano Calabro. Reception facilities in Lampedusa [reportedly](#) remained critically overcrowded, with children and adults living together and sleeping on the floor.

### Immigration detention

The number of persons in detention pending removal increased in Germany as well as in the Vordernberg facility in Austria.

Nearly 2,770 persons were in detention pending removal in Greece, including some 40 unaccompanied children. Upon apprehension, a man from Algeria with hepatitis and a drug addiction died in police custody in Petrou Rali, where medical care and sanitary conditions have been [criticised](#).

Civil society organisations [criticised](#) apprehension practices in Italy, where the police apprehended four women in a Roma encampment in Palermo (Sicily) and moved them to the Identification and Expulsion Centre (CIE) in Rome. Two of these women were born in Italy, but they had become irregular at the age of 18 years – one with an 11-year-old daughter and an elderly woman suffering from chronic diseases.

Some 200 asylum seekers were detained in Hungary, including eight children. According to NGOs, except for unaccompanied children, detention is the default option.

## **Safety and material conditions**

UNHCR continued to coordinate evacuations from unsuitable sites in northern Greece and provided transportation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Migration Policy.

Residents of the Elliniko site in Greece announced a hunger strike in response to bad living conditions, and organised a demonstration.

Many children are staying in the camp at Grande-Synthe, France, which has been hosting between 1,400 and 2,000 persons since the closure of the camp at Calais at the end of 2016. Safety risks at the camp have increased, with the reported presence of traffickers; the circulation of firearms and knives; and violence, particularly sexual assaults and rapes. Victims are reluctant to report incidents due to fear of reprisal, making it difficult to quantify such incidents.

A fight between Iraqi and Syrian asylum seekers broke out at the centre in Harmanli, Bulgaria, originally due to an argument about the dining schedule.

The Italian Court of Auditors [reported](#) significant differences among municipalities as to the management and costs of reception facilities within the system for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR). Agreements with private organisations in charge of managing the centres are not always based on transparent calls for tender.

The Red Cross centre in Ventimiglia, Italy persistently lacks hot water. As the Prefect required migrants to be pre-identified before reception at the centre, many live outside the centre within the local railway station, where local authorities closed public toilets and fountains to avoid the spreading of contagious diseases.

Asylum seekers in Caserta (Campania) and Pisa (Tuscany), Italy demonstrated against poor reception conditions. In Mortara (Lombardy), asylum seekers protested against being expelled from the local reception centre while their appeals against negative asylum decisions were still pending.

The maximum capacity of open reception facilities in Hungary has been decreased from 706 to 486 places.

The Centres for Temporary Stay (CETIs) in Ceuta and Melilla are overcrowded, with Ceuta hosting more than 1,400 people, and both lacking appropriate conditions for accommodating asylum seekers who sometimes stay there for months before being transferred to the mainland. In line with previous judgments, the High Court of Andalusia [reiterated](#) that all asylum seekers are considered to be legally staying in Spain and, although they are under the control of the police in Ceuta and Melilla, this does not imply that their freedom of movement can be restricted.

## **Healthcare and basic services**

In France, in the Calais and Paris areas and near the Italian border, access to shelter, food, drinking water and sanitary facilities is severely limited and poor. The ministers for housing and the interior refused to provide emergency reception facilities in Calais to accommodate the many migrants who have returned to the area. The mayor of Calais blocked the entrance to the *Secours Catholique* with a skip to prevent the installation of showers and discourage

migrants from remaining in the area. The skip had to be removed following an [administrative court order](#).

## **Vulnerable persons**

A UNHCR analysis on Greece shows that more than half (57 %) of the reported incidents of sexual and gender-based violence occurred in Greece after arrival, affecting predominantly women and girls (84 %), and many children (some 16 %). Violent incidents occurred on Leros and Samos, which affected, among others, unaccompanied children accommodated at the Vathy centre on 9 and 10 February.

Asylum seekers with special reception needs are received arbitrarily upon return to Italy following Dublin transfers, without access to SPRAR facilities and without sharing of information on their special needs with the reception facility, according to a [report](#) by the Danish and Swiss Refugee Councils. Applicants believe that neither their nor their children's needs were considered in decisions on their placement. Insufficient communication with the transferring Member State risks infringing upon the children's best interests, according to the report.

A woman living in a reception centre near Rome committed suicide while awaiting the outcome of her asylum application.

