

Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe

Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated

Quarterly Overview of Trends
January - March 2017

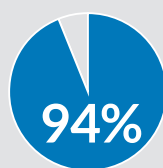


© UNICEF/UN2011/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO



Over
5,000
children

arrived in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain in Q1 of 2017, of whom approximately **3,800 (69%)** were unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).



A total of
3,491
unaccompanied children

94% of all children who arrived to Italy through the **Central Mediterranean Route** were **UASC**.



A total of
1,928
children

benefited from the **EU relocation scheme** in **Greece** and **Italy** in Q1 of 2017, already 60% of all children relocated last year. Among them, **80 were UASC** (just one unaccompanied child relocated from Italy).



Germany

received almost half of all child asylum applications in Q1 of 2017 (**22,637**) including **3,379 applications by UASC**.

Although data on refugee and migrant children out of school is largely missing, it is estimated that on average just **2 in every 10 children are in formal education in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria**.

Arrivals to Europe in First Quarter of 2017¹

In the first quarter of 2017, **5,384** children arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, of those **3,719 (69%)** were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC)².

Greece

In the first quarter of 2017, **1,146³** children arrived to Greece by sea, which is 44% decrease compared to the last quarter of 2016. A total of 182 (16%) of all child arrivals in 2017 were UASC.

The majority of children arriving to Greece were from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. For UASC, most of them were from Pakistan, Syria and Afghanistan.

Italy

Among the **3,714** children who arrived to Italy, **94%** (3,491) were unaccompanied or separated. Arrival of UASC increased by 30% compared to the first quarter in 2016 (2,680). Most of them originated from Guinea, The Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire and notably Bangladesh.

Bulgaria

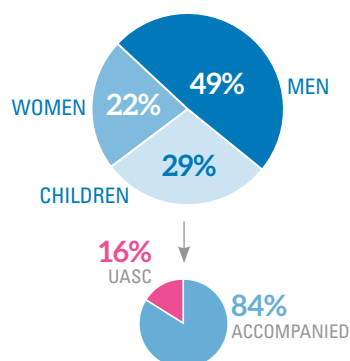
In the first quarter of 2017, **142⁵** children were identified in detention following interception at border crossing points and within the territory of the country. Of them, 32% were unaccompanied children (46). This is a nine-fold decrease compared to Q1 2016. Most children were from Afghanistan and Syria.

Spain

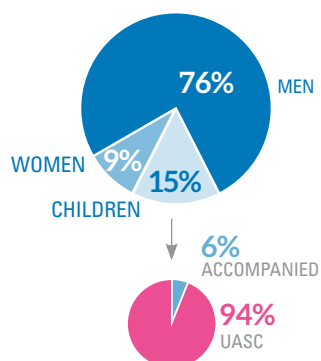
In the first quarter of 2017, **382** children arrived by sea and land, almost half of whom were Syrians (181). Data on unaccompanied children is not available from the Spanish Ministry of Interior.

Demographic of Arrivals, Including Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children

