



IRC ITALY MONITORING REPORT 2024

Profiles and needs of people arriving
to Trieste from the Balkan route



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Executive Summary

As the first major Italian city along the Balkan route, Trieste remains a key entry point for people fleeing conflict and persecution, particularly those coming from Asia. Its strategic location provides an overview of the migratory flows and dynamics along the route, as well as of migration management practices in a congested transit point.

Comprehensive data on land arrivals through Italy's northeastern border remains limited. As a result, there is no clear picture of the number of people arriving and therefore of the services needed.

Official reports suggest a sharp reduction in movements along the Balkan route. [Frontex](#) reported a 78% decrease compared to 2023, that is 21,520 irregular border crossings in 2024 compared to 99,068 in 2023. Meanwhile the [Italian government](#) cited a 48% decline in [crossings](#) at the Slovenian border since Schengen was suspended with 6,200 newly arrived people from October 21, 2023, to January 15, 2025.

However, data collected by [IRC Italy](#) and [Diaconia Valdese](#) around Trieste's Central Station indicate a significantly smaller decline. Our data shows that at least 13,460 people arrived in Trieste in 2024, a 16% decline compared to 2023. This figure is twice the number recorded by the Italian government in absolute terms. Similarly, the [Slovenian Ministry of Interior](#) recorded 46,192 irregular arrivals in Slovenia in 2024, reflecting a 25% decrease from the previous year, when 60,595 people irregularly crossed the Slovenian border.

This report examines these notable data discrepancies, and sheds light on new migration dynamics in the region. It further confirms that rather than stopping migration, stricter border controls make people's movements more

precarious. Many of the collected testimonies describe that people pass through Trieste during the night without stopping. These accounts inform our analysis and, although our data only captures those who participated in our protection monitoring, we estimate that the real number of those entering Italy is much higher. Below is a list of the key findings of 2024.

Key findings

- **New migration dynamics:** Stricter border controls and the prolonged suspension of Schengen have changed migration patterns on the Balkan route rather than significantly reducing arrivals. People are traveling faster, staying more hidden, using riskier nocturnal routes, and paying higher fees to smugglers to reach Trieste.
- **A moderate decline in arrivals from the Balkan route:** In 2024, IRC Italy and Diaconia Valdese recorded 13,460 newly arrived people in Trieste, a 16% decrease from 2023, despite the full year of reintroduced border controls at the Italian Slovenian border due to Schengen suspension. This contrasts with official reports of sharper declines, including a 78% drop in irregular border crossings along the Balkan route (Frontex) and a 48% decrease at Italy's northeast border (Italian Government).
- **Increased presence of vulnerable groups:** The upward trend in the presence of vulnerable groups has continued since 2022, now accounting for 37% of all people met in 2024, with 5,061 individuals, including unaccompanied children, single adult women, and families.
- **Significant rise in single women and families:** The number of single adult women increased by 250% (from 158 to 553), and families grew by 52% (from 280 to 424) compared to 2023, creating challenges in reception facilities.
- **Thousands of unaccompanied children (UACs) keep transiting through Trieste each year:** In 2024, 2,192 UACs were recorded, averaging 6 per day. Almost all UACs aim to reach other countries and do not register their presence in Italy. They are therefore unable to access dedicated reception centers and



emergency dormitories and are forced to spend the night near the train station or in the old port area.

- **Afghanistan remains the main country of origin, with rising arrivals from Syria, Turkey, and Bangladesh:** Trieste continues to be a key transit point for young Afghans seeking protection in Europe. There is also a growing presence of Turkish, Syrian, and Bangladeshi nationals, with a significant increase in Syrians. Overall, the range of nationalities of individuals encountered continues to expand.
- **Trieste remains mainly a transit point:** Most of the people encountered do not consider Italy as their final destination. 57% declared they intended to move to other countries. Only 24% declared they intended to apply for asylum in Trieste, but the actual percentage of people who filed their asylum application in Trieste is much lower (around 9%).
- **Delays in accessing asylum:** People seeking international protection in Trieste often face significant barriers, such as prolonged waiting times and discretionary practices, when attempting to apply for asylum. These obstacles violate current legislation and leave many aspiring asylum seekers in precarious situations for weeks - without legal status, unable to access accommodation through the reception system, and entirely dependent on NGOs to meet their basic needs.
- **Decreased waiting time to access reception:** In 2024, access to reception facilities for asylum seekers remained challenging, with waiting times ranging from a few days to several weeks. However, thanks in part to the increased frequency of asylum seekers' relocations to other Italian regions, this marks an improvement from the previous year, when waits often lasted even months.

- **Protection concerns:** the exposure to health risks due to poor hygiene and harsh living conditions, violence, exploitation, and abuse in the old port area remains high, particularly for those left homeless due to delays in accessing the asylum procedure and reception.
- **Ongoing basic needs:** Humanitarian needs in Trieste remain unchanged, with thousands of people each year requiring basic necessities such as food, clothes, blankets, access to restrooms and showers, emergency shelter, medical care, orientation to services and legal support.
- **Humanitarian response without public support:** Trieste is still lacking a structured and sustainable plan for addressing the needs of an average of 14,000 newly arrived people per year, the vast majority of whom are only transiting through the city. Humanitarian action continues to rely solely on non-governmental organizations and volunteers, with limited funding sustainability and no involvement from the public sector as a key pillar of the response.



