

# **VISIT TO ITALY (ROME AND LAMPEDUSA)**

**of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration  
and the OSCE PA Special Representative on  
Combating Organized Crime**

(6-8 March 2024)

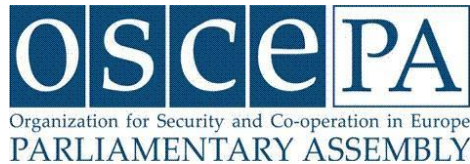


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## Table of Contents

I.	Introduction .....	1
II.	Background.....	2
a.	The Central Mediterranean Route .....	2
b.	Lampedusa – The ‘Gateway to Europe’ .....	3
c.	Short overview of the Italian reception system.....	4
d.	Statistics on reception, asylum and return.....	6
III.	Institutional Briefings in Rome (6 March 2024) .....	7
IV.	Programme in Lampedusa (7-8 March 2024) .....	11
a.	Institutional briefings at the Air Force Base.....	11
b.	Visit of the Contrada Imbriacola ‘hotspot’ .....	14
c.	Briefings at Favalaro Pier and on board a patrol vessel .....	15
d.	Commemorating the dead and missing .....	16
V.	Key Takeaways of the Chair .....	17
	ANNEX I – Final Programme, Interlocutors and Participants .....	20
	ANNEX II – PRESS RELEASE .....	23
	ANNEX III – BASIC FIGURES .....	25





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### **Highlights of the Discussions**

#### **I. Introduction**

From 6-8 March 2024, a high-level delegation<sup>1</sup> of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration<sup>2</sup>, led by its Chair OSCE PA Vice-President Daniela DE RIDDER (MP, Germany), and joined by the OSCE PA Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime, Eugenio ZOFFILI (MP, Italy)<sup>3</sup> and OSCE PA President Pia KAUMA (MP, Finland), travelled to Italy with the objective to witness first-hand the challenges faced by Italy in dealing with irregular migration along the Central Mediterranean route. The focus was on the island of Lampedusa – the southernmost part of Italy which is closer to Tunisia than to Sicily, and which in 2023 accounted for about 70 per cent of all irregular sea arrivals in Italy.

One of the main topics addressed was understanding how organized criminal networks exploit mixed migration flows to traffic human beings and smuggle migrants across borders.

The Committee also pays special attention to the treatment of, and procedures for, migrants in vulnerable categories, notably unaccompanied minors, women, victims of trafficking in human beings and gender-based violence.

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<sup>1</sup> The following Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration participated in the visit: Chair Daniela DE RIDDER (MP, Germany); Vice-Chairs Kyriakos HADJIYIANNI (MP, Cyprus), Farah KARIMI (MP, Netherlands), and Gudrun KUGLER (MP, Austria); as well as Members Alessandro ALFIERI (MP, Italy), Kristian KLINCK (MP, Germany), Malik BEN ACHOUR (MP, Belgium), Kemal ÇELİK (MP, Türkiye) and Fabrizio COMBA (MP, Italy). For the programme and list of interlocutors, please see Annex I.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, please see: <https://www.oscepa.org/en/activities/ad-hoc-committees-and-working-groups/migration>.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime, please see: <https://www.oscepa.org/en/activities/special-representatives/combating-organized-crime>.

## II. Background

### a. The Central Mediterranean Route

Migrants and asylum seekers use the Central Mediterranean route to enter the EU on an irregular basis. They embark on long, dangerous journeys from North Africa and Türkiye, crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy, and to a much lesser extent also Malta. The large majority of migrants transit through Libya on their journey towards Europe. This has contributed to the development of well-established and resilient smuggling and trafficking networks in Libya.

Previous years	Arrivals *	Dead and missing
2023	270,180	4,110
2022	160,070	3,017
2021	123,540	3,231
2020	95,666	1,881
2019	123,663	1,510
2018	141,472	2,277
2017	185,139	3,139
2016	373,652	5,096
2015	1,032,408	3,771

\* Include sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus, and Malta, and both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain (including the Canary Islands). Data are as of 31 December 2023 for all countries.

A record number of irregular arrivals were registered in 2023 across the various Mediterranean routes: 270,000.<sup>4</sup> This was the highest figure since the “migration crisis” of 2015-2016 and confirmed a consistent upward trend following a drop in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Central Mediterranean route was once again the most active migratory route into the EU, experiencing a 50 per cent increase compared to 2022, mostly impacting Italy which recorded over 157,000 sea arrivals.

Route	December 2023	2023	2023/2022	Top Nationalities (2023)
Central Mediterranean	4742	157 479	+49%	Guinea, Tunisia, Cote d'Ivoire
Western Balkans	1091	99 068	-31%	Syria, Türkiye, Afghanistan
Eastern Mediterranean	6290	60 073	+55%	Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine**
Western Africa	4973	40 403	+161%	Senegal, Morocco, Mali
Western Mediterranean	1818	16 915	+12%	Morocco, Algeria, Syria
Eastern Land Border	94	5608	-12%	Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria
Exits towards the UK	3308	62 047	-12%	Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria

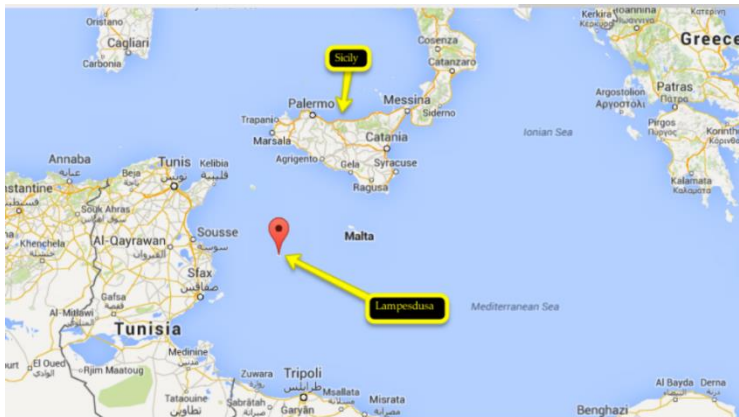
The Central Mediterranean route is also the deadliest known migration route in the world with more than 17,000 deaths and disappearances recorded by IOM's Missing Migrants Project since 2014.<sup>5</sup> This is due both to the length of the overseas journey as well as increasingly dangerous smuggling patterns, gaps in search-and-

<sup>4</sup> The figure of 270,180 includes sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus, and Malta, and both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain (including the Canary Islands). See: UNHCR, Mediterranean situation, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

<sup>5</sup> IOM's Missing Migrants Project ([missingmigrants.iom.int](https://missingmigrants.iom.int)) was established in 2014 following the two deadly shipwrecks off the coast of Lampedusa.

rescue capacity and restrictions on the life-saving work of NGOs. Migrants often embark upon unseaworthy, overloaded inflatable boats; multiple boats may also be launched at the same time, which complicates search and rescue efforts. 2023 was the deadliest year on record for migrants with nearly 8,600 deaths worldwide of which 3,129 along the various Mediterranean routes – 2,476 in the Central Mediterranean alone. IOM estimates the true figure to be much higher.