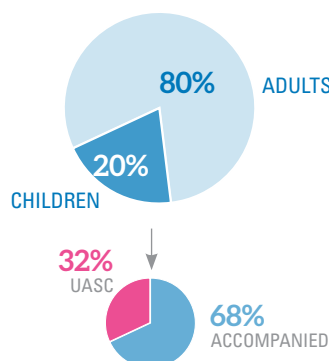
Greece



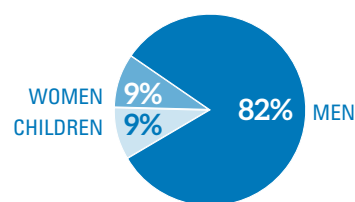
Italy



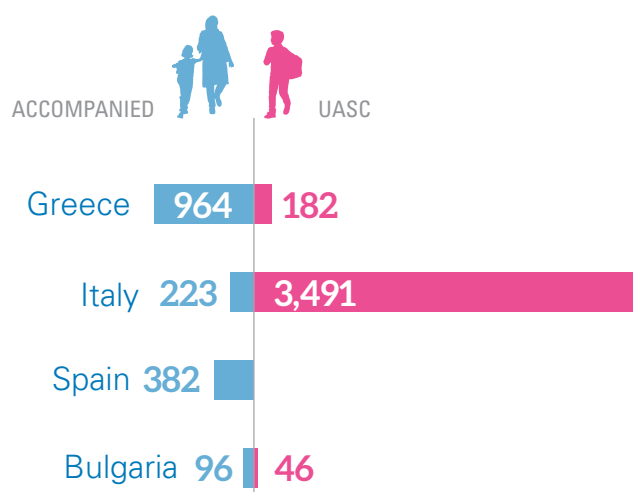
Bulgaria



Spain

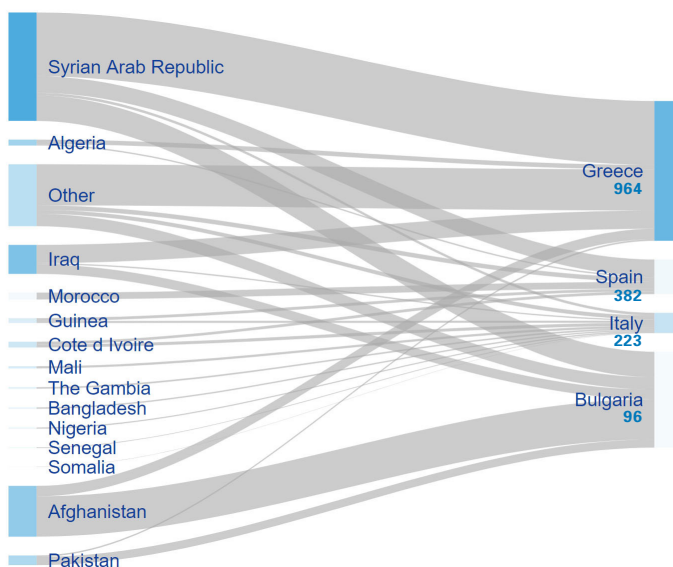


Accompanied versus Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

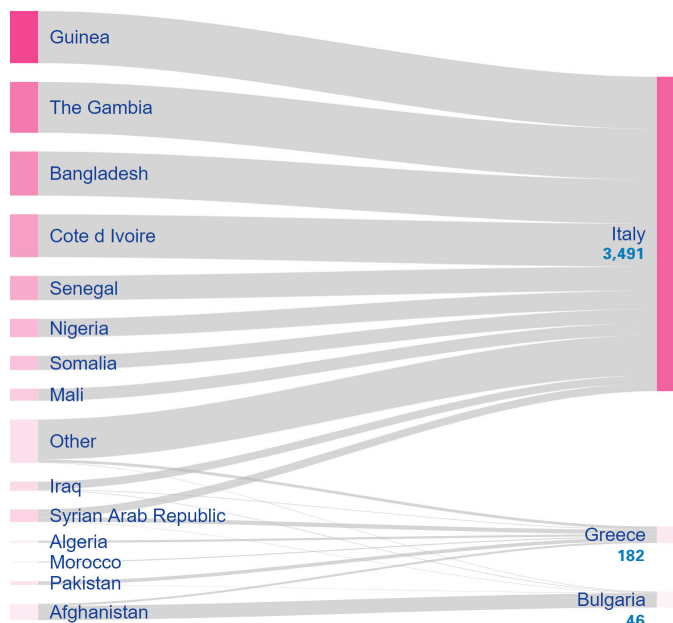


Nationality of Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

Accompanied Children by Country of Arrival

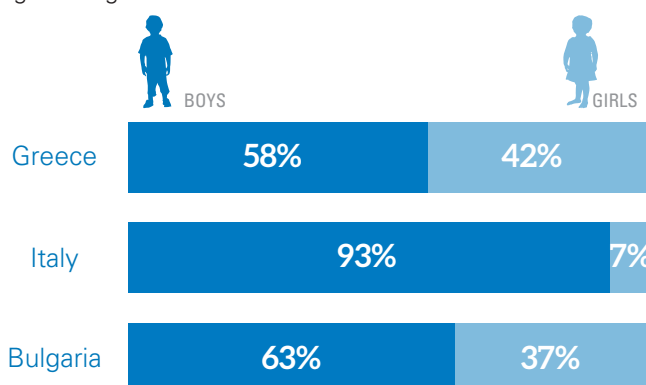


UASC by Country of Arrival



Gender Breakdown of All Children by Country of Arrival

In all countries of arrival, the proportion of boys compared to girls is higher.