The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) published a [report](#) on Italy, recommending binding procedures and training to proactively identify victims of trafficking, including at hotspots; establishing a national referral mechanism; granting a 30-day reflection period whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is a victim of trafficking; and ensuring that appeals have an automatic suspensive effect on removal.

LGBTI asylum seekers in Finland [reportedly](#) face inadequate and sometimes inappropriate assessments of their applications and are offered insufficient specific support.

## **Child protection**

### **Identification**

Children made up some 44 % of asylum seekers in Denmark in February, and unaccompanied children some [14 %](#), in January 2017. An asylum centre in the Vesthimmerland municipality, which operates several reception facilities, noted a significant increase in the share of families with children since rules on family reunification were restricted throughout Europe.

An informal educational space was opened on Leros, Greece, which currently houses 150 children aged 6 to 18 years funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. It provides an interim solution for children before they enrol in the formal educational system. Some 2,500 refugee children are attending public schools on mainland Greece, according to the Greek Education Ministry.

Nearly 400 unaccompanied children arrived in Italy in January and February 2017.



Some 50,300 unaccompanied children, as well as some 13,300 young adults, have been under the protection of the youth welfare offices in Germany since November 2016.

The Prefect of Agrigento (Sicily), Italy, and the local healthcare authorities signed a protocol regulating a non-invasive age assessment procedure to be implemented by a multidisciplinary team.

Some 590 asylum-seeking children arrived in Sweden, including nearly 90 unaccompanied, representing a decrease compared with the three previous months. Also in Sweden, the implementation of a [new method for age assessments](#) is underway, including x-rays of wisdom teeth and MRI scans of knee joints. This will affect between 3,000 and 14,000 unaccompanied children, according to the Swedish Migration Agency.

### **Accommodation and family reunification**

In France, unaccompanied children continue to stay at Reception and Orientation centres (CAOMIs), where national child protection law does not apply, although the centres were supposed to have been closed within three months after the dismantling of the Calais camp, i.e. by January 2017. The Public Defender of Rights also noted several [difficulties](#) concerning access to care and support for unaccompanied children.

The only centre in Ventimiglia at which children can be hosted is a faith-based reception centre. Some unaccompanied children were [reportedly](#) readmitted informally to Italy from France.

The Italian association *Fondazione Migrantes* presented its [report](#) on the situation of unaccompanied children in Italy, highlighting inadequate reception conditions and the overuse of temporary reception centres rather than the decentralised SPRAR structures.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child [asked](#) Spain to stop an unaccompanied child's return to Morocco until his age was assessed.

The [annual report](#) published by the Ombudsman in Spain noted the disappearance of girl victims of trafficking from child centres as well as the [presence of girls](#) who may be victims of trafficking in Aliens Detention Centres.

UNICEF [reported](#) on child victims of trafficking in Spain, criticising that such victims remain invisible due to the reliance on self-identification; exploitation in hard-to-access places; and the lack of a National Referral Mechanism, which makes it impossible to collect data and understand the patterns of child trafficking.

Family reunification in Spain has been difficult for several reasons, including the relatively high fees charged for each family member, and that a parent must prove that he/she has sole custody over the child applying for a visa if the other parent remains abroad. In addition, consulates often assess the link with the child or whether a child is a minor differently than the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, which authorises family reunification. However, the [Supreme Court](#) has held that such differences cannot constitute a ground for denying a visa for family reunification (see below for further national jurisprudence).



Despite the fact that some 20,000 people have requested family reunification in the Netherlands and that processing is reportedly very slow, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service has decided to [cut](#) the number of employees.

Family reunification in Sweden has remained practically impossible because family members in Iraq and Syria cannot reach an embassy to apply for a visa, according to the Swedish Red Cross.

Unaccompanied children in Austria are affected by negative decisions on family reunification if they turn 18 before the date of the decision. In January 2016, the Austrian Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgerichtshof*) clarified that, in proceedings concerning a parent's application for an entry document to join his/her child in Austria, the crucial date for assessing the child's age is not the date of application, but the date of the decision.

As asylum centres are closed in the Netherlands due to fewer arrivals, many asylum seekers are relocated within the country. The Dutch Ombudsman for Children [reported](#) that the rights of children, in particular to education, are insufficiently considered in decisions on repeated relocation, which is often not proven to be necessary.

