

## Humanitarian migration crisis in Europe – main routes and migrant groups



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According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Europe will record in 2015 an unprecedented number of asylum seekers and refugees with up to one million asylum applications. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that 871,623 people have been travelling to Europe through various transit routes across Africa, Asia or the Middle East. An estimated 832,193 arrivals by sea have been reported, with Italy (142,484) and Greece (685,758) receiving the majority of the individuals since the start of 2015. Tragically 3,519 migrants are known to have drowned or remain missing.

The “Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan route”, which is mainly used by asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, has been more frequently used, including Pakistani and selected African migrant groups as well as by people leaving the Western Balkans territories themselves. The “Central Mediterranean route” from Libya to Italy is also much used. By mid-2015, the main nationalities passing through this route were Eritreans (27 %), Nigerians (11 %), Somalis (9 %), Gambians (5 %) and Sudanese (5 %). The third channel, the “Western Mediterranean route” goes through the Spanish Ceuta and Melilla enclaves or through the Strait of Gibraltar.

When looking more closely Syrian refugees, the vast majority of them has fled to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The numbers are remarkable: about 2 million Syrians are estimated to be currently in Turkey. More than 1.1 Syrians are in Lebanon. Large numbers are also recorded in Jordan (630,000) and Egypt (130,000).

Germany continues to be the most popular destination for migrants arriving in Europe. More than 800,000 people are expected to claim asylum there in 2015, four times the figure for 2014. The Finnish Immigration Service reports that there has been 24,082 asylum seekers in Finland during the period of 1.1.–26.10.2015. These applicants represent 95 different nationalities. The most remarkable groups are next ones: Irak (17,021 asylum seekers), Somalia (1,884), Afghanistan (1,737), Albania (713) and Syria (535). Thus, Syrians are a minor group of asylum seekers in Finland.

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