Source: Hellenic Police, EKKA, Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees

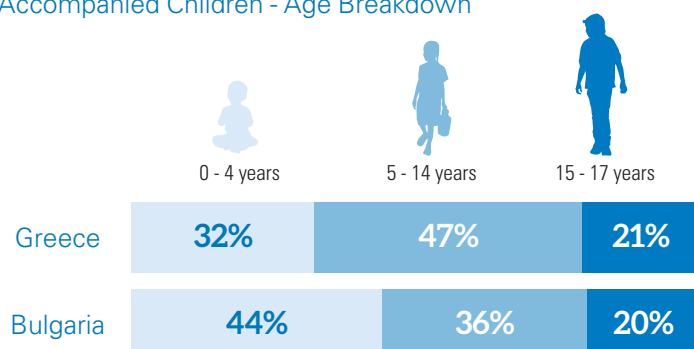
While for accompanied children across all countries this ratio is still 3:2 (**60%** boys vs. **40%** girls), on average, **94%** of all UASC were boys.

For Italy, the calculation is based on the estimated 15,458 UASC accommodated in the government shelters and not the total number of UASC who arrived in first quarter of 2017.

Age Breakdown of Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

Among the **964** accompanied children who arrived to Greece, 32% were between 0 to 4 years old, 47% were between five and 14 years old and 21% were between 15 and 17 years old. An age breakdown for accompanied children in Italy is not available, but their proportion is very low compared to the 94% UASC of all the children arrived in the first quarter of 2017 through the Central Mediterranean Route.

Accompanied Children - Age Breakdown



The majority of UASC who arrived to Italy, Greece and Bulgaria in the first quarter of 2017 were boys between 15 and 17 years old (92% in each country).



Reception on Arrival in 2017*

Greece

- An estimated 20,000 children in Greece - of them 57% are in urban areas (apartments, hotels, etc.); 34% are in accommodation sites; 6% in shelters for UASC and 3% in Reception and Identification Centres.
- 184 unaccompanied children in Reception and Identification centres (down from 324 in December 2016), including 31 unaccompanied children in protective custody/detention (double compared to the end of 2016).
- 1,382 UASC in shelters for UASC.

Italy

- 15,458 UASC are present in shelters for UASC, run by State authorities and non-profit entities (some 2,000 less than at the end of 2016). This includes UASC who arrived in Italy both prior to and during 2017.

Bulgaria

- 920 children, including UASC, accommodated in reception centres in Sofia and southern Bulgaria.
- With the exception of families with small children, all persons intercepted, including children and UASC, are routinely detained until they claim asylum. During the first quarter of 2017, on average children spent 16 days in detention before being transferred to a reception centre (double compared to the average length of detention in 2016).

Serbia

- A total of 2,937 children, including around 900 UASC, were present in the country as of end of March 2017, comprising 38% of the total number of refugees/migrants in the country.

The reception systems still vary greatly in quality and often even posing protection risks. The large number of children who are not in shelters have either moved onwards or found themselves destitute on the streets or in informal accommodation.

* Figures reflect the situation as of end of March 2017

Sources: EKKA-Greece, UNICEF, Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria State Agency for Refugees

Findings from Surveys on Arrival to Europe

- **Journey:** 56% of children spent more than 6 months travelling to Italy; for 23% of them the journey lasted between 3 and 6 months; 13% reported travelling between 2 weeks and 3 months and only 8% reached Italy less than 2 weeks after leaving the departure country.
- On the Central Mediterranean, children are more likely to respond positively to indicators related to exploitative practices, 90% versus 72% adults⁶.
- Children who arrived through the Eastern Mediterranean route, are less likely to respond positively to indicators related to exploitative practices, 3% versus 9% adults.

