

# Refugee and Migrant Children- Including Unaccompanied and Separated Children - in Europe

## Overview of Trends in 2016

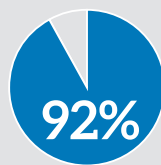


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Over  
**100,000**  
children

arrived in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain in 2016, of whom more than **33,800 (34%)** were unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).



A total of  
**25,846**  
children

**92%** of all children arriving through the **Central Mediterranean Route** were UASC.



Only  
**3,259**  
children

benefited from the EU relocation scheme in **Greece** and **Italy**. Among them, **166 were UASC**.



**Germany**  
received

the highest number of asylum applications in 2016, including **261,390** applications by children and **35,935 by UASC**.

Protection risks faced by refugees and migrant children include **family separation, detention, sexual and gender based violence, exploitation**, as well as **physical and psychological harm**.

## Arrivals to Europe in 2016<sup>1</sup>

Between 1 January and 31 December 2016, **100,264** children arrived in Greece, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, of whom **33,806 (34%)** were unaccompanied or separated children (UASC)<sup>2</sup>.

### Greece

In the whole of 2016, **63,920<sup>3</sup>** children arrived to Greece. Comprehensive data on UASC could not be captured upon arrival, but they are estimated to make up 8% of all children (**5,192<sup>4</sup>**) based on referrals to the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA).

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

### Italy

Among the **28,223** children who arrived to Italy, **92% (25,846)** were unaccompanied or separated. This is double compared to the number of UASC, who arrived in 2015 (12,360). Most of them originated from North, East and West Africa.

### Bulgaria

Between January and December 2016, **6,447<sup>5</sup>** children applied for asylum in Bulgaria. Of them, 43% were UASC (**2,768**). Most children were from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

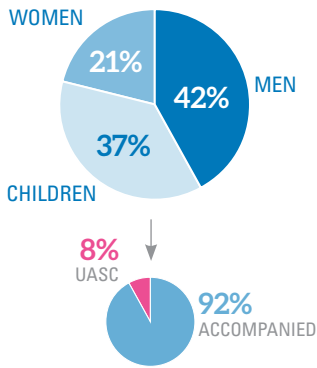
There is no comprehensive data on arrivals in Bulgaria since apprehensions take place upon irregular entry, exit or inside the country.

### Spain

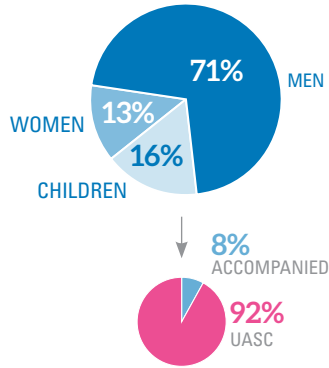
Among the arrivals to Spain in 2016, there were **1,674** children, almost half of whom were Syrians (**809**). Data on unaccompanied children is not available from the Spanish Ministry of Interior.

Demographic of Arrivals, Including Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children

