

Portugal

15 February 2019

Portugal has consistently welcomed refugees and scored high in terms of protection and reception. The number of persons of concern in Portugal is currently increasing.

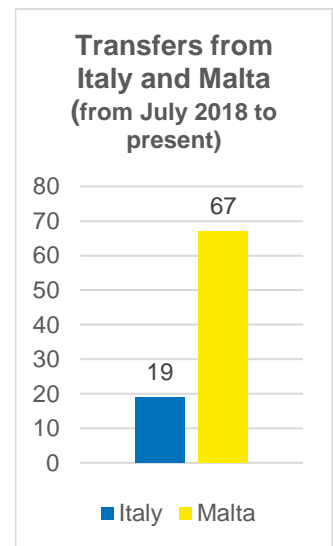
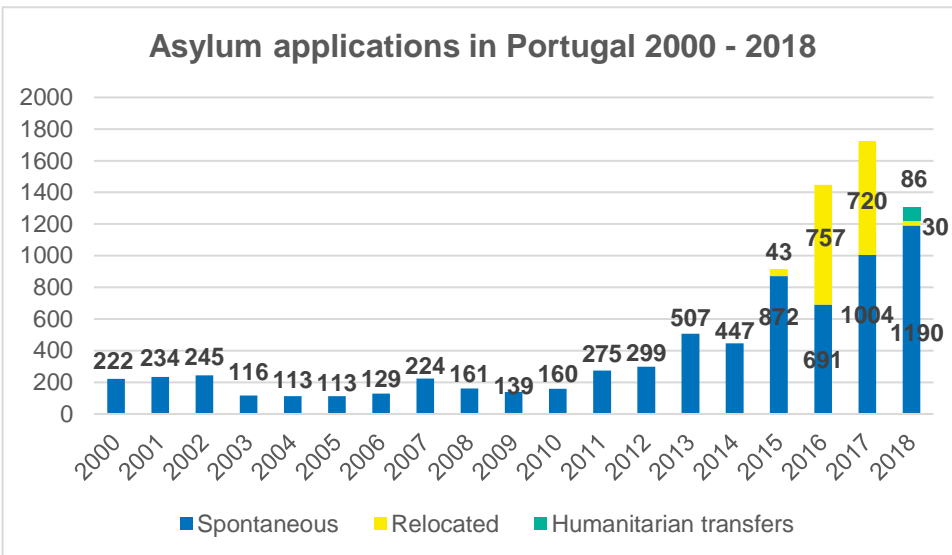
In 2018, 1,190 persons claimed asylum in Portugal.

From 2015 to 2018, Portugal received 1,550 asylum-seekers through intra-EU relocation.

Portugal pledged to **resettle 1,010 refugees** in 2018/2019 from Egypt and Turkey.

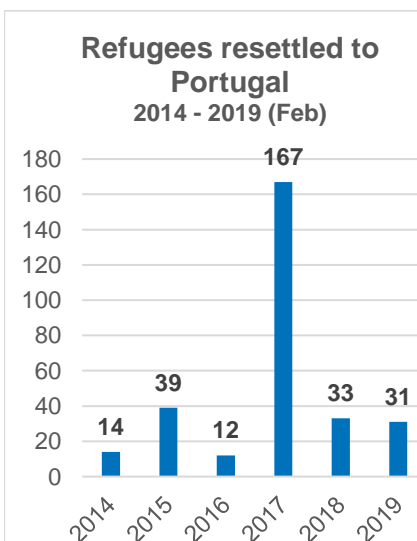
Portugal has **transferred 86 persons** disembarked in Italy and Malta in 2018.

KEY FIGURES



Source: SEF annual reports (<http://sefstat.sef.pt/relatorios.aspx>) and CPR internal reports

Source: Information received from SEF



Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html>.

Resettled refugees arrive in Lisbon on 17 December 2018. Photo: UNHCR / José Ventura.

Operational Context

Portugal maintains a largely **welcoming environment** for refugees and engages in various solidarity and responsibility-sharing measures. Although Portugal receives a small number of **asylum** applications annually, it has seen a significant increase in recent years. Portugal currently receives approximately 1,000 spontaneous asylum-seekers per year (with 1,190 arriving in 2018). This represents an increase from the average of 100 – 300 per year that Portugal received from 2000 – 2012, and together with arrivals through relocation, has placed a strain on both the refugee status determination (RSD) system and reception capacity.