Source: IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys Analysis (FMS)
<http://migration.iom.int/europe/>

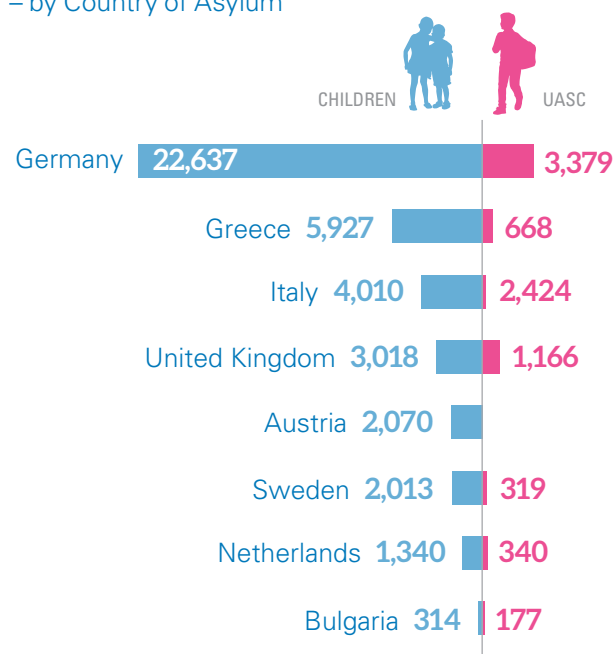
Asylum Applications and Decisions

According to Eurostat, in 2016, **396,705** children lodged asylum applications in Europe (around a third of all asylum applications). 67% of them were registered by Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan children. Moreover, during the same period of time 65,565 UASC claimed asylum in Europe- over half of them were Afghans or Syrians (the large majority were 16 to 17 year-old and predominantly male).

During Q1 2017, an additional **50,201** children claimed asylum in Europe. Nationalities remain consistent with last year. Although children make up 28% of all asylum seekers in Europe, in Germany they represented 41.6% of all new claims. Moreover, 47% of all children (**22,637**) sought international protection in Germany. Around half of them are young children (0 to 5 years old) and another 3,379 are UASC.

Despite the much higher numbers of arrivals through the Central Mediterranean route, in Q1 2017 more children claimed asylum in Greece (5,927) than in Italy (4,010), which suggests that many UASC reaching Italian shores may not be claiming international protection. Other countries that received large numbers of child asylum seekers in 2017 were the United Kingdom (3,018), Austria (2,070), Sweden (2,013) and the Netherlands (1,340).

Asylum Applications Lodged by Children, including Unaccompanied and Separated Children in Q1 2017 – by Country of Asylum



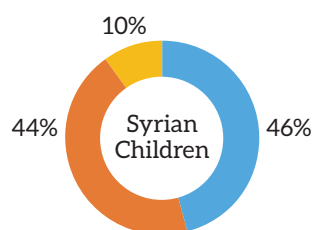
In 2016, a total of **352,965** decisions on asylum claims by children have been issued. Of them, **68%** were positive and **31%** rejected. Among children with positive decisions, **53%** were granted refugee status, **37%** received subsidiary protection and **10%** received humanitarian status.

In Germany there has been a notable drop in the acceptance rate for children from 74.4% during the last quarter of 2016 to **61.3%** during the first quarter of 2017. Such drop has also been observed among decisions on asylum claims by UASC- from an average of 95% in 2016 to **87%** during Q1 2017 (recording a slight decrease of the acceptance rate across all nationalities).