According to a survey by the National Board of Health and Welfare with the municipalities in Sweden, more than 50 % of municipal care unit staff know of suicide plans among unaccompanied children. By mid-February 2017, 68 unaccompanied children attempted suicide, and three have committed suicide since 2016. Main concerns include the risk of expulsion; uncertainty once they turn 18 or are deemed to be adults; and anxiety about the transfer to adult facilities in other municipalities. Specialised psychiatric support for children is largely inaccessible except for acute and very serious cases, because treatment is considered ineffective as long as a decision on asylum is pending, continuing the traumatic situation. Statistics on asylum seekers' causes of death are [not specifically collected](#).

In Finland, transfers to other municipalities following a positive asylum decision have had negative effects on unaccompanied children, according to the [Finnish Ombudsman for Children](#) and the Central Union for Child Welfare. Due to insufficient places, transfers have been delayed and municipalities have become selective. The processing of asylum applications of unaccompanied children has also been delayed.

## Legal, social and policy responses

### Legal changes

Italy signed an [agreement](#) with Libya aimed at strengthening external border control, pursuant to which Italy will provide technical and humanitarian assistance and training, including to prevent irregular migration from other African countries. NGOs severely criticised the agreement for its potential violation of fundamental rights, particularly of [children](#) and [asylum seekers detained](#) in Libya.

Italy signed a similar agreement with Tunisian authorities, who agreed to receive up to 200 returnees per month rescued by the Italian Coast Guard. ASGI [criticised](#) the agreement for its potential of violating non-*refoulement*.

A [draft bill](#) in Denmark regulating the use of force and penalties at centres for unaccompanied children was criticised by [NGOs](#).

A related [draft bill](#) on the increased use of biometrics allows seizing asylum seekers' documents and other items, including personal electronic devices such as mobile phones and tablets, if it serves the interest of verifying the person's identity or possible connection to other countries or if it is "of importance for informing the case". The proposal also foresees 'joint assessments' of asylum applications, which means assessing two or more applications together by using information from one application in the other applications. Furthermore, the draft bill allows retaining, for 30 years, fingerprints and photographs taken for identification purposes, without specific provisions for children. Organisations have questioned whether the measures called for in the draft bill are proportional pursuant to human rights obligations.

[Civil society organisations](#) in Denmark expressed further [concerns](#) over the draft bill establishing an emergency mechanism allowing the authorities to directly turn back persons at the border to other "Dublin countries", stating that such onward transfers would interfere with the right to apply for asylum, the right to family life and the best interests of the child.

[Draft legislative amendments](#) in Hungary foresee the systematic detention of asylum seekers in containers in transit zones for the full duration of the asylum procedure and the return of asylum seekers currently accommodated in open facilities to the new border detention facilities. The draft bill also extends the grounds on which a "state of crisis due to mass migration" may be ordered, allows for interviews to be carried out remotely via telecommunication from the detention containers at the border during judicial review, requires asylum seekers to cover the costs of their detention unless they succeed in getting a protection status, suspends any appeal possibility against detention, including for children, and drastically shortens the deadlines to appeal against an inadmissibility or negative asylum decision, to three days. NGOs have expressed [concern](#) that the new law will lead to push-backs and the eventual suspension of Dublin transfers to Hungary.

The Greek Council of State referred to the Grand Chamber the cases of two Syrian refugees who appealed inadmissibility decisions on [their](#) asylum applications allowing for their transfer to Turkey.

The Slovak Parliament discussed an [amendment](#) to the Foreigners Act, which would improve the conditions for children in immigration detention only slightly by providing for the provision of meals five times a day, access to outdoor space three times a day, and access to education as soon as possible and at the latest within three months of detention.

In Germany, a [draft bill](#) to accelerate returns would allow the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to examine asylum seekers' mobile phones and SIM cards to establish their identity; detention or electronic ankle bracelets to be applied even if the return cannot be carried out within three months if persons considered a threat to public security are concerned; and extend the maximum duration of short-term detention pending immediate removal from four to ten days.

The Court of Cassation in Italy ruled (in judgment No. 1835) that the local juvenile court must promptly appoint a guardian for unaccompanied children to assist them in applying for international protection or obtaining a residence permit.

The ECtHR ordered an [interim measure](#) asking the Italian authorities to move promptly two unaccompanied children accommodated in inadequate conditions in the reception centre of Cona (Veneto), to a specialised reception facility for children. The court also deemed illegitimate the age assessment procedure applied to the two children because it was based merely on wrist x-rays, without the use of the multidisciplinary approach envisaged by Italian and EU legislation.