Introduction

Founded at the call of Albert Einstein in 1933, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) delivers lasting impact for people whose lives have been shattered by conflict and disaster. Today, the IRC operates in over 50 countries, responding to major humanitarian crises and helping individuals restore health, safety, and control over their lives.

Since 2021, [IRC Italy](#) has been active in the Italian city of Trieste, located at the Italian-Slovenian border, providing daily support to people who arrive through the Balkan route¹. A team of multilingual Field Protection Officers engages with dozens of people in need each day in the Central Station area. They provide information on rights, orientation and assistance in accessing critical services such as overnight shelters, food and healthcare, as well as the asylum procedure. They also identify people with visible specific needs (such as people with injuries, illnesses, survivors of violence, pregnant women, etc.) to immediately activate protection measures in coordination with other local actors.

This report is the outcome of monitoring and data collection activities conducted by IRC Italy in collaboration with Diaconia Valdese throughout 2024. It is based on a rigorous analytical process combining quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as insights gained from the fieldwork.

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the changes in regional migration dynamics and explore the trend of people arriving in Trieste from the Balkan route. It aims to provide insights and inform public and private actors so they can better address emerging needs, using a data-driven approach.

The report summarizes the 2024 daily monitoring activities, highlighting key data such as nationalities, demographic profiles, and migratory intentions, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. It adopts a client-centered approach and depicts the main protection concerns and critical issues faced by newly arrived individuals in Trieste, highlighting barriers to access services and rights and key developments in local migration management.

¹ The Western Balkan route is one of the main migratory pathways via land. It typically involves crossing multiple countries in the Balkans, often starting from Turkey and moving through countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, and others in the region. Trieste is one of the main entry points in Italy for people arriving from the Balkan route.





Methodology

The monitoring activity at the Italian-Slovenian border is conducted using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The activities take place in Trieste's central station area, between Piazza Libertà and the San Martino al Campo's daytime center in Via Udine², during the daytime and partially in the evening, every day of the year, including weekends and holidays³.

The monitoring activity primarily focuses on people arriving via the Balkan route through the northeastern border. The data included in this report reflects only individuals that IRC Italy and Diaconia Valdese physically met and directly spoke

to during the daily outreach and information provision activities. Therefore, the data presented in this report does not include all individuals who arrived in Trieste in 2024.

Data collection team

The data and testimony collection are carried out by a team of three Field Protection Officers who are fluent in Pashto, Dari, Urdu, Hindi, English, French, and Italian. This multilingual capability ensures effective communication with the majority of newly arrived individuals. It is important to mention that for some nationalities or ethnic groups (i.e. Syrians, Turks, Kurds), we have limitations and challenges in communication due to language barriers, limiting mutual understanding and, as a result, the quality of data collected⁴.

² The Daytime Care Center is open 365 days a year. Every person in need, without distinction, can have access to the Center during daytime hours to toilets, medical examinations at a small in-house clinic, distribution of clothing, information and orientation to the asylum procedure and the registration of applications for a place to sleep. IRC Italy formally co-manages the center since 2022.

³ Activities take place from Monday to Friday from 9. 00 a.m. to 10 p.m., while on weekends or holidays only during the evening hours from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

⁴ The number of people with whom we faced language barriers was 3,760, representing approximately 27% of the total.



Quantitative data collection

Quantitative data is collected through:

- **Individual and group interviews:** using standardized questionnaires to gather information.
- **Direct observations:** field staff record visible details⁵ during their interactions.

All data is collected anonymously and does not include personal information. Key indicators focus on:

- **Demographics:** Gender, age, nationality.
- **Demographic profiles and vulnerable groups:** We categorize our demographic profiles into four groups: adult single men, adult single women, unaccompanied children, and families⁶.
- **People with special needs:** We collect data mainly on individuals with visible special needs, such as elderly people, pregnant women, individuals with serious illnesses, and people with disabilities.
- **Legal status and migratory intentions:** Understanding individuals' legal status and plans.

The questionnaire is periodically adjusted to address emerging trends or specific monitoring needs, ensuring a comprehensive and up to date understanding of the situation.

⁵ For example, gender, family composition, and whether there are any individuals who are sick or visibly injured.

⁶ Methodological note: in this report, we define vulnerable groups any profile that includes women and/or children (accompanied or unaccompanied), thereby excluding only adult single men (except for cases with special needs). This categorization is also designed considering referral pathways and access to protection services, such as emergency dormitories.

Qualitative data collection

Field staff complete a monthly questionnaire to document their observations. This includes:

- Barriers to accessing services.
- Discriminatory practices reportedly experienced by individuals.
- Access to the asylum procedure and reception services: evaluating the availability and accessibility of these systems.
- Local authorities' practices: observing changes in border control and migration management measures.
- Overnight shelters: monitoring the accessibility and conditions of emergency accommodation.
- Protection risks: identifying and addressing any new or evolving risks.
- Referral context: tracking significant changes in service referral systems.