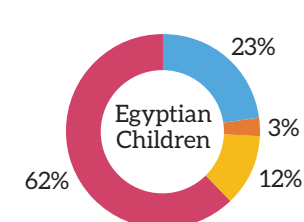
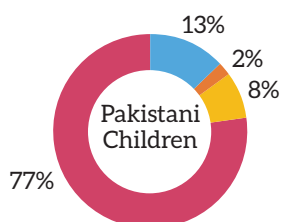
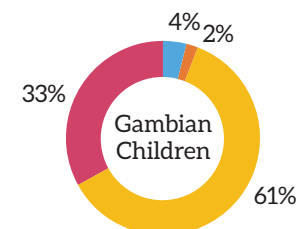
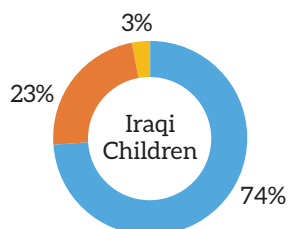
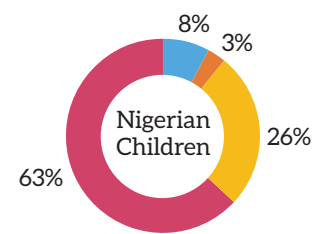
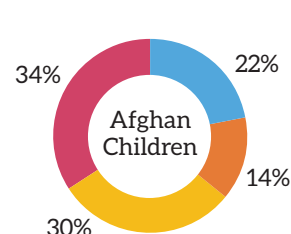
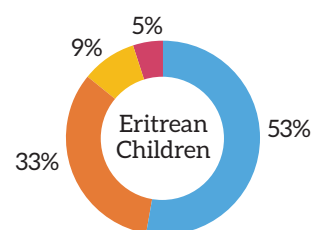
According to updated Eurostat data, the average acceptance rate for children seeking asylum in Europe was **69%**. While for Syrian, Iraqi and Eritrean children, this rate across Europe was close to **100%**, for Afghan and Gambian children this was **66%**, and for Nigerian, Pakistani and Egyptian children it was below **40%**. Moreover, 44% of Syrian, 33% of Eritrean, 14% of Afghan and 23% of Iraqi children received subsidiary protection. 63% of asylum claims by Nigerian children were rejected.

Decisions on Child Asylum Applications

Main nationalities of arrivals in Greece



Main nationalities of arrivals in Italy



■ REJECTED ASYLUM APPLICATIONS
■ REFUGEE STATUS

■ SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION
■ HUMANITARIAN STATUS

Relocation and Family Reunification

As of 31 March 2017, a total of 16,030 refugees and migrants including **5,236** children benefitted from relocation arrangements in Greece and Italy under the EU relocation scheme. Among them there were only 246 UASC (245 from Greece and only 1 from Italy).

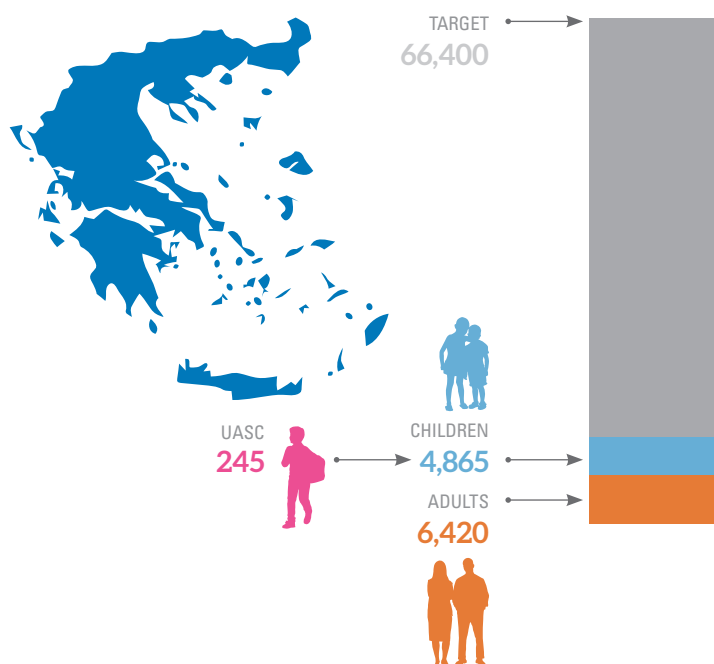
During the first quarter of 2017 a total of **1,761** children were relocated from Greece and **167** from Italy, including **80 UASC** (all from Greece). This is 58% of the total number of children relocated during 2016.