Portugal participated actively in the EU **relocation** programme, receiving 1,550 asylum-seekers from Greece and Italy, which also led to an expansion of the range of actors in the refugee field to include additional civil society actors and Government entities. Currently, Portugal is engaged in *ad hoc* transfer arrangements with Italy and Malta following disembarkation of refugees and migrants rescued at sea, and has transferred 86 persons since summer 2018. Portugal and Greece have also agreed bilaterally on the relocation of up to 1,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from Greece to Portugal, starting in 2019.

Portugal's **resettlement** programme began in 2006, with average annual quotas of between 30 and 60 places. The 2018/2019 pledge of 1,010 places within the EU resettlement scheme represents a significant and generous increase. As of February 2019, 64 refugees had arrived in Portugal, all coming from Egypt, with arrivals scheduled to increase in coming months. Civil society organizations, as well as municipalities throughout the entire country are engaged in reception of resettled refugees and relocated persons.

Up to now, three mainly parallel approaches have been used for reception and integration of resettled refugees, spontaneous asylum-seekers, and relocated asylum-seekers. With the significant upscaling of the resettlement programme and new bilateral relocation initiatives, efforts are now underway to strengthen reception and integration measures, and to develop a more **comprehensive protection system** that includes all refugees and asylum-seekers under a streamlined coordination approach.

Working in partnership

- **UNHCR** does not currently have a permanent presence in Portugal, having closed its office in 1998, but works closely with its partner, the **Portuguese Refugee Council** (CPR). Starting in September 2018, UNHCR also deployed an Associate Resettlement Officer to Lisbon, to be joined in 2019 by a Senior Protection Assistant.
- The **Government of Portugal** is UNHCR's key partner in ensuring the protection and integration of persons of concern. UNHCR collaborates with a wide range of Government stakeholders, including the Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras

(SEF); the Ministry of Internal Administration; the High Commissioner for Migration (ACM); the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other key actors include the Social Security Institute, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ombudsperson's Office, and municipalities. IOM Portugal is also a key counterpart, as are civil society actors and refugee-led associations.

Main Activities

UNHCR's overall aim is to support the Government in strengthening protection of all persons of concern, which involves activities related to asylum procedures, resettlement and complementary pathways, child protection, integration, and statelessness issues.

Through its longstanding [partnership with CPR](#), UNHCR supports the following main activities:

- Continuing to support the development and strengthening of the [national asylum legal framework](#), including through advocacy and research;
- Advocating for access to the territory and asylum procedure and promoting [quality refugee status determination procedures](#);
- Providing free [legal assistance](#) to asylum-seekers, both in country and at border points, and facilitating access to the legal aid system at the judicial appeal stage;
- Carrying out regular contacts and [networking](#) with relevant Government officials, Parliamentarians, NGOs, the legal community, and other entities interested in asylum issues;
- Promoting positive [public attitudes](#) toward persons of concern through various communications and awareness-raising activities; and
- Supporting [integration](#) through social counselling, Portuguese language training, vocational training and employment counselling, access to childcare services and library and sports facilities.

CPR is a central player in offering [reception](#) to persons of concern, running the only reception centre in Portugal for spontaneous asylum-seekers, as well as a reception centre for unaccompanied and separated children and a reception centre for resettled refugees.

Through the two [UNHCR personnel based in Lisbon](#) and from the Regional Office for Southern Europe in Rome, UNHCR will conduct the following activities in 2019:

- Supporting [coordination](#) efforts between the various stakeholders dealing with all groups of concern;
- Providing technical support and capacity-building on a range of [resettlement](#)-related issues both pre- and post-arrival, including: programme design, development of SOPs, reception planning, coordination, selection missions, case

processing, integration/social inclusion, and monitoring and evaluation components;

- Offering technical support to the Government on **refugee status determination** procedures, including training and sharing of tools and good practices;
- Working closely with CPR on their **legal assistance** activities and helping with their efforts to strengthen cooperation with other legal aid providers;
- Promoting provision of adequate **reception** capacity for spontaneous asylum-seekers and maintenance of high reception standards;
- Supporting ongoing initiatives by the Government to strengthen **protection of asylum-seeking children** from the moment of arrival, including through cooperation with anti-trafficking and child protection institutions in Portugal;
- Promoting **community-based approaches** with Government and NGO partners and strengthening engagement with persons of concern in Portugal, especially existing refugee-led associations; and
- Offering capacity building on **statelessness** issues and sharing the findings of the **statelessness mapping** conducted in 2018, as well as providing technical support on establishment of a statelessness determination procedure in Portugal.



Resettled refugees arrive in Lisbon on 17 December 2018. Photo: UNHCR / José Ventura

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LINKS

Recent story: *First resettled refugees arrive in Portugal under new scheme*, 19 December 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/12/5c1a0d624/first-resettled-refugees-arrive-portugal-under-new-scheme.html>.