Five Sudanese citizens who were expelled from Italy based on a bilateral police agreement in August 2016 [applied](#) to the ECtHR for compensation for the alleged violation of their right to apply for asylum.

The Ordinary Court of Milan, Italy [ordered](#) the Northern League political party to pay damages to two associations that complained about the use of racist, derogatory language on some of the party's posters.

[NGOs](#) and the [Court of Cassation section of the Italian National Association of Judges](#) strongly criticised a decree that restricts appeal options in Italy, introduces new rules on expulsion and detention and allows for video recording hearings by the territorial commission to avoid another hearing before the judge.

The Spanish Supreme Court [recognised](#) the appellant's right to obtain a family reunification visa through the Spanish Embassy in Pakistan because the appellant's documentation was previously found to be suitable for obtaining such a visa by the Ministry of the Interior.

The Spanish Supreme Court also [denied](#) a request for a family reunification visa due to lack of evidence that the appellant was economically dependent on both his daughter and his son-in-law.

The Dutch parliament [approved a bill](#) that obliges persons who have been granted international protection status to sign a declaration of participation, committing to basic values such as freedom, equality, solidarity and participation. The declaration will become part of the naturalisation process that is obligatory for obtaining Dutch citizenship.

In Austria, the Alien Law Amendment Act remained under discussion. [UNHCR](#) and NGOs are concerned about the possible suspension of basic care for asylum seekers in accelerated procedures, and possible legal uncertainty arising from a provision providing for the imposition of a fine or confinement sentence for not attending counselling on voluntary return after receiving a first-instance negative decision.

## **Policy responses**

Housing is a key obstacle to integration in Slovakia, where NGOs have managed to ensure private housing for relocated mothers with children on a voluntary basis. The Migration Office and the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia have been assessing possibilities for making municipal flats available.

The Slovak Interior Ministry established a unit of 100 staff within the National Criminal Agency to tackle increasing extremism.

The Italian Ministry of the Interior [instructed](#) police in Turin, Brindisi and Caltanissetta to intensify checks to identify Nigerian migrants living irregularly in Italy, indicating that up to 50 women and 45 men can be held at Identification and Expulsion Centres (CIEs) pending their return. Seven Nigerian women were subsequently arrested and two of them moved to the CIE in Rome. [Several NGOs criticised](#) the instruction, claiming it increases the risk of violating the right to protection of persons who are often victims of human trafficking.

The Ministry of the Interior in Italy signed a "[National Compact for an Italian Islam](#)" with nine representatives of faith-based Islamic organisations, agreeing to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, train religious leaders and ensure transparency concerning funding.

### **Responses by civil society, local and political actors**

In Budapest, Hungary, people protested against an appellate court's decision to uphold the detention of 11 persons charged with terrorism and mass rioting for protesting against the closure of the border at Röske in September 2015. According to NGOs, the detention is arbitrary and unjustified.

Three associations in Hungary published a comprehensive [report](#) on a future asylum system in Hungary, proposing small one-stop-shop registration camps instead of transit zones.

Several Polish cities – including Sopot, Gdańsk and Łódź – expressed their willingness to accept asylum seekers, while the government continued to object to resettlement and relocation.

Protests against the EU-Turkey agreement and poor reception conditions took place in Greece following the deaths of refugees at the hotspot facilities.

In a [public letter](#) to the prime minister of France, the National Consultative Committee on Human Rights criticised the questioning of journalists and persons supporting asylum seekers.

Public manifestations of anti-migrant attitudes increased in Bulgaria, where parliamentary elections are approaching. Local resistance against the accommodation of two Afghan boys was so strong that the boys had to be moved several times and eventually separated, prompting the younger boy to abscond. Demonstrations also took place against the resettlement of a Syrian family granted protection on humanitarian grounds in Elin Pelin, whose mayor said the family must find another place to live.

A Slovak MP [sought](#) to ban by law the construction of mosques in Slovakia, claiming these would be centres of terrorism. There are currently no mosques in Slovakia.

Faith-based organisations in Italy, including the Community of Sant'Egidio, visited Morocco with a view to establishing a humanitarian channel for asylum seekers to reach Italy legally.

The mayor of a small town near Benevento (Campania), Italy, blocked the road to a facility that was to receive 34 asylum seekers, who subsequently had to be transferred to another facility.