In 2016, out of the **5,000** requests for family reunification made from Greece (including 700 requests by unaccompanied and separated children), only **1,107** successful applicants reached their destination country by the end of the year. During the same period of time, of over **14,229** requests for family reunification in Italy, only **61** people were transferred in the same year, and procedures often took more than 12 months.

Greece

From the start of the EU relocation scheme until 31 March 2017, 11,285⁶ people were relocated from Greece to other EU Member States; **4,865** (43%) of them were children, including **245** children. Although the number of relocated UASC remains low with just 80 UASC benefitting from the scheme during the first quarter of 2017, this still represents a two-fold increase compared to the average for 2016. The increase is even more significant when comparing the total number of relocated children. The figures scaled up from 197 (6 UASC) relocated between January and March 2016 to 1,791 (80 UASC) relocated in 2017.

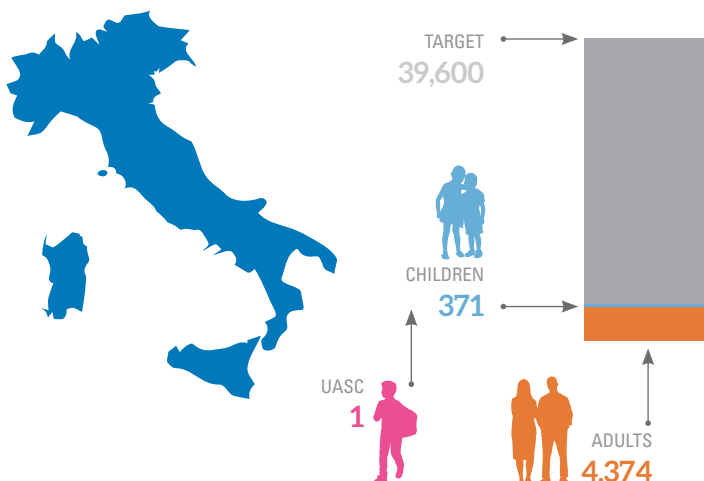
Most UASC have been relocated to Finland (107).



Italy

As of March 2017, only 4,745 refugees and migrants were relocated from Italy, including **371** children (8%) and only **one** unaccompanied child.

Among the 371 relocated children, almost half (167) departed during in the first quarter of 2017. This is in stark contrast when compared to the same period in 2016, during which only 3 children benefited from the relocation scheme.



Children Resettled to Europe in 2016

Of the total resettled refugees (18,175) to Europe in 2016, **49%** were children (**9,020** children, 27% boys and 22% girls).

The vast majority of children resettled in Europe are from the **Syrian Arab Republic** (7,440 or 82%), followed by the **Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan and Eritrea** (445 or 5%, 250 or 3% and 155 or 2% respectively).

The European countries admitting the most child refugees via resettlement in 2016 were the **UK, Norway, Sweden and Germany** (2,525 or 28%, 1,930 or 21%, 915 or 10% and 595 or 7% respectively) and in total comprise 66% of the child resettlement admissions to Europe.

86% of the children resettled were under 14 years old. The demographics of all commonly resettled nationalities remain very similar, except Eritreans, with fewer children resettled from Eritrea than other nationalities (38%).

Source: Europe Resettlement 2016, UNHCR

Returns from Greece to Turkey

Of the total returnees (143) from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement in the first quarter of 2017, **15** (10%) were children. All of them were returned with their families.

Children and UASC among Assisted Voluntary Returned and Reintegration (AVRR)

More than **80%** of the **18,879** migrants, who were assisted with voluntary return globally in the first three months of 2017, departed from Europe. Almost a quarter (**24%**) of all beneficiaries were children. Majority of the returns were facilitated from Germany (44%). By the end of 2016, IOM assisted over 98,000 people (of whom 4.8% were children and 1.3% were UASC) globally to return home voluntarily- more than half of the returns were facilitated from Germany (54,006 in total).