## b. Lampedusa – The ‘Gateway to Europe’

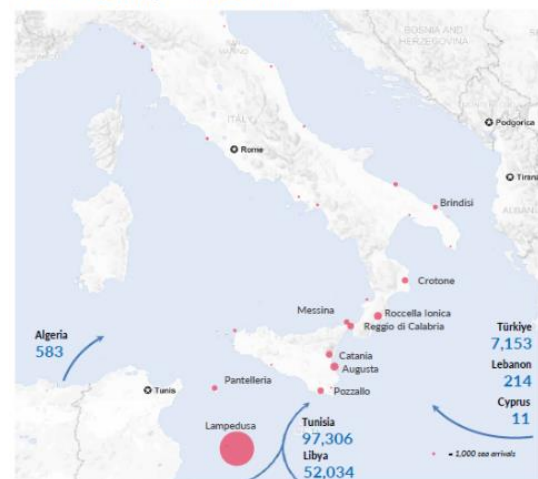


The island of Lampedusa (6,000 inhabitants, 20.2 km<sup>2</sup>) is one of the Pelagie Islands together with Linosa and Lampione. The *comune* (municipality) of Lampedusa and Linosa is part of the Province of Agrigento, in the region of Sicily.

Lampedusa has long been targeted by people smugglers as it is situated closer to the Tunisian coast (a little over 100km) than to Sicily and the Italian mainland. In 2023, the Tunisian city of Sfax overtook Libya as the main launching pad and Lampedusa received about 70 per cent of migrants arriving in Italy along the Central Mediterranean route.

Over four days in September 2023, about 11,000 people arrived on the island, the highest number since 2011. The island’s single reception centre (‘hotspot’) – with an official capacity of about 400 persons – struggled to cope. Another surge occurred over Christmas, with more than 1,500 migrants registered over a four-day period. The surge in arrivals in late 2023 brought back memories of the tragedies of October 2013, when two shipwrecks off the coast of Lampedusa cost over 600 lives.

Sea Arrivals in 2023 by disembarkation site



A **ten-point plan for Lampedusa**<sup>6</sup> to reduce irregular migration and provide immediate EU assistance to the Italian authorities, in accordance with fundamental rights and international conventions, was announced on 17 September 2023 by European Commission President von der Leyen and Home Affairs Commissioner Johansson during a visit following an

<sup>6</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/migration-commission-10-point-plan-lampedusa-2023-09-19\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/migration-commission-10-point-plan-lampedusa-2023-09-19_en).

invitation by Italian Prime Minister Meloni. This followed a **July 2023 agreement between the EU and Tunisia**<sup>7</sup>, a main component of which was to combat the criminal networks of migrant smugglers and human traffickers. Critics noted Tunisia’s poor human rights record, and notably abuse of Sub-Saharan Africans.



Arrivals started to drop in October 2023. As of the time of the visit in March 2024, arrivals numbered about 5,580, down 70% compared to the same period in 2023 (Annex III). As new arrivals are swiftly transferred to Sicily (Porto Empedocle) or the mainland within a few days, the Lampedusa hotspot is mostly empty.

The top ten nationalities in 2023 were: Guinea, Tunisia, Côte d’Ivoire, Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Mali and Sudan (Annex III). In January 2024,

Bangladesh took over as the leading nationality (26 per cent) followed by Tunisia, Syria, Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan, Gambia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Morocco (Annex III). The majority are young men (72 %). However, there are about 12% unaccompanied minors, as well as women (10%) and (accompanied) children (5%).

### c. Short overview of the Italian reception system

Upon arrival in Italy irregular migrants undergo an initial identification process. Those arriving by sea, near the points designated for disembarkation, are welcomed in first aid and reception facilities known as “hotspots”. There are currently four hotspots in Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Messina, and Taranto. Here, individuals undergo health screenings, pre-identification and identification procedures. Pre-identification consists of an interview, usually conducted by police officers of the Immigration Office assisted by an interpreter, during which migrants are asked to fill out a form with some general information and the reason for arriving in Italy. Identification involves photo-signaling and fingerprint detection. Information on immigration and asylum procedures and the possibility of applying for international protection is then provided.

<sup>7</sup> On 16 July 2023, the EU and Tunisia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) based on five pillars: macroeconomic stability, trade and investment, green energy transition, people-to-people contacts, and migration and mobility. The MoU defined a common approach based on upholding human rights and with action to combat criminal networks of migrant smugglers and human traffickers. Immediate aid of €105 million was released to support the Tunisian coastguard and border management. The MoU also proposed €900 million in macroeconomic support and €150 million in direct budgetary support. For the text of the EU-Tunisia MoU, see: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_3887](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3887). For more on EU-Tunisia co-operation, see [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/tunisia\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/tunisia_en)

After identification and photo-recognition, those who have expressed a desire to apply for international protection are directed to **First Reception Centres** (*Centri di Prima Accoglienza* – CPA) where they stay pending resolution of their application.

### Reception Centres in Italy



Orange: Hotspots  
Green: First Reception Centres (CPA)  
Grey: Centres for Permanence and Repatriation (CPR)

Applicants for international protection may be granted **refugee status** or **subsidiary protection**.<sup>8</sup> **Special protection** can be granted to a person who cannot be expelled to a state where they may be subjected to persecution on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, citizenship, religion, political opinions, personal or social conditions, or if there are well-founded reasons to believe that they are at risk of being subjected to torture. Finally, another case provided for by EU law and incorporated into the Italian legal system is **temporary protection**, in cases of massive influx or imminent massive influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries.

Refugees and holders of subsidiary international protection or other forms of protection are included in the Reception and Integration System (SAI).

<sup>8</sup> *Subsidiary protection* may benefit foreign citizens lacking the requirements for recognition of refugee status established by the Geneva Convention but who, upon return, would face a real risk of serious harm and who cannot or do not want to avail themselves of the protection of the country of origin (Legislative Decree No. 251/2007, Article 14).

Those who enter Italian territory irregularly and do not apply for international protection or whose application has been denied are placed in administrative detention centres known as Centres for Permanence and Repatriation (CPR).<sup>9</sup>

#### **d. Statistics on reception, asylum and return**

As of 15 February 2024, 83 irregular migrants were being hosted in hotspots.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that the number of migrants in the hotspots is subject to strong seasonal fluctuations. In January 2024, Italian hotspots were hosting 289 persons whereas during mid-September 2023 this number reached 5,696 persons.

A total of 103,596 irregular migrants were being hosted in first reception centres while 35,063 people were hosted in SAI centres. The total of irregular migrants in Italian reception facilities thus amounted to 138,742 (as of 15 February 2024).

According to latest official data, in 2022 Italian authorities received 84,289 asylum requests (+57% compared to 2021).<sup>11</sup> Out of those requests, 56% were denied whilst 44% resulted in the granting of asylum or other forms of international protection. The three top countries of origin of asylum seekers were Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt. Nationals from Syria, Afghanistan and Sudan had the most successful asylum requests (74%, 72% and 47% respectively). Citizens of Egypt, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso had the lowest recognition rates: 1%, 2% and 2% respectively. The majority of applicants from Ukraine (82%), Burkina Faso (61%), Venezuela (61%) and Somalia (51%) were granted subsidiary protection.