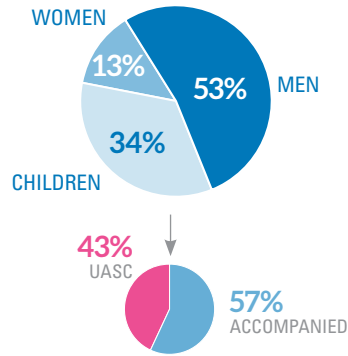
Greece



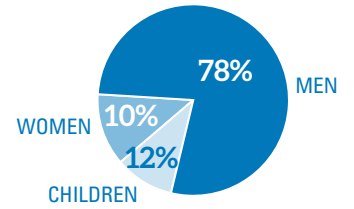
Italy



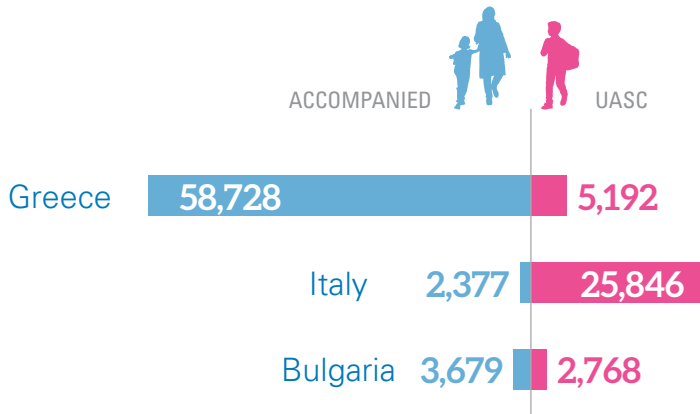
Bulgaria



Spain

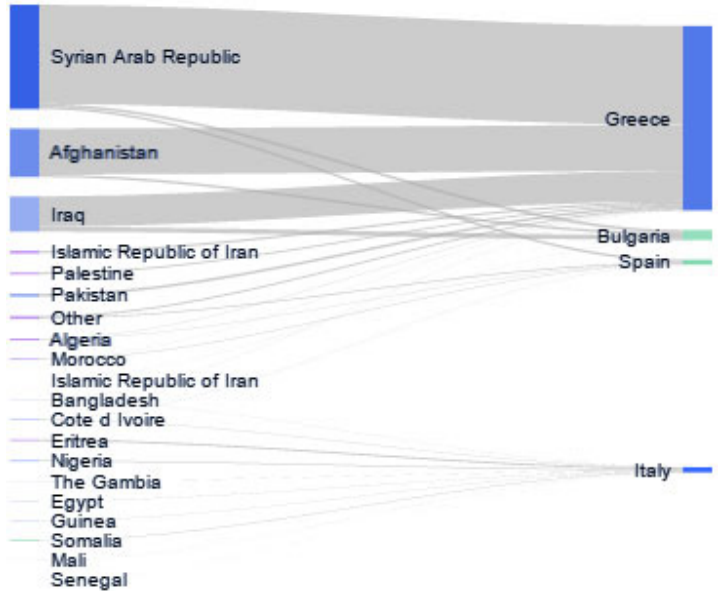


Accompanied versus Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

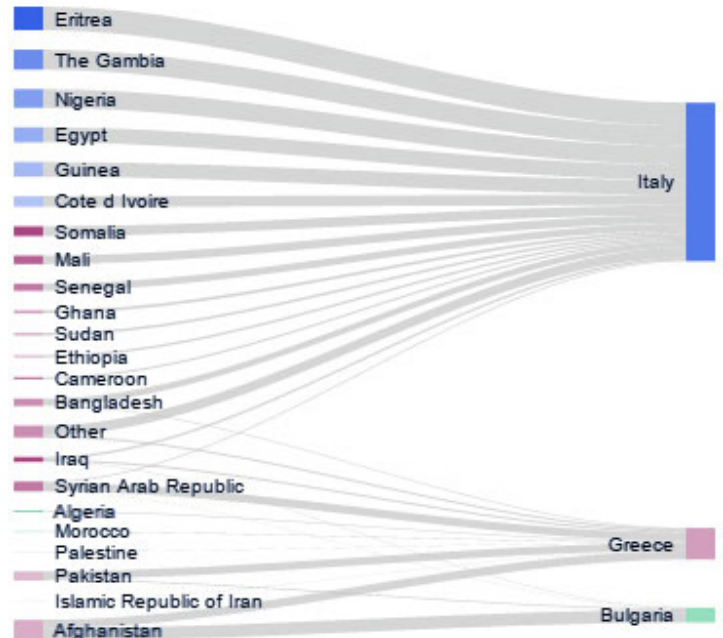


Nationality of Accompanied and Unaccompanied and Separated Children by Country of Arrival

Accompanied Children by Country of Arrival



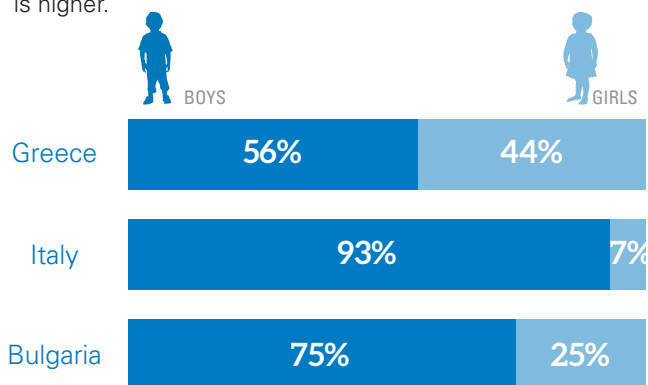
UASC by Country of Arrival



Source: Hellenic Police, EKKA, Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria State Agency for Refugees, Spanish Ministry of Interior.