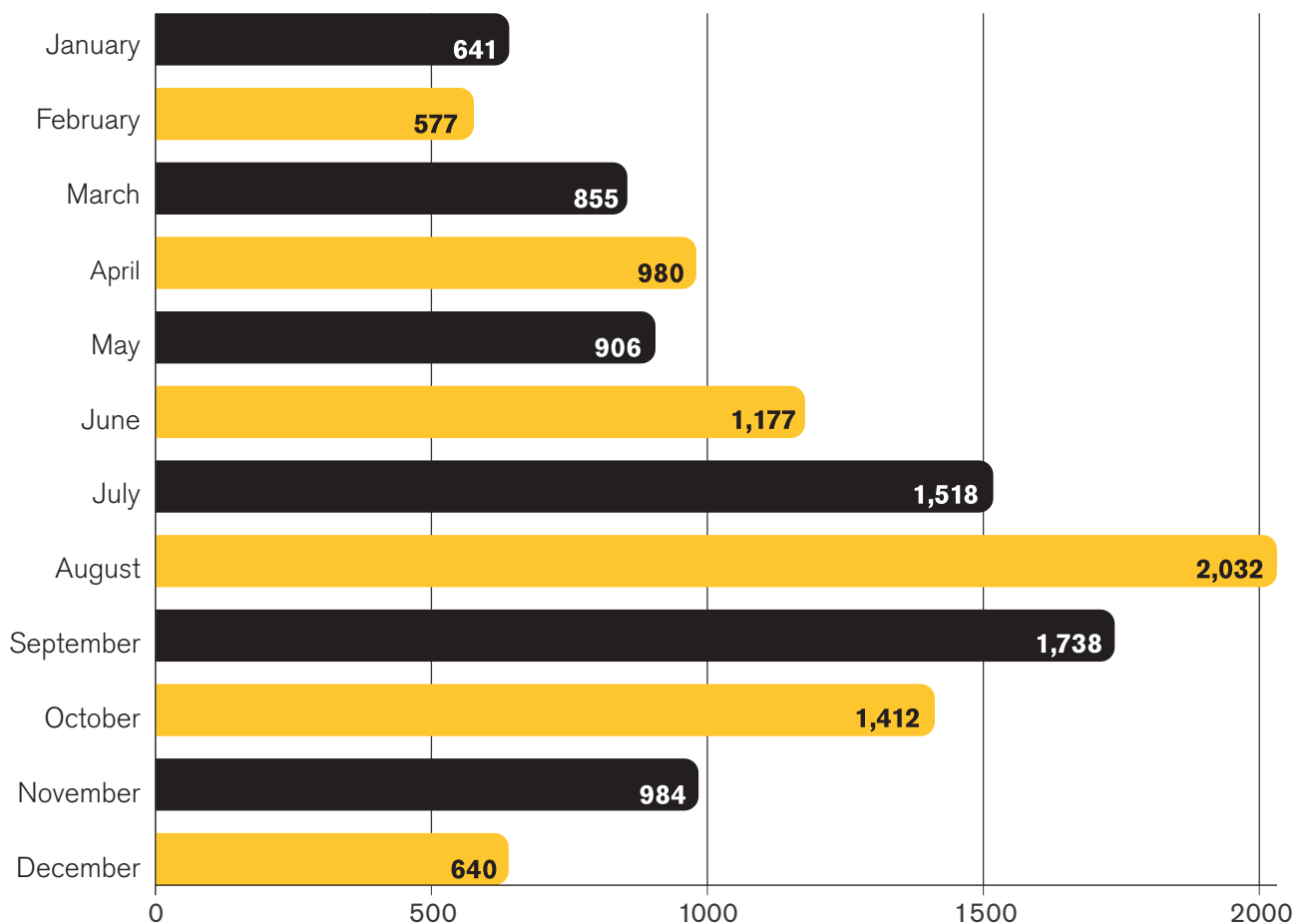
Analysis of Data and Profiles

The daily monitoring carried out in Trieste enables the collection of extensive data and information, providing valuable insights into the profiles and protection needs of people met at the Italian-Slovenian border.

From January 1 to December 31, 2024, a total of **13,460** people arriving through the Balkan route were met and supported in the Trieste central station area, i.e. an average of **37 new people per day**. This figure represents a **16% decrease compared to 2023**, when 16,052 people were met, as illustrated in the [2023 IRC Italy Monitoring Report](#), and a **3% increase compared to 2022**, when 13,127 people were met, as outlined in the [2022 Abandoned Lives Report](#).

