

# 2015 in review:

## How Europe reacted to the refugee crisis

### Chronology of events and policy responses

**19 April**

**At sea**

800 persons drown in the Mediterranean as their vessel sinks on its way from Libya to Italy.

**24 April**

**EU**

EU leaders hold a special meeting on the situation in the Mediterranean.

**13 May**

**EU**

The EC presents the 'European Agenda on Migration' a 10-point plan to face the crisis in the Mediterranean.

**17 June**

**Hungary**

Hungary unveils its plans to build a fence at its 175 km border with Serbia.

**26 June**

**EU**

EU member states agree to relocation of refugees in Europe, but fail to reach consensus on distribution quotas. They commit to resettlement of 20,000 refugees from outside of Europe.

**1 July**

**Serbia**

Serbia opens two temporary reception/ registration centres near its borders to Macedonia and Hungary.

**20-23 August**

**Macedonia**

To cut off the flow of migrants crossing from Greece, Macedonia deploys riot police and calls for the state of emergency. Around 3,000 migrants spend the night out in the open. On 23 July the Macedonian army eventually allows migrants to move on to Serbia.

**24 August**

**Germany**

Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees publicly announces not to return Syrian refugees under the Dublin Regulation.

**24 August**

**Serbia**

Some 7,000 migrants cross the border to Serbia over the weekend. More than 90,000 people have entered Serbia so far this year, 23,000 of them within 2 weeks.

**27 August**

**EU**

The Western Balkans Summit in Vienna is overshadowed by the tragic incident the same day of the meeting.

**27 August**

**Austria**

The bodies of 71 dead migrants are found inside an abandoned lorry on a motorway in eastern Austria.

**31 August**

**Greece**

The Greek coast guard announces it has rescued almost 2,500 people off its eastern islands, including Lesbos and Kos, during one weekend.

**30-31 August**

**Hungary**

Refugees protest at the Budapest train station as authorities deny them to board trains without valid Schengen documents, which they do not possess. The next day, the migrants are allowed to take trains to Austria without visa checks.

**2 September**

**Turkey**

The heart-breaking photo of a drowned Syrian boy washed up on a beach in Turkey makes the headlines around the world.

**1-6 September**

**Austria**

Around 20,000 migrants arrive at Vienna from Hungary. Police desist from apprehending and registering persons without valid Schengen documents. Most migrants board trains toward Germany.

**8 September**

**Serbia**

The EU Delegation provided approximately € 400,000 to help prepare temporary accommodation for refugees, bringing emergency EU funding for Serbia to nearly € 2,5 million.

**5 September**

**Middle East**

The cash-strapped World Food Programme announces it has had to drop one-third of Syrian refugees from its food voucher program in Middle Eastern host countries this year.

## 9 September

### EU

EC President Juncker admits that “policy makers have been neglecting the Balkans route” and presents a plan to relocate 120,000 refugees from GR, IT and HU via a mandatory distribution quota. He also presents a common list of Safe Countries of Origin which includes all Western Balkan countries and Turkey.

## 14 September

### EU

EU ministers agree on this list of Safe Countries of Origin proposed by the EC. Though, only a fraction of the places for relocation can be assured, as Eastern European states are not willing to accept mandatory relocation quota.

## 14 September

### Germany and Austria

Germany introduces temporary border controls with Austria to cope with the influx of people. Austria does so as well, sending army troops to support border police at the Hungarian border.

## 15 September

### Hungary

Construction of a 175 km fence along Hungary’s border with Serbia is completed. On the same day, a new asylum system comes into force setting up strict sanctions on illegal border crossing.

## 16-17 September

### Croatia

The route travelled by migrants shifts from Hungary to Croatia.

## 18 September

### Hungary

Hungary begins to construct a fence along its border to Croatia.

## 19 September

### Slovenia

Around 2,500 migrants cross from Croatia into Slovenia, despite Slovenia initially trying to block their passage.

## 22 September

### EU

EU Ministers change the proposed relocation plans: Hungary would not take part in the mechanism. The 54,000 places envisaged will instead be distributed between Italy and Greece.