Large-scale demonstrations in support of refugees took place in several Spanish cities. Between 160,000 and 300,000 people took to the streets in Barcelona,

criticising the restrictive approach to receiving refugees. Some members of the Catalan government responded by referring protesters to the central government, noting that it has the main competence on the issue.

The Neighbourhood Brigades for Monitoring Human Rights, a civil society initiative in Madrid aiming to report police checks based on ethnic profiling and large-scale apprehension operations, [called for support for their complaint to the UN International Committee on Human Rights](#) concerning fines imposed on them by the Madrid government.

## Hate speech and violent crime

UNHCR and [NGOs](#) in Poland observed and reported pervasive [hate speech](#) and an increasing number of violent crimes motivated by prejudice.

The local prosecutor in Mytilene (Lesvos), Greece initiated [proceedings](#) against a radio station owner for “spreading false news” and “public incitement to violence and hatred” upon a complaint by the Association of Media Employees.

A Pakistani man was attacked – presumably on racist motives – in Aspropyrgos, Greece, hospitalised and subsequently detained for removal. His removal was suspended after the arrest became public and the protection available for victims of racist crimes was applied to his case. Such protection consists of a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, valid for the duration of the criminal proceedings relating to the attack.

A woman was detained and investigated for producing extremist material in Slovakia after she published a video of herself destroying and dishonouring the Quran and threatening all Muslim persons. The video was very widely shared and several gatherings in her support took place in the Czech Republic.

For [2016](#), a total of 3,533 attacks against refugees and accommodation facilities, and 217 attacks against support organisations, were registered in Germany. For [2017](#), 18 attacks against refugees and their accommodation facilities were registered, including six arson attacks.

In a public speech on 17 February, the Secretary of the Northern League party in Italy [called](#) for a “mass cleansing” to free Italian towns of irregular migrants. On the same day, a firecracker exploded in front of a reception centre near Verona (Veneto); no injuries occurred.

## Stakeholders interviewed in March 2017 (highlights and focus section)

| Country  | Stakeholders interviewed   |
|----------|--|
| Austria  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Ministry of the Interior (<i>Bundesministerium für Inneres</i>), Department III/9 (<i>Abteilung III/9 Grundversorgung und Bundesbetreuung</i>); Department III/10 (<i>Abteilung III/10 – Grund- und menschenrechtliche Angelegenheiten</i>);</li> <li>• Caritas Styria (<i>Caritas Steiermark</i>);</li> <li>• Caritas Vienna (<i>Caritas Vienna</i>);</li> <li>• Red Cross Austria (<i>Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz</i>);</li> <li>• Antidiscrimination office Styria (<i>Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark</i>);</li> <li>• Federal Agency for State Protection and Counter Terrorism (<i>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und Terrorismusbekämpfung, BVT</i>);</li> <li>• Queer Base and TransX.</li> </ul> |
| Bulgaria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Agency for Refugees (SAR) (<i>Държавна агенция за бежанците, ДАБ</i>);</li> <li>• Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General Border Police (MoI – DGBP) (<i>Министерство на вътрешните работи, Главна дирекция „Гранична полиция“, МВР – ГДГП</i>);</li> <li>• Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) (<i>Български червен кръст, БЧК</i>);</li> <li>• Refugee Support Group (RSG);</li> <li>• LGBT Youth Organisation “Deystvie” (<i>Младежка ЛГБТ организация „Действие“</i>).</li> </ul>   |
| Denmark  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Danish Ministry of Justice (<i>Justitsministeriet</i>);</li> <li>• The Danish Immigration Service (<i>Udlændingestyrelsen</i>);</li> <li>• Asylum Center, Vesthimmerland Municipality (<i>Asylcenter Vesthimmerland</i>);</li> <li>• The Danish Red Cross (<i>Røde Kors</i>);</li> <li>• The Danish Refugee Council (<i>Dansk Flygtningehjælp</i>);</li> <li>• LGBT Asylum.</li> </ul>  |
| Finland  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish Immigration Service (<i>Maahanmuuttovirasto/Migrationsverket</i>);</li> <li>• National Police Board (<i>Poliisihallitus/Polisstyrelsen</i>);</li> <li>• Refugee Advice Centre (<i>Pakolaisneuvonta/Flyktingrådgivningen</i>);</li> <li>• Helsinki reception centre;</li> <li>• HeSeta;</li> <li>• Central Union for Child Welfare (<i>Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto/Centralförbundet för Barnskydd</i>);</li> <li>• Amnesty Finland.</li> </ul>   |
| France   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Defender of Rights (<i>Le Défenseur des droits - DDD</i>);</li> <li>• National Consultative Committee on Human Rights (<i>Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme - CNCDH</i>);</li> <li>• Service centre for migrants in Calais (<i>Plateforme de service aux migrants à Calais</i>);</li> <li>• Doctors of the World (<i>Médecins du Monde</i>) - France;</li> <li>• Committee for the health of exiles (<i>Comité pour la santé des exilés - COMEDE</i>);</li> <li>• Association The voice of the child (<i>La voix de l’enfant</i>);</li> </ul>  |