### Gender Breakdown of All Children by Country of Arrival

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

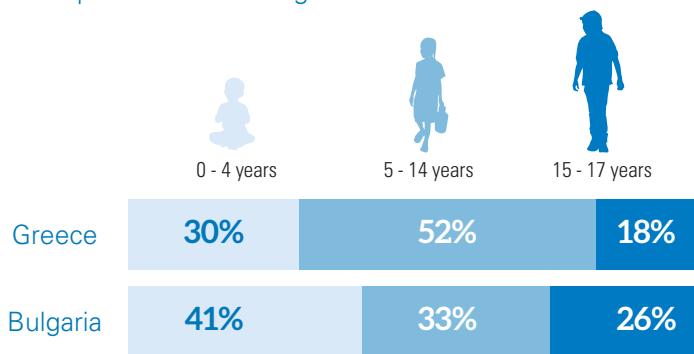


While for accompanied children across all countries this ratio is 3:2 (60% boys vs. 40% girls), on average, 94% of all UASC were boys.

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

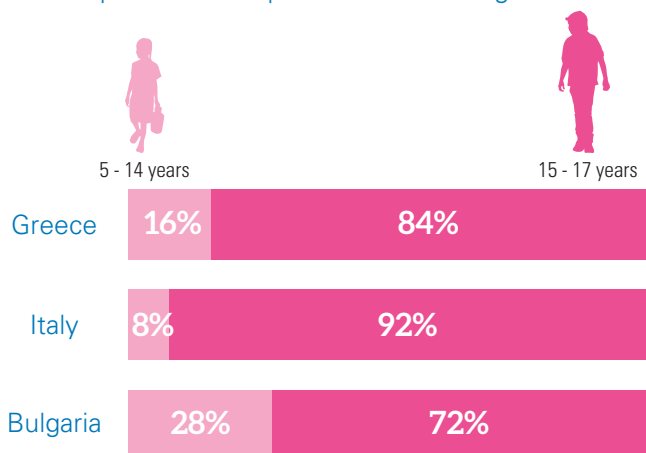
Among the 58,728 accompanied children who arrived to Greece, 30% were between 0 to 4 years old and 52% were between five and 14 years old. Age breakdown for accompanied children in Italy is not available, but their proportion is very low compared to the 92% UASC of all the children arrived in 2016 through Central Mediterranean Route.

### Accompanied Children- Age breakdown



The majority of UASC, who arrived to Italy, Greece and Bulgaria in 2016 were boys between 15 and 17 years old (92% in Italy; 84% in Greece and 72% in Bulgaria).

### Unaccompanied and Separated Children- Age breakdown



### Reception upon arrival in 2016\*

#### Greece

- Out of 63,920 children, an estimated 21,000 children were in temporary accommodation sites, urban areas and reception and identification centres in Greece
- 324 UASC in reception and identification centres, including 15 children in protective custody/detention
- 1,142 UASC in shelters for UASC out of 2,300 estimated number of UASC present in Greece.

#### Italy

- 17,373 were in shelters for UASC, run by State authorities. This includes UASC who arrived in Italy both prior to and during 2016.

#### Bulgaria

- 6,447 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. In 2016, on average children spent eight days in detention before being transferred to a reception centre.