As of November 2023, Italy had 156,316 pending cases of asylum requests.<sup>12</sup>

In 2022, a total of 2,790 irregular migrants were returned to their countries of origin (both forced and assisted voluntary returns) out of a total of 28,185 deportation orders issued by Italian authorities (a rate of 9.9%).<sup>13</sup> Eurostat estimates that more than 85 % of all returns in Italy in 2022 were forced. In the

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<sup>9</sup> The Chief of Police (*Questore*) shall order that the foreigner is detained for the strictly necessary time at the nearest repatriation centre. The detention period can last up to 90 days, with the possibility of extending for an additional 45 days (DL Cutro 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Interior, Department for Civil Liberties and Migration, Daily statistical dashboard as of 15 February 2024, at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero> (accessed 27 February 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Interior, Department for Civil Liberties and Migration, Asylum Figures, at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasilo> (accessed 27 February 2024).

<sup>12</sup> European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Latest Asylum trends, November 2023, at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-asylum>

<sup>13</sup> Eurostat, Enforcement of immigration legislation statistics, 2022. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enforcement\\_of\\_immigration\\_legislation\\_statistics&oldid=611776#:::text=In%202022%2C%20141%20060%20non.Member%20State%20was%20422%20400](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enforcement_of_immigration_legislation_statistics&oldid=611776#:::text=In%202022%2C%20141%20060%20non.Member%20State%20was%20422%20400) (accessed 27 February 2024).

first semester of 2023, available data show an increase in the rate of successful returns to 12 %. The EU rate of return for the same period was 25 %.<sup>14</sup>

### III. Institutional Briefings in Rome (6 March 2024)



The official programme of the visit kicked off on 6 March in Rome with institutional briefings at the Ministry of the Interior with a broad range of Italian officials covering migration and asylum policies, border control and combating organized crime.

OSCE PA Special Representative Eugenio ZOFFILI introduced the high-level PA delegation and focussed his remarks on how Lampedusa, as the southernmost point of Italy, has become a point of entry into the EU for migrants who fall prey to ruthless smugglers, as well as for drugs. He also shared concerns that terrorists also find their way into Italy through Lampedusa.

Nicola MOLTENI, Undersecretary at the Ministry of the Interior, remarked that Lampedusa was not just an Italian island but a European island. The high numbers of migrants arriving on the island necessitate a **high degree of co-ordination** and additional synergies between all the institutions involved. While the objective of the Italian government is to combat irregular flows, it is also facing having to welcome people who are arriving directly from detention centres in Libya, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, he noted.

MOLTENI provided some basic figures on the number of irregular sea arrivals in Italy in 2023 (157,000) and the total number of asylum seekers currently hosted in Italy (147,000). About 60-70% of all asylum applications in Italy are rejected, he added. According to GALZERANO, 99% of persons arriving in Lampedusa are economic migrants, with Bangladesh currently the lead nationality; only 1-2 % receive international protection.

MOLTENI also touched upon some of the steps taken by the authorities in response to the surge in arrivals, including the declaration of a state of emergency. The “Cutro Decree”<sup>15</sup> enabled Italy to demonstrate accountability and to provide

<sup>14</sup> EU News, L'Italia è riuscita a rimpatriare solo il 12 per cento dei migranti irregolari [Italy has managed to repatriate only 12% of irregular migrants], 2023, at: <https://www.eunews.it/2023/10/06/italia-1600-rimpatri-migranti/> (accessed 27 February 2024).

<sup>15</sup> Decree Law of 10 March 2023, n. 20, in coordination with the conversion Law 5 May 2023 n. 50, on “Urgent provisions regarding the regulation of legal entry flows for foreign workers and the prevention and combating of irregular immigration”. Following the introduction of the “Cutro Decree” (named after a shipwreck in February 2023 in which more than 80 people died), a number of services provided to asylum seekers in first reception centres (psychological assistance

reception facilities to migrants, he underlined. He also commended the Coast Guard and the Navy for their efforts in difficult conditions.

Migration is a global phenomenon which requires **a global response, based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility**, MOLTENI underlined. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum is an important step forward in the management of migration flows based on the principle of solidarity, MOLTENI emphasized, as it represents an effort to jointly deal with migration flows.



MOLTENI also informed the delegation that the policies of the Italian government, and the July 2023 agreement between the EU and Tunisia, were beginning to bear fruit, with irregular sea arrivals down significantly in 2024 compared to the same period last year.

In response to concerns raised during the discussion about **agreements reached with third countries** due to Tunisia's poor human rights record and Libya's treatment of migrants, Claudio GALZERANO, Director of the Central Department of Immigration and Border Police, emphasized that the co-operation between the Italian and Tunisian authorities dates back to 2011 and that the technical support provided by Italy has contributed to enhancing the professional capabilities of the Tunisian border police. Furthermore, the training always includes a human rights segment. The goal of this co-operation is two-fold, GALZERANO noted: to reduce irregular migration flows and to improve the counter-terrorism capabilities of Tunisian authorities. It can serve as a model because it is based on mutual trust, he emphasized. GALZERANO also stressed the need to engage in dialogue and partnerships with countries which we might have difficulty considering as partners.

GALZERANO linked the 2023 migration surge to Italy to instability in Tunisia. He also praised the EU's **ten-point plan for Lampedusa** for its very positive impact on the allocation of funds to Italy for migration management.

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services, Italian language courses, and legal and territorial orientation services) were discontinued. Material reception services, healthcare assistance, social assistance, and linguistic-cultural mediation continue to be provided. According to Human Rights Watch, the new law makes it harder for people to obtain special protection (a temporary but renewable right to remain on Italian territory on humanitarian and family grounds); it will also make it harder to convert the special protection into a work permit. The new law also extends the maximum period of detention for people waiting to be deported from 120 to 135 days and introduces a new process to detain asylum seekers at the border for up to four weeks while their claim is processed under a new accelerated border procedure. See: Human Rights Watch, "Disastrous Clampdown on Migrants rights in Italy," 12 May 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/12/disastrous-clamp-down-migrants-rights-italy>.

**Repatriations to Tunisia** also function well: 4,743 repatriations were carried out in 2023. Italian authorities furthermore help Tunisian authorities control the southern border with Algeria through which most Sub-Saharan migrants arrive. Prefect Francesco ZITO recalled that Italy participates in IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme which also provides reintegration assistance.

Italy's recent **agreement with Albania** was also touched upon. Presented as an innovative agreement by MOLTENI, he underlined that Albania was a safe country. Two facilities are foreseen: one for pre-identification, identification and screening procedures, and another one where asylum applications will be processed, including a facility for migrants awaiting repatriation. Women and minors would not be sent to these facilities in Albania, and the process will be carried out swiftly and in compliance with Italian law, and will be staffed by Italians, it was emphasized.

The topic of **combating trafficking in human beings (THB) and other forms of organized crime** was also addressed by a number of the interlocutors. Prefect Francesco ZITO highlighted the good co-operation between Italian authorities and Europol, Interpol and some countries of departure. He underlined the good relations with the Libyan police force which are subject to Italian law. He also informed the delegation about a **splintering of criminal organizations** which has resulted in more THB occurring outside of the major networks.