| Country | Stakeholders interviewed   |
|---------|--|
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association Active Life (<i>La Vie Active</i>) ;</li> <li>• French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) (<i>Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides</i>);</li> <li>• Association for Support, Defence of Homosexuality, and Equality for all Sexual Orientations (<i>Association d'Aide, de Défense Homosexuelle, pour l'Égalité des Orientations Sexuelles</i>)(ADHEOS);</li> <li>• Association for the Recognition of the Right to immigration and residence of homosexuals and transsexuals (<i>Association pour la Reconnaissance des Droits des personnes Homosexuelles et transsexuelles à l'Immigration et au Séjour</i>) (ARDHIS);</li> <li>• Reception and accommodation centres for applicants for asylum (<i>Centre d'accueil de demandeurs d'asile de Paris</i>) (CADA) in Paris;</li> <li>• Reception and accommodation centres for applicants for asylum (<i>Centre d'accueil de demandeurs d'asile de Evry</i>) (CADA) in Evry.</li> </ul>  |
| Germany | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (<i>Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend</i>);</li> <li>• Federal Ministry of the Interior (<i>Bundesministerium des Inneren</i>);</li> <li>• Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (<i>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge</i>);</li> <li>• Federal Association for Unaccompanied Minor Refugees (<i>Bundesfachverband Unbegleitete Minderjährige Flüchtlinge</i>);</li> <li>• Jesuit Refugee Service (<i>Jesuiten Flüchtlingsdienst, JRS</i>);</li> <li>• Federal Police (<i>Bundespolizei</i>);</li> <li>• Counselling Centre Inter* and Trans* QUEER LEBEN in Berlin (<i>Inter* und Trans* Beratung QUEER LEBEN</i>);</li> <li>• SUPPORT – empowering homosexual and transsexual refugees (<i>SUPPORT - Homosexuelle und transgeschlechtliche Geflüchtete stärken. Bildungs- und Sozialwerk des Lesben- und Schwulenverbandes Berlin-Brandenburg (BLSB) e.V.</i>);</li> <li>• Ministry of the Interior and Sports Saxony-Anhalt (<i>Ministerium für Inneres und Sport des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt</i>);</li> <li>• Ministry for Work, Social Issues and Integration Saxony-Anhalt (<i>Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Integration des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt</i>);</li> <li>• Ministry for the Interior and for Federal Issues (<i>Ministerium für Inneres und Bundesangelegenheiten des Landes Schleswig-Holstein</i>);</li> <li>• Fliederlich – Gaylesbian Centre Nürnberg (<i>Fliederlich e.V. - Schwulesbisches Zentrum Nürnberg</i>).</li> </ul> |
| Greece  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry for Migration Policy (Υπουργείο Μεταναστευτικής Πολιτικής);</li> <li>• Asylum Service Greece (Υπηρεσία Ασύλου);</li> <li>• United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Greece (Υπατη Αρμοστεία του ΟΗΕ για τους Πρόσφυγες, γραφείο Ελλάδας);</li> <li>• Racist Violence Recording Network (Δίκτυο Καταγραφής Περιστατικών Ρατσιστικής Βίας);</li> <li>• Medecins Sans Frontieres-Doctors Without Borders (Γιατροί χωρίς Σύνορα);</li> <li>• Medecins Du Monde-Doctors of the World (Γιατροί του Κόσμου);</li> <li>• International Organization for Migration-IOM (Διεθνής Οργανισμός Μετανάστευσης);</li> <li>• NGO PRAKSIS (ΜΚΟ ΠΡΑΚΣΙΣ);</li> </ul>  |