Education Needs for Refugee and Migrant Children

- **Eastern Mediterranean Route:** refugee and migrant children have missed 2.5 years of school on average.
- **Central Mediterranean Route:** 28% of children interviewed in Italy reported having been out of school for more than a year, 25% never went to school, 26% were absent from school for less than a year and 21% between 1 and 2 years.
- **Greece:** Only 29% of the estimated 12,000 school-age children (6 to 17 years old) in Greece, attend formal education* and another 35% are covered by non-formal education activities. 36% of children (including 40% of all children in urban areas) are not attending any type of education. Main reason for dropping out of school, as reported by children, relates to difficulties with the language and level of education.
- **Serbia:** out of the 2,570 school-age children in reception and accommodation centres, only 130 were attending formal education as of April, and barely 23% of all children were in some form of education.
- **Bulgaria:** only one in ten of the 920 refugee and migrant children in centres go to school.
- **Germany:** there is an estimated 184,100 school-age child asylum seekers (based on caseload in 2015-2017). The number of refugee and migrant children out of school across the country remains unknown.
- **Italy:** No data is currently available on refugee and migrant children (particularly UASC) out of school.

* Among children in the age group for which education in Greece is compulsory (6-15 years old), the access to formal education is 37%.

Sources: UNICEF, Greece Education Working Group, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys Analysis (FMS)

Limitations of Available Data on Children and UASC:

There is no comprehensive data on arrivals (both adults and children) in Europe, especially by land and air, as such movements are largely irregular and involve smuggling network, which are difficult to track. If collected, data is rarely disaggregated by nationalities, risk category, gender or age. In Bulgaria, for example, official data on arrivals and interceptions at border crossing points or within the territory of the country has no age and gender breakdown. This means that the only indication about the children intercepted is the number of children identified in detention facilities by UNICEF partners.

Reliable data on the number of UASC either arriving to, or currently residing in, different European countries is often unavailable. The number of asylum applications filed by UASC is used to provide an indication of trends but does not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the caseload due to backlogs in national asylum systems, onward irregular movements or not applying for asylum at all. In addition, due to different definitions and national procedures and practices, collecting accurate data on separated children specifically is very challenging (e.g. separated children being registered as either accompanied or unaccompanied). It should also be noted that complete data for 2016 on children and UASC asylum application for all EU member states was not available on the Eurostat website at the time when this factsheet was released.

Endnotes:

1. Data on arrivals is partial due to the large scale of irregular movements and reflects only sea arrivals for Greece and Italy. Data for Spain include both sea and land arrivals.
2. Separated children are children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. Unaccompanied children are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. (IASC)
3. Arrival figures for Greece are collected in the framework of UNHCR border activities and are provided by Hellenic Coastguard and Hellenic Police.
4. During the same period of time, a total of 1,073 referrals were made to the Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) based on children identified on islands and mainland Greece, including close the land border with Turkey.
5. During the same period of time, 341 children applied for asylum in Bulgaria. This is due mainly to the fact that there is no systematic registration of people arriving in the country, and some children may have claimed asylum in reception centres without being intercepted or identified by national law enforcement authorities at border crossing points or within the territory of the country.
6. Based on 1,440 surveys conducted with refugees and migrants in Italy.
7. This number reflects all relocations since the launch of the EU relocation scheme in late 2015.

About the factsheet

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

The document provides an overview of the situation in Europe in 2016 with regards to refugee and migrant children (accompanied and UASC). It compiles key child-related data based on available official sources: arrival, asylum applications, asylum decisions, profiling of arrivals, relocation from Greece and Italy under the EU relocation scheme, as well as returns from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement.

The present factsheet covers first quarter of 2017 and is produced on quarterly basis to provide up-to-date information on refugee and migrant children, including unaccompanied and separated children.

For further information or any questions concerning this factsheet please contact:

UNHCR:
Edgar Scrase
scrase@unhcr.org

UNICEF:
Tsvetomira Bidart
tbidart@unicef.org

IOM:
Ivona Zakoska Todorovska
dtmmediterranean@iom.int