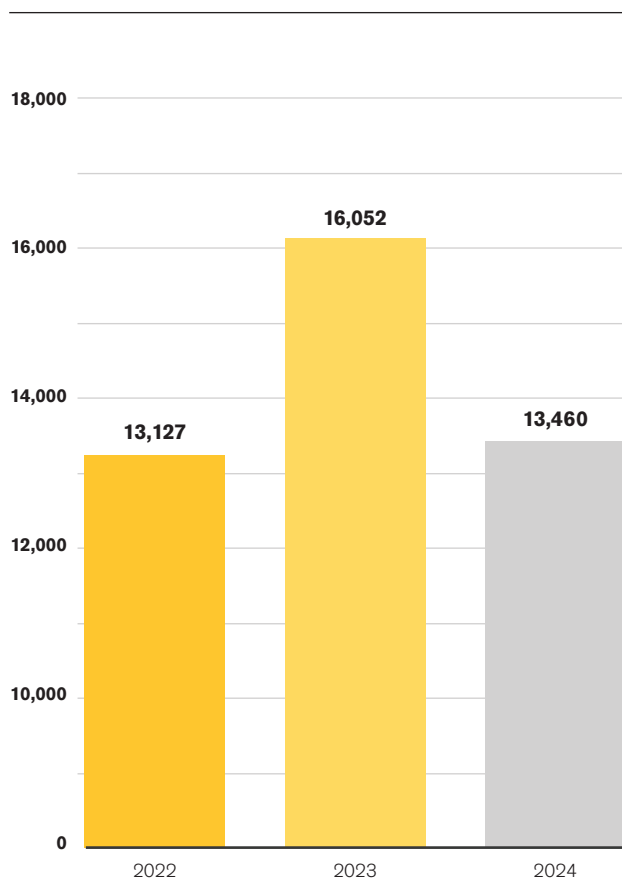
The graph below shows the number of new people encountered each month in 2024, which exceeds a thousand from June to October 2024.

Fig.1 Number of new people encountered by IRC Italy and Diaconia each month in Trieste in 2024



A comparative analysis of data collected by IRC Italy in Trieste from 2022 to 2024 shows, that despite the changes described in the official reports, the number of people arriving to Trieste remained similar. This underscores the necessity for a structured plan to manage migration and address the humanitarian needs of thousands of people.

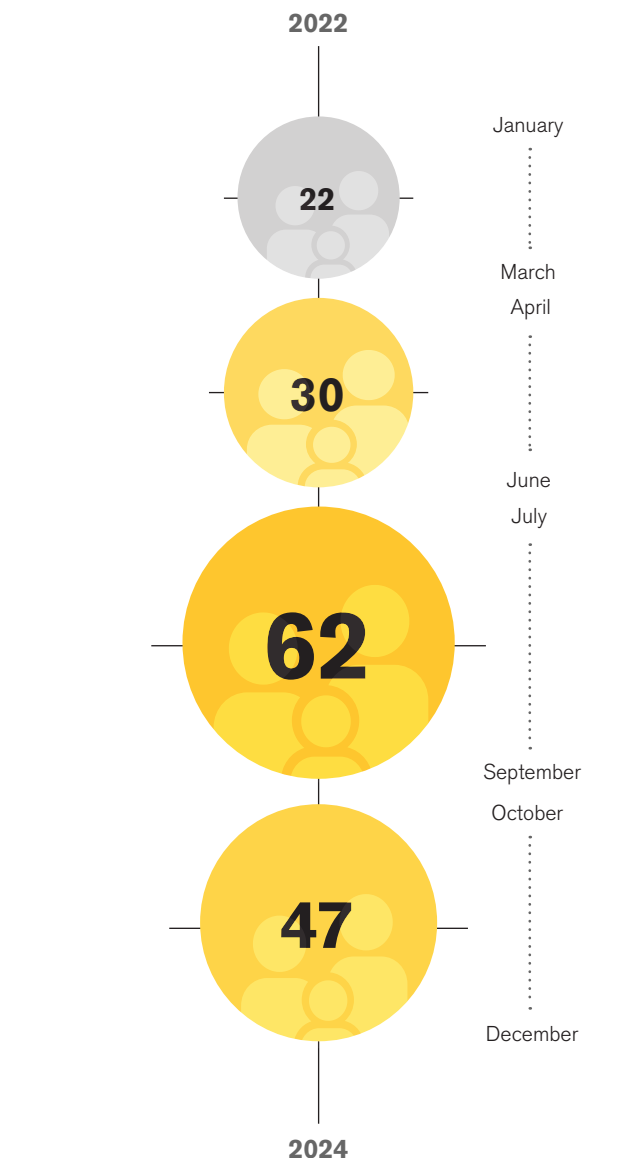
Fig.2 Number of new people encountered by IRC Italy and Diaconia in Trieste in 2022, 2023, 2024



Between 2022 and 2024, we met a total of **42,639** newly arrived people, averaging approximately **14,000 per year** and **39 per day**. The figure on the right highlights the quarterly trend of arrivals during the 3-year period.

Quarterly analysis of people arriving to Trieste via the Balkan route

Fig.3 Average daily number of new people encountered by IRC Italy and Diaconia by quarter and across the three-year reporting period (2022-2024)⁷



⁷ Note that in the first quarters' comparison we used the median and not the average, as the 2022 value is anomalous and unrepresentative. In early 2022, we had just started field activities, and the field coverage was reduced.