| Country     | Stakeholders interviewed   |
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|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Centre for Social Solidarity (Εθνικό Κέντρο Κοινωνικής Αλληλεγγύης).</li> </ul>  |
| Hungary     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigration and Asylum Office (<i>Bevándorlási és Menekültügyi Hivatal</i>);</li> <li>National Police Headquarters (<i>Országos Rendőr-főkapitányság</i>);</li> <li>UNHCR Hungary;</li> <li>Hungarian Association for Migrants (<i>Menedék Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület</i>);</li> <li>Hungarian LGBT Association (<i>Magyar LMBT Szövetség</i>).</li> </ul>  |
| Italy       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of the Interior;</li> <li>Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (<i>Associazione per gli studi giuridici sull'immigrazione, ASGI</i>);</li> <li>Italian Refugees Council (<i>Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati, CIR</i>);</li> <li>Doctors Without Borders Italy (<i>Medici Senza Frontiere Italia</i>);</li> <li>Save the Children Italia Onlus;</li> <li>UNHCR;</li> <li>Italian Red Cross (IRC);</li> <li>Jesuit Refugee Service 'Centro Astalli';</li> <li>Community of Sant'Egidio (<i>Comunità di Sant'Egidio</i>);</li> <li>'Melting Pot Europa' project;</li> <li>NGO 'Borderline Sicilia';</li> <li>ArciGay;</li> <li>The Bologna section of 'Arcigay'.</li> </ul>                                |
| Netherlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry for Security and Justice: central information point, providing information on behalf of: Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Aliens Police, Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers;</li> <li>COC Netherlands: NGO advocating the rights of lesbian women, gay men, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBTs) since 1946;</li> <li>Movisie: National Knowledge and Counsultancy Centre for topics related to the Social Domain;</li> <li>Transvisie: Patient Organisation for Transgenders, Transsexuals, so called 'Gender Seekers' and their relatives;</li> <li>Uganda Gay on Move: community of LGBTIQ persons from Uganda;</li> <li>Dutch Council for Refugees (<i>Vluchtelingenwerk</i>).</li> </ul> |
| Poland      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Association for Legal Intervention (<i>Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej, SIP</i>);</li> <li>The Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center (<i>Centrum Pomocy Prawnej im. Haliny Nieć, CPPHN</i>);</li> <li>Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (<i>Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka</i>);</li> <li>UNHCR;</li> <li>Border Guard (<i>Straż Graniczna</i>);</li> <li>Head of the Office for Foreigners (<i>Szef Urzędu do spraw Cudzoziemców</i>);</li> <li>Lambda Association (<i>Lambda</i>);</li> <li>Campaign against Homophobia (<i>Kampania przeciwko Homofobi</i>).</li> </ul>  |
| Slovakia    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic;</li> <li>Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic;</li> <li>Office of Border and Alien Police of the Police Presidium;</li> </ul>   |

| Country | Stakeholders interviewed  |
|---------|---|
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginal;</li> <li>• Human Rights League;</li> <li>• <i>Iniciativa Inakost</i>.</li> </ul>   |
| Spain   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asylum and Refuge Office of Ministry of Interior (<i>Oficina de Asilo y Refugio del Ministerio del Interior</i>);</li> <li>• Jesuit Migrant Service (<i>Servicio Jesuita Migrantes, SJM in its Spanish acronym</i>);</li> <li>• Spanish Committee of UNHCR (<i>Comité español de la Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados, ACNUR in its Spanish acronym</i>);</li> <li>• Spanish Refugee Aid Commission (<i>Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado, CEAR in its Spanish acronym</i>);</li> <li>• Acoge NGO;</li> <li>• Accem NGO;</li> <li>• State Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Transgender individuals and Bisexuals (<i>Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Transexuales y Bisexuales, FELGTB, in its Spanish acronym</i>);</li> <li>• Lesbian, Gay, Transgender &amp; Bisexual Collective (<i>Colectivo de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales de Madrid, COGAM in its Spanish acronym</i>);</li> <li>• Daniela Foundation (<i>Fundación Daniela</i>).</li> </ul> |
| Sweden  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swedish Migration Agency (<i>Migrationsverket</i>);</li> <li>• Swedish Police Authority (<i>Polismyndigheten</i>);</li> <li>• National Board of Health and Welfare (<i>Socialstyrelsen</i>);</li> <li>• The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights (<i>RFSL, Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexuellas, transpersoners och queeras rättigheter</i>);</li> <li>• The Swedish Red Cross (<i>Röda korset</i>);</li> <li>• Knowledge centre for sexual health (<i>Kunskapscentrum för sexuell hälsa</i>).</li> </ul>   |