

Albania

123

Refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection.

4378

Asylum requests (1 Jan. – 31 Dec. 2018).

5730

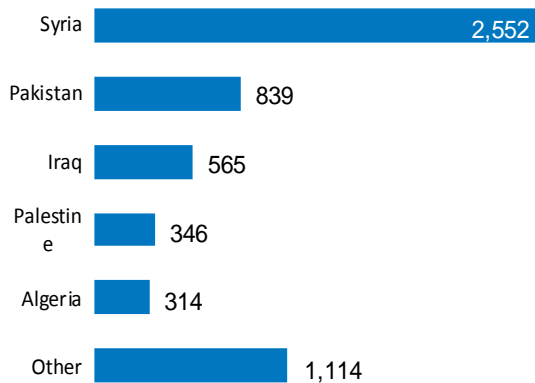
Persons intercepted by Border Police (1 Jan. - 31 Dec. 2018).

2719

Persons holding temporary humanitarian permits

POPULATION OF CONCERN (AS 31 DECEMBER 2018)

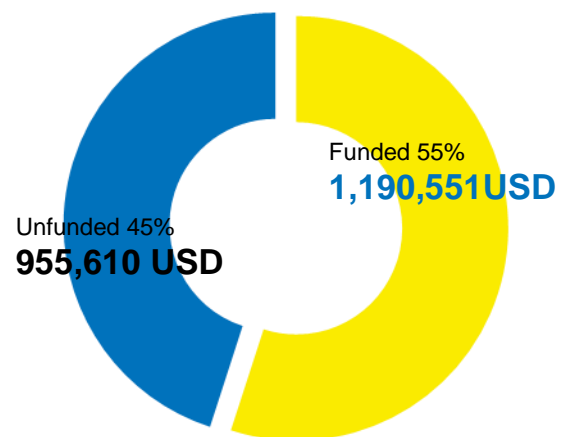
Origin of Arrivals



FUNDING (AS JANUARY 2019)

USD 2,146,161 USD

requested for the Albania situation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 2 International Staff
- 12 National Staff
- 3 International Affiliated Workforce
- 1 National Affiliated Workforce

Offices:

- 1 Representation Office in Tirana
- 1 Field Presence in Gjirokastra



Operational context

Refugees and asylum seekers

Albania remains mostly a transit country for asylum seekers and refugees. The government keeps a rights-based approach to mixed movements and has declared to be ready to take part in European initiatives to address the phenomenon. In 2018, there was a five-fold increase in arrivals (5730) and a 14 times increase of asylum requests (4378). The trend remains high in January with 295 arrivals and 266 asylum requests. The flow, however, remains mostly of transit, with estimated 1% willing to remain in the country. Two thirds of arrivals and asylum seekers is from countries suffering turmoil and conflict, with Syrians broadly accounting for half of arrivals and of asylum requests. More women, girls and boys are arriving (18%) and their humanitarian and protection needs are being addressed to the extent possible. A total of 155 children were identified as travelling unaccompanied. In light of the increased numbers, coordination with government counterparts, NGOs, other UN agencies, as well as the donor and diplomatic community has been reinforced to ensure preparedness and adequate response, notably on access to asylum and reception conditions. Reception capacity has been reinforced with the addition in 2018 of some 200 places notably at borders, totalling 400 persons. Gaps at borders and in country have been identified along with governmental actors and UN Agencies and are being addressed, notably with regards to protection to vulnerable categories.

Statelessness

Albania has taken significant steps to reducing the risk of statelessness by improving its legal framework through the revision of the Law on Civil Status in October 2018, advocated by UNHCR in coordination with UNICEF and NGOs. Draft by-laws have been finalised and submitted for approval by Ministry of Interior and other line Ministries. The majority of persons at risk of statelessness in Albania are entitled to nationality but experience difficulties in having it confirmed, mostly due to obstacles in birth registration linked to lengthy and costly administrative and judicial procedures. Roma and Egyptian minorities are at risk as a result of social and economic marginalization and children of Albanian diaspora returnees face obstacles to have their births registered and their Albanian nationality confirmed. A draft new Law on Citizenship which addresses most of the remaining concerns on statelessness has been prepared and is open for consultations.

Main Activities

■ ACCESS:

UNHCR has a Field Presence at the southern border with Greece to monitor border trends, promote coordination among relevant actors and improve identification and referrals of asylum seekers with specific needs in the context of mixed migration flows. Border monitoring, directly and through partners is held in the northern and eastern borders of the country as well. UNHCR and its partners –including Ombudsperson’s Office- support Border Police to ensure access to territory and asylum through the pre-screening procedure. It furthermore complements State efforts by providing humanitarian assistance at the borders to new arrivals. The Office is engaged with the Ministry of Interior and OSCE in a review of the pre-screening procedure to address identified gaps. UNHCR is engaged in discussions with the government and key stakeholders to devise responses to the misuse of the asylum system by persons who do not intend to enjoy international protection in Albania.

■ RECEPTION:

UNHCR and partners complement State services in the National Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers, with provision of specialised services and material support, notably in view of the sharp increase of asylum requests. Supported by UNHCR with EU funding, the capacity of the Centre

was doubled in 2017 and now hosts 180 persons. In 2018, additional 200 places at have been made available to increase reception capacity at borders, including vulnerable persons. Overall, in a year, the reception capacity doubled to address increased arrivals.

■ **SOLUTIONS:**

UNHCR regularly consults with refugees and asylum seekers on their integration prospects. Its partners provide Albanian language courses, vocational training and support to access the labour market, as well as legal counselling and representation. In addition, UNHCR is working with the Ministry of Interior to promote naturalization of refugees. A joint working group with Social Protection authorities will address identified gaps for integration, including revision of the legislative framework and procedures to ensure that the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and persons at risk of statelessness are adequately factored in. UNHCR has engaged with the Ministry of Interior to provide persons of concern access to personal identification numbers and IDs –expected to be provided in the first quarter of 2019-, which will significantly improve their integration prospects in the country. Persons Lacking Proof of Nationality and at Risk of Statelessness receive legal assistance by UNHCR’s partners to register children without birth certificates; structural gaps affecting Roma and Egyptian communities as well as the Albanian diaspora have been identified and are being addressed with the Government and the Parliament.

■ **ENGAGE:**

UNHCR main counterpart is the Ministry of Interior, specifically the Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship, the Border and Migration Police and the Reception Centre. UNHCR is increasingly cooperating with line Ministries, particularly Ministry of Health and Social Protection and Ministry of Education, to improve integration prospects through the inclusion of persons of concern in national systems. Collaboration with the Ombudsperson was expanded, notably to monitor the State response to the increased arrivals. UNICEF, OSCE and Council of Europe (CoE) have proven to be key partners to build capacities and promote refugee rights. UNHCR is actively engaged with key stakeholders and donors to update figures, developments and trends on mixed movements, seeking support to supporting Albania’s rights based approach. UNHCR coordinated the UN Agencies in developing a joint assessment on the asylum and mixed migration situation in Albania (December 2018), which will serve as basis for joint advocacy and fundraising. UNHCR works with the Parliament to reduce the risk of statelessness, resulting in positive legislative changes.

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

European Union and US

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Links

<http://www.unhcr.org/albania.html> - <https://www.un.org.al/un-agencies/united-nations-high-commissioner-refugees> - <https://www.facebook.com/unhcr.tirana/>