The reception systems vary greatly in quality and are 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 December 2016

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

### Findings from surveys upon arrivals to Europe through Eastern and Central Mediterranean Routes - 2016

- **Reasons for Leaving:** Refugee and migrant children, on the Eastern Mediterranean Route, reported having left their countries of origin or habitual residence due to war, conflict or political reasons (84%); due to economic reasons (14%) and limited access to basic services or other reasons (2%), while on the Central Mediterranean Route, reported reasons were war and conflict (63%), economic reasons (20%) and limited access to basic services (14%).
- **Length of Journey:** Afghan UASC who travelled through the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey spent an average of 7 months on their journey. On the Central Mediterranean Route, refugee and migrant children have travelled for more than 5 months on average, with 27% of them having spent in transit between 6 months and 1 year.
- **Education and work:** A profiling exercise of Afghan UASC in Sweden reported that most UASC had completed primary school, while two thirds had worked for an average of ten months in the past year, which had prevented them from attending school.
- **Family situation:** Most of the Afghan UASC interviewed in Sweden lived with their nuclear family prior to embarking on their journey. However, those interviewed often reported that one of their parents, or habitual care-givers were missing. For example, half of the UASC participants reported that their father was deceased, and one quarter of those surveyed noted that their mother was either deceased or her location unknown.

- Safety and Security en route:** On both routes, the most common alleged protection incidents witnessed or experienced by respondents, including children, were violence and emotional abuse committed by third parties (smugglers, local police, other travellers), arduous routes, detention or being kept against their will by persons other than the authorities. Nearly 75% of interviewed children in Italy exhibited a unique set of risk factors linked to human trafficking indicators. This share is slightly higher than the one for adults (73%). Although such reports by children are less frequent on the Eastern Mediterranean Route, children tend to report direct experience of exploitative practices more often than adults (20% of children compared to 13.5% for adults).

Source: UNHCR Afghans Sweden profiling 2016, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Flow Monitoring Surveys Analysis (FMS)

### Protection risks, faced by refugee and migrant children in Europe

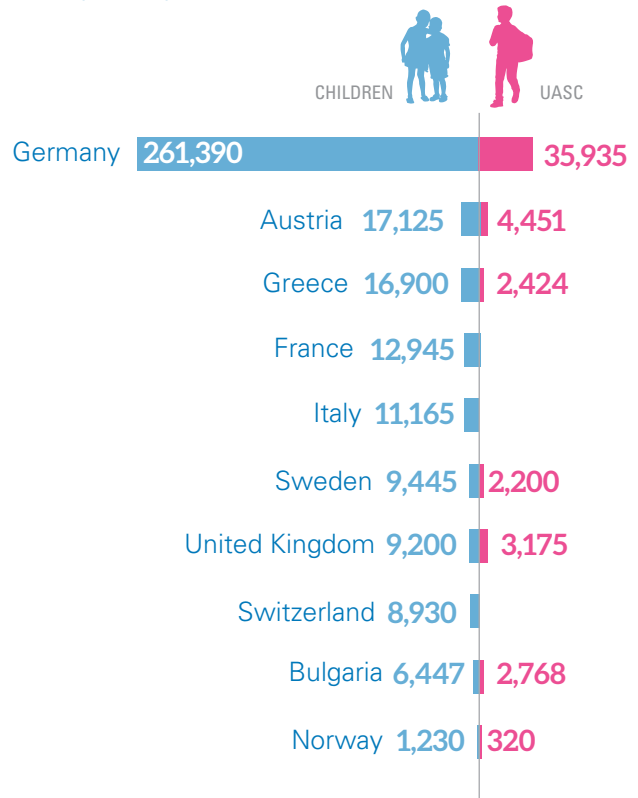
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Abuse
- Exploitation
- Physical and Psychological Harm
- Detention
- Harm to child’s Fullest Development Due to Limited Access to Education and Recreational Activities
- Family Separation and Challenges to Family Unity
- Smuggling and Trafficking
- Financial Dependency
- Security Risks

### Asylum Applications and Decisions

According to Eurostat, in 2016, **390,770** children lodged asylum applications in Europe (around a third of all asylum applications). Two in every three children claimed asylum in Germany- or more than **261,300** children, almost half of whom were 0 to 5 years old. Other countries that received large numbers of child asylum seekers were Austria (**17,125**), Greece (**16,900**), France (**12,945**), Italy (**11,165**), Sweden (**9,445**), the United Kingdom (**9,200**) and Switzerland (**8,930**).

While in 2015, Sweden recorded the highest number of asylum claims by unaccompanied and separated children (**35,400**), this reduced by 94% in 2016 –recording only **2,200** asylum claims by UASC. At the same time, **35,935** UASC registered for asylum in Germany during 2016, which represents a 61% increase compared to 2015.