3.1 Overview of 2024 Data



13,460

New people met and supported

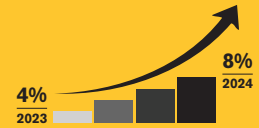
75%
Adults
(10,129)



25%
Children
(3,331)

92%
Males
(12,328)

8%
Women
(1,132)



63% 2023
Single adult men (8,399) **-24%** 2024

16% 2023
Unaccompanied children (2,192) **-26%** 2024

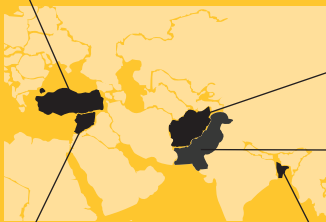
4% 2024
Single adult women (553) **+250%** 2023

17% 2024
Families (426) **+52%** 2023



Countries of origin

13%
Turkey
(1,738 people)



41%
Afghanistan
(5,553 people)

10%
Pakistan
(1,311 people)

11%
Syria
(1,425 people)

9%
Bangladesh
(1,267 people)

Migratory intentions

Other countries
57%
7,684 people

Unknown
12%
1,590 people

Trieste
24%
3,255 people

Other cities in Italy
7%
931 people

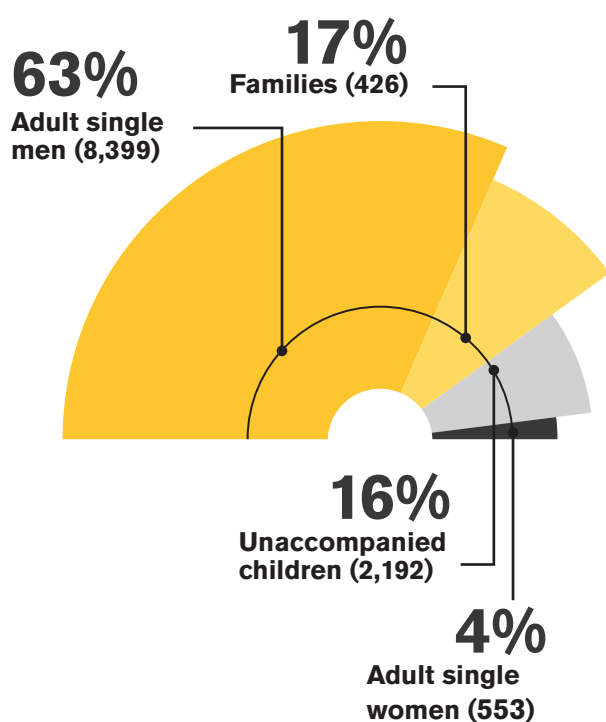


3.2 Demographic Profiles

Over one-third of people met in 2024 fall under a vulnerable group

Continuing the 2023 trends, the proportion of people belonging to vulnerable groups (unaccompanied children, families and adult single women) within the total number of people encountered further increased in 2024.

Fig.4 Share of demographic profiles encountered by IRC Italy and Diaconia in Trieste in 2024



This share rose from 11% in 2022 (2,392 out of 13,127) to 31% in 2023 (5,051 out of 16,052) and reached 37% in 2024 (5,061 out of 13,460). This increment is largely attributed to a significant rise in the number of single adult women, which grew by 250%.

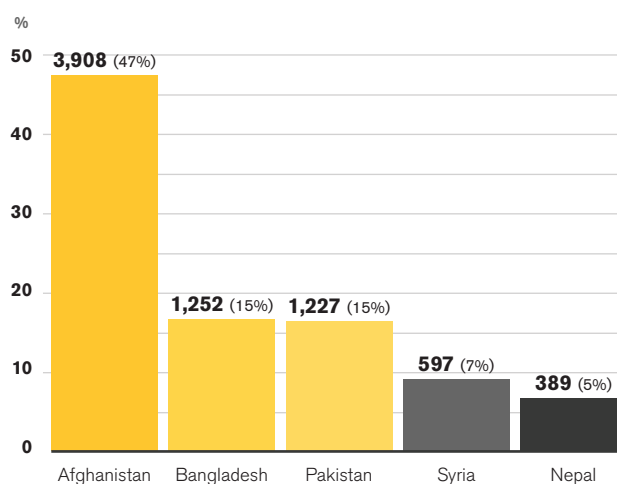
Families also increased by 21%, totaling 2,316 people and accounting for 17% of cases. The number of unaccompanied children remains notably high, despite a slight decrease.

3.2.1 SINGLE ADULT MEN



Single adult men remain the predominant profile among people arriving in Trieste via the Balkan route. In 2024, 8,399 single adult men were met, accounting for 63% of the total number of people served.

Top countries of origin - single adult men



Among all single adult men, the majority (4,200 individuals, 50%) stated their intention to move to other countries, while 42% declared their intention to remain in Italy. In particular, 35% (2,937 individuals) planned to seek asylum in Trieste, while 7% in other Italian cities. However, as highlighted in the section on migration intentions, these figures should be interpreted with caution, as the actual number of people who ultimately stayed in Trieste and formalized their asylum claims is significantly lower.