In the discussion, Members stressed the need to also facilitate **regular migration** and enquired whether there is a correlation between regular and irregular migration flows. GALZERANO expressed his conviction that by increasing paths for regular migration, irregular migration would decrease. He also informed the participants about a talent partnership programme to bring to Italy persons who have already started vocational training in their home country.

GALZERANO strongly advocated for the new **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**. There is a need for a shared vision based on the principle of solidarity, he noted, as he deplored the failure of the Schengen agreement, against the backdrop of bilateral border closures. The Pact will furthermore enable the differentiation between regular and irregular migrants. The solidarity mechanism foreseen as part of the Pact would contribute to a decrease in secondary movements, he predicted.

A number of interlocutors emphasized the need to provide humanitarian corridors for people in Libya and the importance of identifying **vulnerable migrants**. Deputy Prefect Carmen COSENTINO, who spent six months in Lampedusa in 2023 setting up procedures for identifying vulnerabilities, presented a new "Handbook for the identification, referral and care of persons living with vulnerabilities entering Italy and within the protection and reception system". Published in June 2023, it was developed by the Interior Ministry's Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, together with UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, the European Commission, Frontex, Europol, and other actors. This handbook has had a positive impact on increasing coordination and greater dialogue between the various actors and institutions involved in the reception of migrants, COSENTINO stated.

The discussion also touched upon the **instrumentalization of migrants**, the expected impact of the **situation in the Middle East**, and the issue of **returns** to countries with which there is no repatriation agreement and how to encourage countries to take back their citizens and help them build a future.

The **experience of Türkiye** in dealing with irregular migration was also discussed, with appeals to the OSCE to be more effective in dealing with migration and for further support to Türkiye which has reached its limit. GALZERANO commended the Turkish authorities for their assistance in identifying those who had navigated the boat which departed from Türkiye in the Cutro disaster (February 2023).

In the concluding discussion, GALZERANO advocated for an integrated approach across countries, as measures adopted by one country are likely to affect another. He also called for a balanced, co-ordinated and far-sighted approach to migration management. Chair DE RIDDER emphasized the need for regular pathways, and for measures to support the integration of migrants and an inclusive approach.



During the working lunch at the Chamber of Deputies, the participants had the opportunity to exchange their first impressions with the Members of the delegation of Italy to the OSCE PA.

## IV. Programme in Lampedusa (7-8 March 2024)

### a. Institutional briefings at the Air Force Base



The programme in Lampedusa started with in-depth briefings at the Air Force base on 7 March with representatives of a broad range of institutions and organizations including the Prefecture, Police, Coast Guard, *Guardia di Finanza*<sup>16</sup>, *Carabinieri*, Air Force, Mayor's office, Frontex, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), and a number of international governmental and non-governmental organizations (Italian Red Cross, UNHCR, IOM, Save the Children).



Prefect Filippo ROMANO shared with the delegation the challenges faced by this small island of only 6,000 inhabitants in dealing with irregular migration, and the degree to which its remoteness (it is over 200 km away from Sicily and even further away from the Italian mainland) complicates operations. He provided an overview of the response of Italian authorities, highlighting improvements following the surge in arrivals in late 2023. Arrivals are first accommodated at the 'hotspot' on Lampedusa but are swiftly transferred by ferry after a maximum of 2-3 days to Porto Empedocle in Sicily and onwards. Another

improvement is that the 'hotspot' is managed by the Italian Red Cross rather than private entities which focus on profit. Procedures carried out there consist of pre-identification after the provision of first care. Accommodation is then provided in reception centres in Sicily or other parts of the country after the ferry transfer. The majority request asylum, the Prefect noted; however, only about 10% obtain asylum; the rest are economic migrants he stated.

Police Commissioner Tommaso PALUMBO focussed on the importance of ensuring returns – both forced and voluntary – as well as on procedures to ensure the security of not only Italy but Europe as a whole as Italy acts as a gateway for migrants. He underlined the importance of identifying every single migrant through fingerprinting and an interview. However, identification (registration) is just physical, not based on identity documents. Many migrants come through Lampedusa several times with different identities. This is why physical identification (registration) is required. PALUMBO also remarked that it was fairly

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<sup>16</sup> The *Guardia di Finanza* (Financial Police) is a military police force reporting directly to the Minister of Economy and Finance, with general economic and financial crime-fighting competences, including money laundering, drug trafficking, smuggling, trafficking in human beings. To fulfill its maritime border patrol and surveillance functions, the *Guardia di Finanza* has a fleet which can also be involved in search and rescue operations.

easy for criminal gangs to reach Italy. There are several protocols in place with many north African countries to confirm identification efforts (and proceed with repatriations). However, in many cases, there is simply no way to consult countries of origin and to thus identify and possibly repatriate migrants.

Criminal groups exploit these irregular movements to maximize profit and avoid prosecution. Criminal investigations start already at this stage. Migration is a business opportunity, and the criminal organizations behind the business need to be dismantled. Terrorists can also exploit these movements to infiltrate Europe, PALUMBO noted. Italian and European police forces are therefore closely monitoring the situation.

PALUMBO commended the good level of co-operation with European agencies (Frontex, Europol, Interpol, EUAA) as well as the Italian Coast Guard, Guardia di Finanza and Army. Despite the different mandates of these institutions, they share a common focus: the management of the complex phenomenon of irregular migration. It is mandatory to always be prepared, he stressed, due to the constantly changing modus operandi of smugglers. While in the past they used larger vessels departing from Libya, there has been a shift to small, unstable metal boats departing from Tunisia.

The Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa, Filippo MANNINO, focussed on the great distance separating Lampedusa from Sicily and the Italian mainland and how this has affected the response of authorities. Characterising Lampedusa as a **“life raft in the middle of the Mediterranean”** which has been dealing with migration since 1998, MANNINO noted some improvements in the hotspot facilities and in the area of health care. However, he called for more to be done by various institutions. Italy cannot deal with this global phenomenon alone, he emphasized. MANNINO also stressed the need to fight the criminal networks behind these movements. We need to stop migrants before they leave; once they are in the sea we need to take care of them, MANNINO stated. He also mentioned the huge impact which migrants have had on the local community, which has so far manifested outstanding solidarity but also needs special support to cope with this situation and stressed the need to provide services to migrants and to local citizens alike.

The first round of questions focussed on what more could be done to prevent migrants from embarking upon these journeys and ‘lessons learned’ from the **agreement with Tunisia**. Relations with Tunisia are improving, Prefect ROMANO noted, as is evident in the lower number of arrivals in 2024 so far compared to the same period in 2023. The ‘Mattei Plan’ for development aid to Africa was mentioned as a measure aimed to address the root economic causes of migration.

Police Commissioner PALUMBO remarked that Italy has an agreement on bilateral cooperation with Egypt in the area of migration but not with Morocco.

The **new agreement with Albania** should help relieve some of the pressure on Italy, one Member stated.