### Asylum Applications Lodged by Children, including Unaccompanied and Separated Children in 2016 – by Country of Asylum



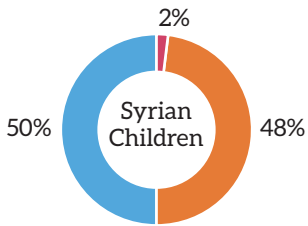
Based on partial data<sup>6</sup> in 2016, a total of **346,150** decisions on asylum claims by children have been issued. Of them, **67%** were positive and **33%** rejected. Among children with positive decisions, **53%** were granted refugee status, **38%** received subsidiary protection and **9%** received humanitarian status.

In Germany<sup>7</sup> alone in 2016, a total of **226,450** decisions on children’s asylum applications were issued. Among them, **155,755** were positive, while **70,700** were rejected. **56,475** children received subsidiary protection. A total of **8,753** decisions were made on the asylum applications lodged by UASC (who at the time of decisions were still under the age of 18). The overall protection rate for UASC in Germany was very high – **95%** (Syrian Arab Republic and Eritrea **100%** each, Iraq **96%**, Islamic Republic of Iran **94%**, Somalia **89%**, Afghanistan **82%**, The Gambia **75%**, Guinea **56%**, and Pakistan **3%**).

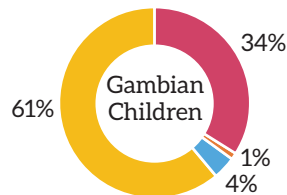
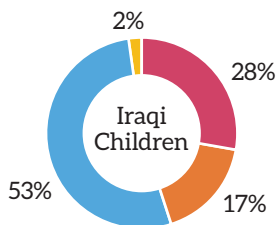
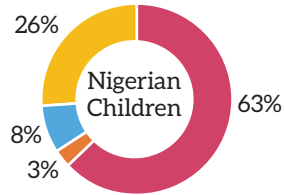
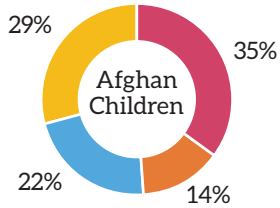
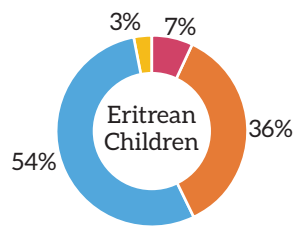
While for Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi and Eritrean children, the average acceptance rate across Europe in 2016 was **80%**, for Nigerian children this was only **37%**. Moreover, **48%** of Syrian, **36%** of Eritrean, **14%** of Afghan and **17%** of Iraqi children received subsidiary protection. **63%** of asylum claims by Nigerian children were rejected.

### First-Instance Decisions on Child Asylum Application

Main nationalities of arrivals in Greece



Main nationalities of arrivals in Italy



■ REJECTED DECISIONS      ■ SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION  
■ GENEVA CONVENTION STATUS      ■ HUMANITARIAN STATUS



### Relocation and Family Reunification

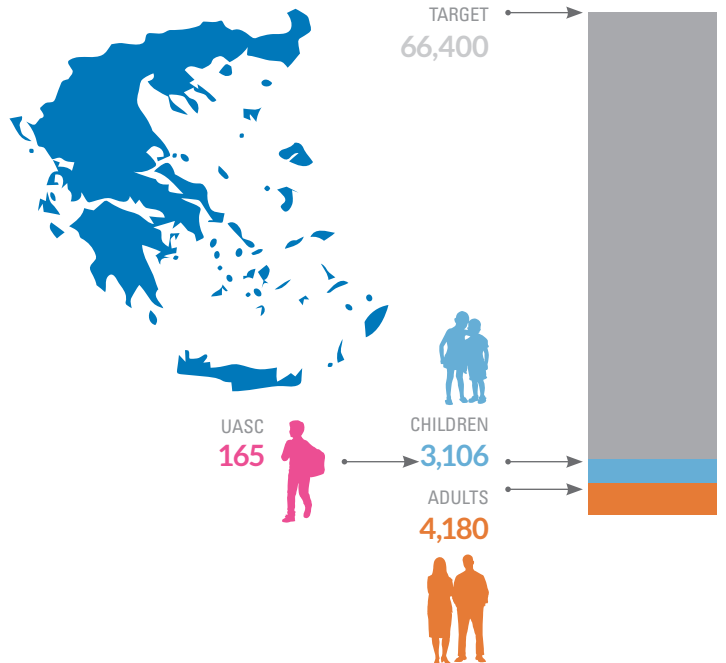
Overall, by the end of December 2016, only **9,940** refugees and migrants, including **3,310** children benefitted from relocation arrangements in Greece and Italy under the EU relocation scheme.