3.2.2 FAMILIES

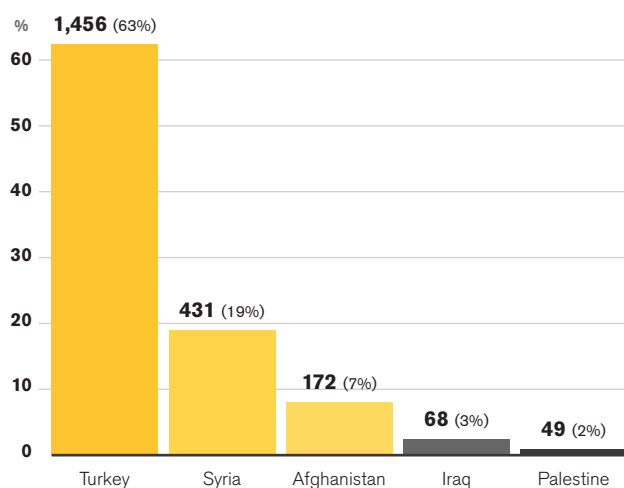
Over the course of 2024, 426 families were met in Trieste, doubling the 2023 total of 280 by 52%. This amounted to a 4% increase of families among the total number of people met in Trieste, from 12% in 2023 to 17% in 2024. Among these families, 47 were single-parents travelling alone with their children.





Most families came from **Turkey** (63%), and more specifically from the Turkish Kurdistan, followed by **Syria** (19%) and **Afghanistan** (7%). Additionally, 9 families fleeing Palestine were met for the first time in Trieste during outreach activities.

Top countries of origin - families



Most families reported traveling to other countries (60%); **only 5% expressed an intention to stay in Italy** and just 4% intended to settle specifically in Trieste.

The non-response rate to the destination question was very high, with **35% of answers unknown**. This is mainly due to families being reserved and

reluctant to share information about their travel intentions, as well as to language barriers. Most of the families met were in rapid transit through the Trieste area, typically arriving in the evening and departing at dawn.

During 2024, IRC Italy evening field staff referred 2,436 cases to the city's emergency dormitory system in coordination with [Caritas Trieste](#) and [San Martino al Campo](#). IRC Italy and other local NGOs prioritized access to these facilities for families and single adult women .



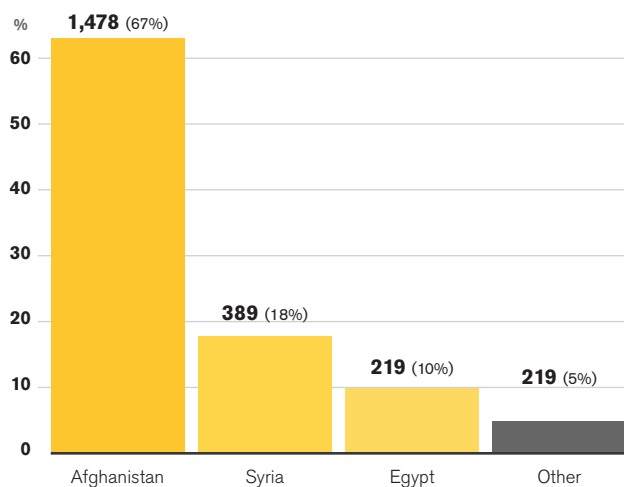
3.2.3 UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

In 2024, IRC Italy and Diaconia met and assisted 2,192 unaccompanied children, representing 16% of newly arrived individuals in Trieste, a 19% decrease from the previous year.

Two-thirds of the unaccompanied children met were Afghan (67%), continuing the trend from 2022 of young Afghan Pashtuns fleeing to Europe. For the first time since IRC Italy began its operations in Trieste, a significant number of unaccompanied children from Syria (18%) and Egypt (10%) were also encountered.



Top countries of origin - unaccompanied children



Most of the children (81%) expressed the intention to travel to other countries. 10% stated their intention to reach other Italian cities, particularly Milan.

About 2,000 of the unaccompanied children served stayed in Trieste for a very limited time, ranging from a couple of hours to a few days. These children did not register their presence in Italy and were therefore unable to access dedicated reception centers, forcing them to spend their nights sleeping rough in the park in front of the train station or in the old port area.

Only 146 unaccompanied children (7%) chose to remain in Trieste and sought support in accessing Questura for identification purposes and the city's dedicated facilities. Despite receiving tailored information about the possibility of family reunification under the Dublin Regulation, no relevant requests were made, reiterating a general conception of the process being long, complex and ineffective, as highlighted by Reuters in their investigation about unaccompanied children in Trieste.