On the issue of **links between migration and terrorism**, another Member asked the Italian authorities to

share data on how many suspected terrorists had actually been identified. Police Commissioner PALUMBO informed the delegation that in 2023, 813 persons had been arrested and a further 300 had been stopped for investigations in Lampedusa alone, mostly for smuggling. He could not provide data on convictions as this is within the mandate of the judicial authorities. PALUMBO estimated that about 10-20 potential terrorists are identified each year in Lampedusa based on international databases.

Compared to 2015, there is **more human smuggling now than human trafficking**, he noted, with criminal network operating as travel agencies offering “transfer services” to irregular migrants. Additionally, the discussion addressed whether all cases of **trafficking** were linked to organized crime. Both big and small criminal networks and various nationalities are involved, Prefect ROMANO stated. He also highlighted how lucrative the business of the small metal boats is: each boat is about 10m long and can transport up to 40 people, earning smugglers €100,000. The activities of NGOs patrolling the sea should be fully coordinated with Italian authorities as they could otherwise become tools in the hands of criminal networks profiting from this business. It is key, therefore, that NGOs saving migrants at sea co-operate closely with Italian authorities who know about the reception capacity situation of various facilities, ROMANO emphasized.

The impact of the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** on identification procedures in Lampedusa and the rest of Italy was also discussed.

The **difficulty of returning rejected asylum seekers** was also addressed, with the non-cooperative attitude of many African countries mentioned as the main obstacle. Most of these rejected asylum seekers probably remain in Europe without documents, Prefect ROMANO surmised.

The issue of **Search and Rescue (SAR) by NGOs** was also raised, in particular the case of a vessel which had just completed a rescue operation and had been assigned a port further north which would take four days to reach. The authorities had furthermore refused the transfer to Lampedusa of the body of a 17-year-old migrant. A suggestion was made to set up a safe harbour in Italy for NGO SAR



vessels as well as a special protocol for vulnerable migrants (unaccompanied minors, pregnant women) so that they could be transferred to the hotspot in Lampedusa and spare them additional days of navigation. Prefect ROMANO replied that vulnerable migrants are immediately disembarked in Lampedusa. In this case, two migrants were therefore transferred to Lampedusa and two others transferred by helicopter to Palermo for medical treatment.

ROMANO was critical of the surge in disembarkations which in his view had been imposed upon Lampedusa in September 2023 by NGOs. The island's hotspot – which has a capacity of 389 and can be doubled in case of emergency – could not cope with such large numbers, he stressed. The facility at Porto Empedocle in turn can accommodate only 160 persons. There also need to be sufficient numbers of police authorities to process the new arrivals as well as transportation, he noted. Italy needs migration, Prefect ROMANO highlighted. However, the number of migrants which the country can receive should be determined by politicians and not left to fate or criminal networks.

Overall, the Italian authorities were commended for their efforts and Members acknowledged that Italy deserves more support from Europe. More efforts were needed to regulate migration and to combat human smuggling and trafficking in human beings, Members concurred. It was also important to show solidarity and to treat migrants with dignity and not to focus exclusively on combatting trafficking, Chair DE RIDDER underlined.

#### **b. Visit of the Contrada Imbriacola 'hotspot'**



Following the institutional briefings at the Air Force Base, the delegation visited the Lampedusa hotspot for further briefings and a site visit.

Located in Contrada Imbriacola, the hotspot has been active since 2015, when Italy found itself at the forefront of a migration crisis from Northern Africa. It has been managed by the Italian Red Cross since June 2023. The center has a capacity of 389 persons. It includes a

building for women with minors with a capacity of 64 persons and another one for unaccompanied minors.<sup>17</sup> The Lampedusa hotspot experiences cyclical periods of overcrowding alternated with empty periods after migrants are moved to first reception centers in Sicily and on the mainland.

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<sup>17</sup> Prefettura di Agrigento, Convention for the management of the Lampedusa hotspot, 2022. Available at <https://inlimine.asgi.it/la-convenzione-per-la-gestione-dellhotspot-di-lampedusa/> (accessed 28 February 2024)



At the hotspot, the delegation was briefed on procedures carried out there: migrants receive medical aid and are checked for security reasons. Pre-identification screening procedures aim to identify individuals in need of international protection and/or relocation, individuals with special needs, and individuals who do not intend to apply for protection. Migrants have an interview with immigration

officers assisted by an interpreter, and fill out an information sheet with personal details and state their reason for arriving in Italy.

After being informed about their status as irregular migrants and the possibility of applying for international protection, they are photographed and fingerprinted for registration in the Eurodac database (identification process). They then receive information about the international protection procedure, relocation and assisted voluntary returns.



The delegation was shown the facilities for men, unaccompanied minors and families. It also met with two migrants, one from Syria, the other from Pakistan, who had arrived from Libya the previous evening. Both had spent about 10 months in Libya some of which in detention and had paid €4,000-8,000 for the journey together with about 60 persons in terrible conditions.

### c. Briefings at Favalaro Pier and on board a patrol vessel



Similarly to other hotspots, the Lampedusa hotspot is characterized by a proximity with a disembarkation point for migrants, notably the Favorolo Pier.

At the Favorolo Pier, the delegation was briefed by Flag Lieutenant Gaetano ROSEO from the Coast Guard Maritime District Office in Lampedusa and representatives of the Guardia di Finanza (GdF). The delegation was told how smugglers now use very dangerous metal boats that sink easily. Port authorities engage primarily in Search & Rescue operations with specialists on board, including rescue swimmers and social services. The Coast Guard co-operates actively with GdF and other EU naval operations.

Captain Gianluca PETRONE, Commander of the GdF Naval Operations Section ROAN, underlined that it is the only police force at sea operating in Lampedusa. Its mandate is to counter human smuggling at sea and coordinate all activities at sea in this regard. It is usually the smugglers themselves that “initiate” Search & Rescue in order to avoid being caught by the GdF. However, they are limited by the fact that they do not have jurisdiction in international waters. Hence smugglers tend to leave migrants with smaller boats just outside Italian waters. Criminals usually hide with other migrants on boats. This necessitates a search for evidence through different means (areal monitoring, witness statements, etc). Witness statements are rare as migrants fear retaliation. The GdF cooperates with Frontex but it is the GdF which runs investigations.



#### **d. Commemorating the dead and missing**

On the morning of 8 March, the delegation commemorated the thousands of lives lost at sea, laying a wreath at the “*Porta di Europa*” (“Gateway to Europe” – a reference to Lampedusa’s nickname) monument located at the southernmost tip of the island. Designed by the Italian sculptor Mimmo Paladino and inaugurated in 2008, it is a memorial to those who have perished at sea while attempting the treacherous maritime journey from North Africa to Europe. The open portal also symbolizes Italian and European hospitality towards migrants.

The delegation also visited the Cala Pisana cemetery where migrants who have died off the coast of Lampedusa, most of whom unidentified, are buried.



## **V. Key Takeaways of the Chair**

The decision of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration to focus on irregular arrivals in Italy along the Central Mediterranean were clearly well founded. This was the main entry point into Europe in 2023 with over 270,000 recorded irregular arrivals. Although arrivals appear to be lower at the beginning of 2024 compared to the same period last year, they were unfortunately already picking up by the time of the Committee's visit in March.