In 2016, only **166** UASC (**165** from Greece and only **1** from Italy) have been relocated. Moreover, due to multiple criteria related to nationality and time of arrival, it is estimated that only **17%** of UASC arriving in Italy and **48%** of UASC pre-registered on mainland Greece are eligible for relocation.<sup>8</sup>

Data on family reunification for refugee and migrant children has been very difficult to collect and is largely missing across Europe.

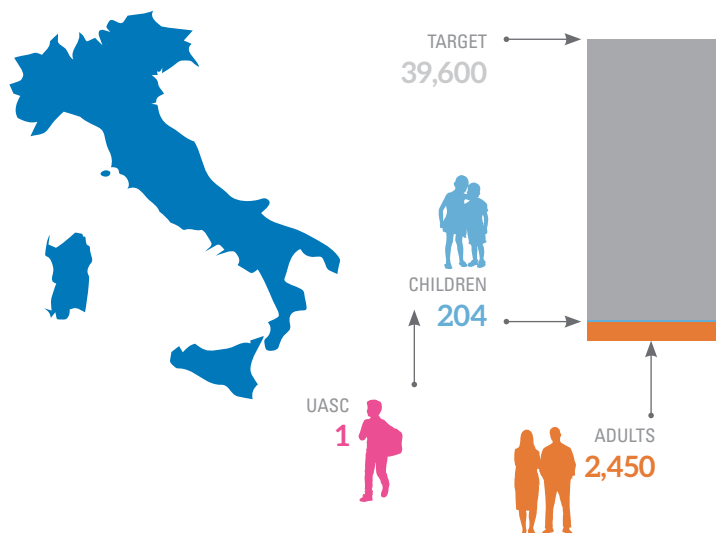
### Greece

Out of the **7,286** people, who were relocated from Greece to other EU Member States by the end of 2016, **3,067 (42%)** were children, including **165** UASC.



### Italy

In 2016, **4,323** people were relocated, including **191** children (**4%**) and only **one** unaccompanied child (out of 25,546 UASC).



Majority of all children relocated from Greece were moved to **France** (34%), **The Netherlands** (11%) and **Germany** (9%), while the children relocated from Italy were transferred mainly to **Switzerland** (21%), **France** (19%) and **The Netherlands** (18%).

### Returns from Greece to Turkey

Of the total returnees (**801**) from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement (20 March – 31 December 2016), **44 (6%)** were children. All of them were returned with their families.



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### Limitation 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.

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.

**Sources:** Hellenic Police, Greek National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), Italian Ministry of Interior, Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees, Spanish Ministry of Interior, Eurostat, BAMF-Germany, IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF

### 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 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'.
3. Arrival figures for Greece are collected in the framework of UNHCR border activities and are provided by Hellenic Coastguard and Hellenic Police.
4. Data on UASC arrivals in Greece for 2016 is based on referrals to EKKA.
5. Data on Bulgaria reflects the number of children who applied for asylum in 2016 (State Agency for Refugees- Bulgaria). There is no comprehensive data on child arrivals in Bulgaria since apprehensions take place upon irregular entry, exit or inside the country, and do not systematically capture age, gender and nationality breakdown.
6. Based on available data from Eurostat, which as of 3 March 2017 covers Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, the UK, Liechtenstein, Norway.
7. Comprehensive data on asylum decisions across Europe is not yet available.
8. 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.

### About this 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 annual data for 2016. It will be produced on quarterly basis in 2017 in order to provide up-to-date information on refugee and migrant children, including unaccompanied and separated children.

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