3.2.4 SINGLE ADULT WOMEN

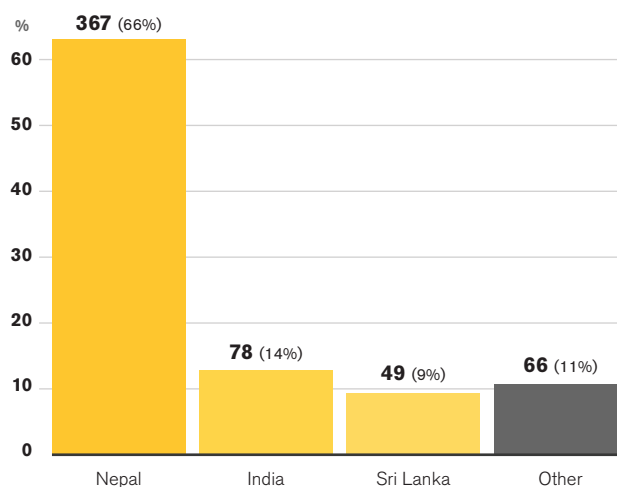


The number of single adult women encountered in Trieste in 2024 was 560, which is a **large increase (+250%)** compared to 2023 (1% of the total number of people met, i.e. 158 people).

The number of single adult women arriving in Trieste increased by 250% in 2024

Two out of three were **Nepalese** single adult women (66% out of total single women). The second and third most common countries of origin among single women met were **India** (14%) and **Sri Lanka** (9%), respectively, highlighting a significant difference in countries of origin compared to other groups.

Top countries of origin - single adult women



31% of all single women declared they intended to remain in Italy as their destination, with 15% planning to seek asylum in Trieste (85 people) and 16% in other Italian cities. **The vast majority were planning to move to other countries.**

Single adult women, as well as family units, have priority access to emergency dormitories, and generally most manage to spend the night in a warm place thanks to the city's network of local dormitories. **The main protection concerns include exposure to gender-based violence and the risk of trafficking, mainly sexual exploitation.** A key priority for single women is the establishment of a dedicated space where they can rest, have a warm meal, change clothes, and access hygiene items and facilities during the day. IRC Italy's Women and Girls' Safe Space in Trieste has adapted to meet this unmet need for months, despite not being originally designed for it, thanks to the invaluable support of numerous volunteers.

3.3 Nationalities

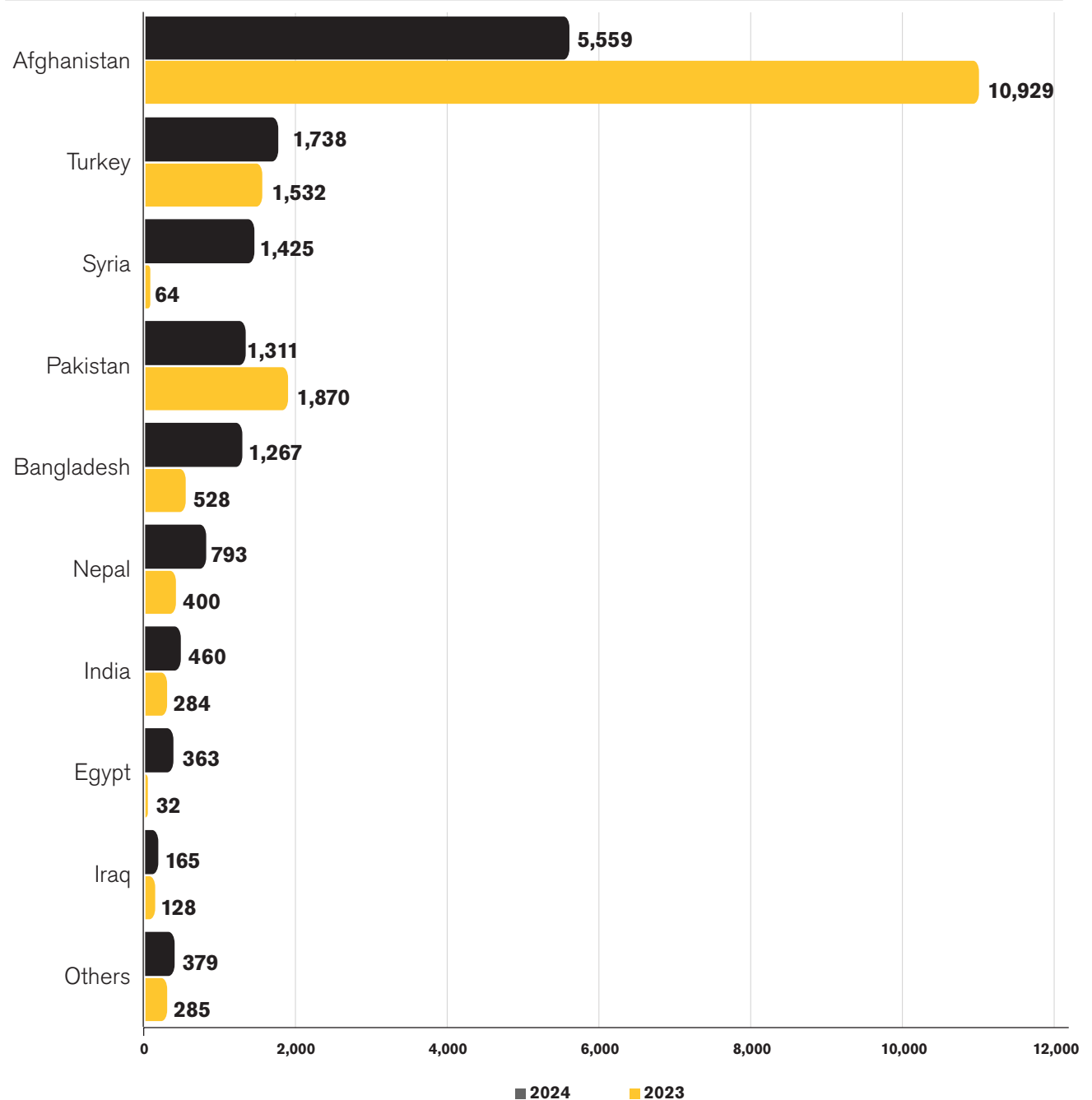
Trieste remains an entry point for primarily young Afghans fleeing and seeking protection in Europe