There are many lessons to be learned from this visit. The following attempts to summarise some of the key messages:

1. Managing mixed migration flows in an effective and humane manner is an extremely challenging task for any given country. It has significant financial, organizational and logistical implications which should never be underestimated. It requires strong political determination and foresighted planning, along with skilled resources and top-notch equipment.
2. The Italian authorities have made tremendous efforts over the years to welcome refugees and migrants arriving irregularly across the Central Mediterranean route and to save lives. This route was again the main entry point into Europe in 2023 with over 157,000 irregular sea arrivals. It was sadly also the deadliest, having cost at least 2,476 lives this past year alone; the true figure is estimated to be much higher.
3. Solidarity, co-operation, co-ordination and shared responsibility are key guiding principles in addressing the challenges connected to migratory movements. No entity, state or organization, when acting alone, can make a lasting difference. The Italian border at Lampedusa is a European border. Greater shared responsibility is needed to address the challenges related to irregular migration with the ultimate goal of ensuring the security of the entire OSCE region.
4. Expectations regarding the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, the new solidarity mechanism and reform of the Common European Asylum System are understandably high. Implementation should be closely monitored to ensure that due process and the right to seek asylum are respected and that migrants in vulnerable categories in particular are identified and receive protection.
5. The assessment of the impact of bilateral agreements with countries of origin and transit remains mixed. While there are positive results in terms of capacity building and human rights training of border and police authorities and a decrease in irregular arrivals in some cases, credible and documented reports of serious human rights violations raise ethical questions as to the price to be paid for the results achieved as well as the sustainability of these approaches.
6. The implementation of returns of persons not deemed in need of protection to their countries of origin should also be enhanced through stronger incentives

for Third Countries to readmit their nationals. This is vital to alleviating the pressure on countries of first arrival.

7. Co-operation, co-ordination and data exchange between the various Italian, European and International authorities involved in border control and combatting human smuggling, trafficking in human beings and other forms of organized crime appears to be at a good level, and is characterised by a high degree of professionalism and reliability.
8. Still, fighting the organized crime networks behind migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings – two distinct but often overlapping crimes – needs to be stepped up. Migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings are also used to finance other criminal operations such as drug and arms trafficking. Promptly identifying new migrant arrivals, duly patrolling borders and conducting joint investigations are therefore critical steps to fight criminal cartels preying on the vulnerability of migrants. Co-operation with Third Countries to investigate, arrest and prosecute smugglers and traffickers must also be intensified, including online.
9. At the same time, the contribution of emergency services, civil society organizations and citizens is paramount to "humanize" procedures and to address the needs of especially the more vulnerable refugees and migrants, and to ensure that they are treated with empathy and dignity. A greater involvement of non-state actors has also proven to enhance prospects for the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings as their trust in authorities tends to be low.
10. Recognizing the life-saving efforts of NGOs in the area of Search & Rescue at sea and the gap which they are seeking to fill in this regard, their efforts need to be better coordinated with the Italian authorities, bearing in mind not only the well-being of the rescued migrants but also the need to ensure that they can be received in adequate conditions. While, ultimately, the responsibility for deaths at sea lies with the smugglers, traffickers and also migrants themselves, the current loss of life cannot be tolerated. Compromises must be found to minimise the suffering of all the parties concerned: people on the move but also the authorities as well as humanitarian staff, volunteers and citizens.
11. Efforts to combat human smuggling and trafficking in human beings can also be strengthened through enhanced collaboration and information sharing between EUROPOL and national intelligence services.
12. Notwithstanding the need to protect borders and to dismantle human trafficking and smuggling networks, it is also vital to protect the human rights of people on the move – be they refugees or economic migrants
13. We should also strive to honour the memory of those who perished while attempting to cross the sea in pursuit of better lives. The majority of victims are either lost at sea or buried without having been identified. We can do better

to bring closure to relatives by establishing mechanisms for sharing information on missing and dead migrants.

14. There must be more safe and legal routes for those in need of protection so that they do not embark on perilous journeys and put their fate in the hands of human smugglers and traffickers.
15. A better understanding of the reasons triggering mobility can lead to the design and implementation of better policies and good governance and securing the dignified treatment of people on the move.
16. Economic downturns serve as additional catalysts for migration. It is therefore imperative to embark on long-term collaborative initiatives aimed at providing comprehensive economic development assistance to countries, particularly those in Africa and other regions generating significant numbers of migrants, to promote resilience and to mitigate one major driver of migration.

## ANNEX I – Final Programme, Interlocutors and Participants

### FINAL PROGRAMME

#### Rome, Wednesday, 6 March 2024

10:00-12:30 (Ministry of Interior)	<p><b>Institutional briefings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MP <b>Nicola MOLTENI</b>, Undersecretary at the Ministry of the Interior</li> <li>• Mr. <b>Claudio GALZERANO</b>, Director of the Central Department of Immigration and Border Police.</li> <li>• Mr. <b>Francesco ZITO</b>, Prefect, Director of the Central Department of civil services supporting migration and asylum</li> <li>• Ms. <b>Carmen COSENTINO</b>, Deputy Prefect, Civil Liberties Department - Head of Office II: Reception, Temporary Stay, Assistance and Identification Centres; and Acting Head of Office III: Asylum, special and subsidiary protections, Dublin Unit</li> <li>• Ms. <b>Angela CIRIELLO</b>, Deputy Director of the Central Department of Immigration and Border Police</li> <li>• Mr. <b>Marco Alesi</b>, Head of Section 1 "Organized Crime" of the Organized Crime, Subversion and Terrorism Office</li> <li>• Ms. <b>Laura Lega</b>, Head of the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Ministry of the Interior</li> </ul>
13:30 (Chamber of Deputies)	Working lunch with the participation of the Members of the OSCE PA Italian Delegation

#### Lampedusa, Thursday, 7 March 2024

9:45 – 11:00	Institutional briefings at the Air Force base
11:30 – 13:00	Visit of the <i>Contrada Imbriacola</i> Hotspot and briefings with law enforcement agencies, Frontex, Europol and other possible actors
13:30	Lunch at the Air Force base
15:30 – 18:00	<p><i>Favaloro</i> Pier: Briefing by Guardia di Finanza, Coast Guard and other entities</p> <p>Briefing and navigation on board a patrol vessel of the Guardia di Finanza</p>

#### Lampedusa, Friday, 8 March 2024

10:00	Wreath-laying ceremony at “Porta d’Europa”, visit of Lampedusa’s Cala Pisana cemetery of the nameless
12:00	End of the official programme

### **List of Interlocutors in Lampedusa**<sup>18</sup>

- Mr. Filippo ROMANO, Prefect
- Ms. Elisa VACCARO, Prefecture Chief of Staff, Deputy Prefect
- Mr. Tommaso PALUMBO, Police Commissioner
- Mr. Andrea PALERMO, Senior Police Officer at the Hotspot - Assistant Commissioner
- Lt. Giuseppe FRENNA, Commander of Carabinieri Tenenza
- Lt. Antonino GIANNO, Commander Guardia di Finanza Tenenza
- Capt. Gianluca PETRONE, Commander of Guardia di Finanza Naval Operations Section ROAN
- Flag lieutenant Gaetano ROSEO, Coast Guard Maritime District Office in Lampedusa
- Capt. Enrico PASCALI, Commander of Lampedusa Air Force Detachment
- Ms. Cristina PALMA, Director of Lampedusa Hotspot, Italian Red Cross
- Mr. Filippo MANNINO, Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa
- Mr. Attilio LUCIA, Deputy Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa

Representatives of the following European agencies and international organizations:

- European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX): Inspector Angelo CORONATO
- European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA): Ms. Rossella FADDA, Ms. Silvia LAZZARINI, Mr. Giuseppe MUSSO, Ms. Gaia PISANI
- Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Mr. Abiel GHEBRE
- International Organization for Migration (IOM): Ms. Ines AMER
- NGO "Save the Children": Ms. Lisa BJELOGRLIC, Mr. Giulio MAROSTICA

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<sup>18</sup> Note: This list is not exhaustive.