## 29 September

### Germany

Germany includes Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro in a list of safe Countries of Origin.

**5 October**

**Turkey**

President Erdogan meets with EU leaders to discuss a plan which includes the establishment of six additional refugee camps in Turkey, with places for up to two million persons. EU would as a quid pro quo accept the resettlement of half a million refugees from Turkey.

**9 October**

**Italy**

Opening of first hotspot in Lampedusa. Also, the EU relocation programme starts: 19 asylum seekers are relocated by plane from Italy to Sweden.

**15 October**

**EU**

In a Eurobarometer poll, 66% of respondents from across Europe said that decisions on migration issues should be taken at EU level rather than by national governments alone.

**15 October**

**EU**

EU and Turkey agree a joint action plan to stem migration flows to the EU. Also, changes of border management system shall give Frontex a more proactive role in protecting the external borders. Hundreds more border guards are promised to secure the hotspot areas in Italy and Greece.

**16 October**

**Greece**

The first Greek hotspot centre opens its doors in Lesbos.

**18-21 October**

**Slovenia**

In only 24 hours, 12,000 refugees enter Slovenia and the government announces to restrict its intake to 2,500 arrivals a day. Slovenia calls in army to help patrol its border to Croatia.

**23 October**

**Sweden**

The Swedish government agrees upon a stricter asylum law. Sweden is expected to receive 190,000 asylum applications in 2015, the highest per-capita rate in the EU.

**2 November**

**EU**

UNHCR announces that the number of refugees entering Europe by sea in October was roughly the same as for the whole of 2014: almost 220,000 persons. Syrians accounted for 53% of arrivals, followed by Afghans with 18%.

**3 November**

**Austria**

The Austrian government proposed stricter asylum laws.

## 5 November

### Sweden

Sweden notifies the EC that it is confronted with an emergency situation and thus cannot fulfil its relocation commitments of 4,358 persons from Greece and Italy.

## 14 November

### Poland

Poland cannot accept migrants under EU quotas after the attacks in Paris, the newly-elected Polish government announces.

## 23 November

### Macedonia and Greece

After this announcement, 1,500 migrants from Pakistan, Iran and Morocco are stuck near the Greek-Macedonian border town of Idomeni, Some of the migrants withdraw back to inland Greece.

## 28 November

### Macedonia

Macedonia starts constructing a fence on its southern border with Greece.

## 30 November

### EU

Updated figures are published: Only 14 EU member states have made available 3,346 places for relocation, out of 160,000 planned places. 159 persons were effectively relocated from Greece or Italy. EU member states' financial pledges for the Africa Trust Fund, Syria Trust Fund, World Food Programme, UNHCR and other humanitarian aid programmes amount to EUR 572 million. Together with EU funding of EUR 2,8 billion, this falls short by 40% of the required amount or EUR 5,6 billion in total.

## 11 November

### Slovenia

Slovenia begins erecting a razor wire fence along parts of its border with Croatia to control migrant flows.

## 18 November

### Several countries

Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia announce that they would only allow people from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan to pass through their borders.

## 27 November

### Austria

Austria starts constructing a 3,7 km fence along its southern border with Slovenia.

## 29 November

### Turkey

The EU and Turkey finalise their agreement negotiated over the past weeks. A key element is 3 billion EUR in EU aid for the 2,2 million Syrian refugees in Turkey.

## 2-3 December

### Slovakia and Hungary

Slovakia files a lawsuit at the European Court of Justice against the European Union decision to redistribute 160,000 asylum seekers among member countries. Hungary files a law suit the day after.

## 8 December

### Germany

The number of asylum applications filed in Germany in 2015 reaches 1 million.

## 15 December

### EU

The EC proposes lifting Sweden's obligation to relocate 4,358 persons from December Greece and Italy.

## 10 December

### EU

According to Eurostat, 413,800 persons applied for asylum in the EU in the 3rd quarter of 2015. This number almost doubled since the second quarter.