## OSCE PA Delegation

### Members of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration

1. Daniela DE RIDDER (MP, Germany), Chair, OSCE PA Vice-President
2. Kyriakos HADJIYIANNI (MP, Cyprus), Vice-Chair, OSCE PA Vice-President
3. Farah KARIMI (MP, Netherlands), Vice-Chair
4. Gudrun KUGLER (MP, Austria), Vice-Chair
5. Alessandro ALFIERI (MP, Italy)
6. Kristian KLINCK (MP, Germany)
7. Malik BEN ACHOUR (MP, Belgium)
8. Kemal ÇELİK (MP, Türkiye)
9. Fabrizio COMBA (MP, Italy)

### Other OSCE PA Members

10. Pia KAUMA (MP, Finland), President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
11. Eugenio ZOFFILI (MP, Italy), Head of the Delegation of Italy to the OSCE PA, OSCE PA Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime

### Staff

12. Valeria GALARDINI, Secretary of the Delegation of Italy to the OSCE PA
13. Pia CALIFANO, Staff of the Delegation of Italy to the OSCE PA
14. Ecem DANIK GOKCE, Secretary of the Delegation of Türkiye to the OSCE PA

### OSCE PA International Secretariat

15. Marco BONABELLO, Senior Adviser, OSCE PA International Secretariat
16. Farimah DAFTARY, Senior Adviser, OSCE PA International Secretariat

## ANNEX II – PRESS RELEASE

### Visiting Rome and Lampedusa, high-level OSCE PA delegation stresses need to support Italy's migration efforts and combat human trafficking

LAMPEDUSA, 8 March 2024 – OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma (Finland) joined members of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, chaired by Vice-President Daniela De Ridder (Germany), and Special Representative on Combating Organized Crime Eugenio Zoffili (Italy) on an official visit to Rome and Lampedusa this week to witness first-hand the challenges faced by Italy in dealing with irregular migration.

With the Central Mediterranean route from Africa to Europe once again the most active – and deadliest – route for migrants entering the European Union irregularly, and with Lampedusa at the front line due to its proximity to North Africa, the OSCE PA delegation noted that Italy deserves continued support for managing the migration flows, and that the international community must do more to jointly address irregular migration as well as drivers of migration.

“Migration is a global phenomenon that requires a co-ordinated approach,” President Kauma said. “The efforts of Italy and the EU to address irregular arrivals seem to be bearing fruit, with numbers so far down by 70 per cent in 2024 compared to last year. We must continue to learn from this experience and to work together to ensure that we are better prepared to meet the challenges ahead. OSCE parliamentarians can furthermore contribute by ensuring that our legislative frameworks support sustainable migration governance.”

President Kauma's participation underscored the significance of migration on the OSCE PA's agenda and the importance that the PA attaches to the challenges faced by Italy, she stressed. In Rome, she held a bilateral meeting with Lorenzo Fontana, President of the Chamber of Deputies, in which the sides discussed a range of issues facing the OSCE area, including migration, as well as Italy's support for the PA's activities.

Ad Hoc Committee Chair De Ridder said that there must be closer co-operation with other frontline countries around the Mediterranean. “Offers of help are always about the dignity of the refugees and this is managed in an orderly fashion on Lampedusa,” De Ridder said. “Lampedusa is a place where tragedy and hope mix with a lot of potential. We often cannot understand the willingness to take risks of refugees who want to reach Europe by sea, but we must work more intensively on the causes of flight, especially conflict, poverty and climate change.”

One of the main focuses of the visit was understanding how organized criminal networks exploit mixed-migration flows to traffic human beings and smuggle migrants across borders. The delegation noted that criminal groups have increasingly used the Central Mediterranean route to boost their illegal operations. During their perilous journeys, many migrants and asylum seekers fall prey to unscrupulous trafficking rings, and are subsequently exploited for sexual or labor exploitation in countries of transit and destination.

Special Representative Zoffili, who serves as Head of Italy's OSCE PA Delegation, said that it is important to keep a strong focus on the criminal element related to irregular migration. “Migrant smuggling and human trafficking are closely related, albeit different, crimes that exploit vulnerable people for financial gain,” said Zoffili. “The organized criminal networks that profit from these crimes are usually interlinked, and often they are also involved in other dangerous criminal operations, such as drugs and weapons trafficking. Combating these criminal cartels should be a top security priority for all of our countries. In this regard, there is much that can be learned from the Italian experience.”

In meetings with law enforcement and asylum policy officials in Rome, the OSCE PA delegation learned about the techniques that criminal networks use to evade detection, as well as the internal operations of these networks. They also heard how Italian border police authorities provide technical support to border police in Tunisia to improve their professional capacity to manage irregular sea migration and counter terrorism. Training activities also include a human rights component, the delegation heard.

Visiting Lampedusa, the delegation was briefed on the situation at the Air Force base and visited the Contrada Imbriacola 'Hotspot' managed by the Italian Red Cross where they met with a broad range of interlocutors including representatives of law enforcement agencies, Frontex, Europol, EU Asylum Agency and also representatives of UNHCR, IOM, and Save the Children.

Accounting for about 70 per cent of all arrivals on Italian soil in 2023, migrants arrive in Lampedusa on small boats from North Africa (Tunisia and Libya), committee members were told. Following an agreement reached with Tunisia, arrivals from Tunisia have gone down, with Libya again the main point of departure for the boats. The Mediterranean crossing continues to be the most treacherous route for migrants on record, with at least 3,129 deaths and disappearances. This is the highest death toll recorded in the Mediterranean since 2017.

Committee members also visited Favalaro Pier, where about 11,000 asylum seekers arrived over a four-day period in mid-September 2023. Meeting with Guardia di Finanza and Coast Guard officials, committee members learned about the challenges posed when an enormous influx of migrants arrives over such a short period. The remoteness of this small island of 6,000 inhabitants which is closer to Africa than to Sicily and the rest of Italy is one of the main challenges.

Italy's achievements in coping with the crisis was highlighted: migrants arriving in Lampedusa go through an efficient process, including health screenings, pre-identification and screening for vulnerabilities. The delegation also discussed lessons learned from agreements with third countries such as Libya, Tunisia and Albania, and whether there are sufficient human rights safeguards. The new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, including accelerated border procedures as well as the proposed solidarity mechanism and their expected impact on vulnerable categories of migrants, notably unaccompanied minors, women and potential victims of trafficking, were also discussed.

In addition to President Kauma, Chair De Ridder and Special Representative Zoffili, members of the delegation included Ad Hoc Committee Vice-Chairs Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus), Farah Karimi (Netherlands), and Gudrun Kugler (Austria), as well as committee members Alessandro Alfieri (Italy), Kristian Klinck (Germany), Malik Ben Achour (Belgium), Kemal Çelik (Türkiye), and Fabrizio Comba (Italy).

# ANNEX III – BASIC FIGURES

## 2024 (as of 10 March)

Sea Arrivals in 2024 by disembarkation site

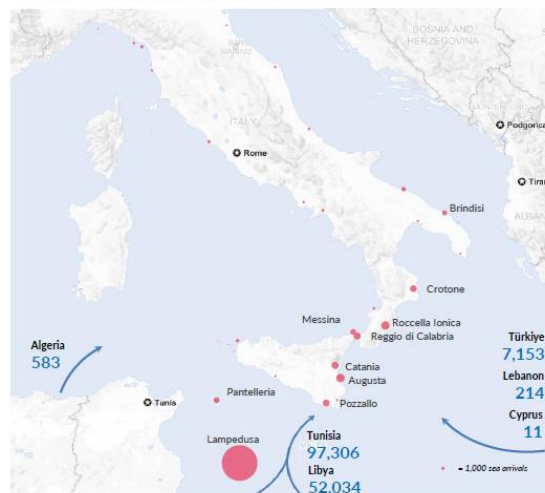


Year	Sea arrivals <sup>1</sup>	Year-to-date arrivals	Month-to-date arrivals
2024	5,580	1,059	1,059
2023	18,039	3,611	3,611

-69% (Year-to-date 2024 vs 2023)  
 -71% (Month-to-date 2024 vs 2023)

## 2023

Sea Arrivals in 2023 by disembarkation site



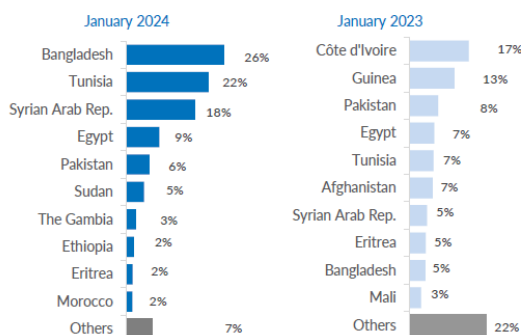
Year	Sea arrivals <sup>1</sup>	Year-to-date arrivals	Month-to-date arrivals
2023	157,301	4,886	4,886
2022	105,131	10,788	10,788

+50% (Year-to-date 2023 vs 2022)  
 -55% (Month-to-date 2023 vs 2022)

<sup>1</sup> The charts above are based on figures from the Italian Ministry of Interior and UNHCR estimates. All figures are provisional and subject to change. Please note that, in addition to sea arrivals, Italy also receives land arrivals and air arrivals. The present document focuses on sea arrivals only, as per official figures provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior.

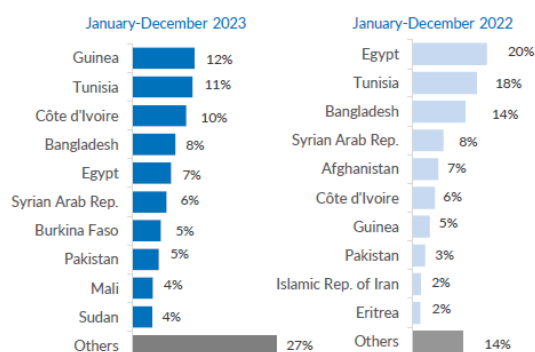
## Jan. 2024 vs. Jan. 2023

Top 10 most common countries of origin

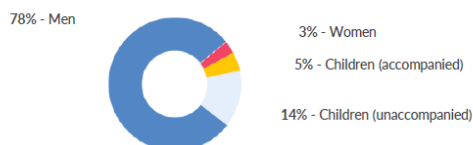


## 2023 vs. 2022

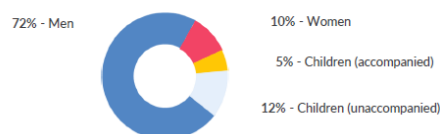
Top 10 most common countries of origin



Sea arrivals by gender and age, Jan 2024

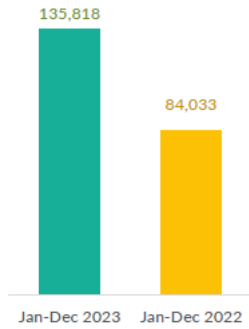


Sea arrivals by gender and age, Jan-Dec 2023

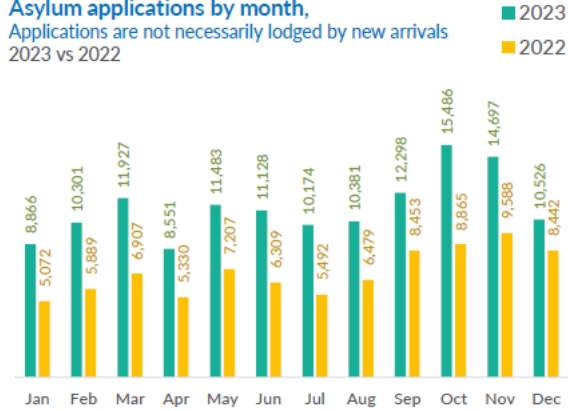


Source: UNHCR, Italy weekly Snapshot 4-10 March 2024, and Italy weekly Snapshot 22-28 January 2024, at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

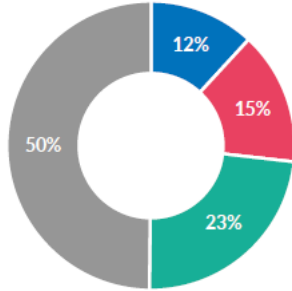
**Asylum applications,**  
Jan-Dec 2023 vs Jan-Dec 2022



**Asylum applications by month,**  
Applications are not necessarily lodged by new arrivals  
2023 vs 2022



**First-Instance RSD Decisions,**  
Jan-Dec 2023



- 1951 Convention Refugee
- Subsidiary Protection
- Complementary Forms of National Protection <sup>2</sup>
- Rejection <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 'Complementary forms of national protection' include decisions granting authorization to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law to persons who are not eligible for international protection, but nonetheless at risk of violation of articles 3 and 8 of the ECHR in case of return  
<sup>3</sup> 'Rejection' includes all cases closed, including decisions not taken on the merits, such as inadmissibility decisions and no-shows.  
<sup>4</sup> Source: Ministry of Interior. This includes pending cases at first and second instance.

Total first-instance decisions (Jan-Dec 2023)  
Total pending cases (as of Dec 23) <sup>4</sup>

**41,413**  
**146,938**

Source: UNHCR, Italy weekly Snapshot 4-10 March 2024, at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/italy/italy-weekly-snapshot-04-mar-10-mar-2024>.