In 2024, **Afghans** remained the largest group of people arriving through the Slovenian-Italian border. However, Afghan individuals entering Trieste have significantly decreased (-49%)

compared to 2023, when they represented 68% (10,929 people) of all individuals met.

Despite this year's drop, in 3 years of IRC Italy's activities (2022-2024), nearly 24,000 Afghans were met and supported in Trieste. Italy continues to serve primarily as a transit country for Afghan individuals, as only 3% of Afghan asylum applications in the EU were lodged in Italy from January to September 2024, according to the EUAA, while 72% were submitted in Germany, France, and Greece.

Fig.5 Main countries of origin of the people encountered by IRC Italy and Diaconia in Trieste in 2024 compared to 2023



AFGHANISTAN

Key data from IRC's emergency watchlist



22.9 million
people in
humanitarian
need (50% of
the population)



9.6 million
forcibly displaced
within or from
Afghanistan

14.2 million
people facing crisis or worse levels of
food insecurity (33% of the population)



27.7 million
people living in
extreme poverty
(64% of the population)



177th/177
countries ranked
on the Women,
Peace and Security
Index for women's
inclusion, justice
and security

The range of nationalities met in Trieste is in line with the data published by the Slovenian Ministry of Interior, with the same top 3 nationalities and highlighting a sharp increase in Syrians using the route through Slovenia and Italy to reach northern countries⁸.

Turkish nationals are the second-largest group met in Trieste, coming primarily from the Kurdistan region. Their presence has continued to grow over the years, increasing from 4% in 2022 (515 people) to 10% in 2023 (1,532 people), and reaching 13% of all individuals met in Trieste in 2024 (1,738 people).

The vast majority were families, who accounted for 84% of all Turkish nationals met in 2024. Among them, 28 were women traveling alone with children. In the EU, Turkish nationals remain among the top five nationalities applying for asylum, with a recognition rate of around 18% in 2024⁹.

A new trend has emerged in Trieste regarding **Syrian** nationals: their arrivals remained stable throughout the year, making them the third most common nationality among those met in the city (1,425 individuals, 11% of the total). Among Syrians, 42% are single adult men, 30% are with members of a family unit, and 27% are unaccompanied children. Only 25 individuals (2%)

8 <https://www.policija.si/o-slovenski-policiji/statistika/mejna-problematika/nedovoljene-migracije-na-obmocju-republike-slovenije>

9 <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-asylum>



expressed the intention to remain in Italy, with none wishing to stay in Trieste. The rest declared their intention to reach other countries.

Data illustrated above suggests that Syrian nationals used the Balkan Route more frequently in 2024 than in previous years. This trend is supported by [reports](#) from other organizations and the [EUAA Mid-Year Review](#), which notes a 7% increase in Syrian asylum applications compared to the same period in 2023.

SYRIA

Key data from IRC's emergency watchlist



23.2 million population



16.7 million people in humanitarian need in 2024 (69% of the population)



13.8 million forcibly displaced within or from Syria (59% of the population)

12.9 million people facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (56% of the population)



90% of the population living in poverty



48% of primary health care facilities either partially or not functional



35% of public hospitals either partially or not functional



Pakistani and **Bangladeshi** nationals ranked as the 4th and 5th most common nationalities met in Trieste in 2024. The proportion of Bangladeshi nationals saw a gradual increase from 3% in 2023 to 9% in 2024. In contrast, the share of Pakistani nationals continued to decline, dropping from 12% in 2023 to 10% in 2024, a significant decrease compared to 2022 when they represented 25% of all individuals met.

Regarding the demographic composition of Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals, nearly all were adult men traveling alone, with 99% of Bangladeshi individuals and 94% of Pakistani falling into this category.

In general, the **spectrum of nationalities** of individuals met in Trieste **kept diversifying** from 2022 to 2024. While 30 nationalities were recorded in 2022, this number rose to 32 in 2023 and reached 39 in 2024. Notably, compared to the previous year, individuals from countries of origin such as Ghana, Somalia, and Uzbekistan were no longer met in Trieste, while others from North Macedonia, Mali, Mongolia, and Myanmar were met for the first time. Additionally, some countries of origin that were absent in 2023 but had been observed in 2022, such as Burundi, Cameroon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kosovo, Senegal, and Togo, re-appeared.

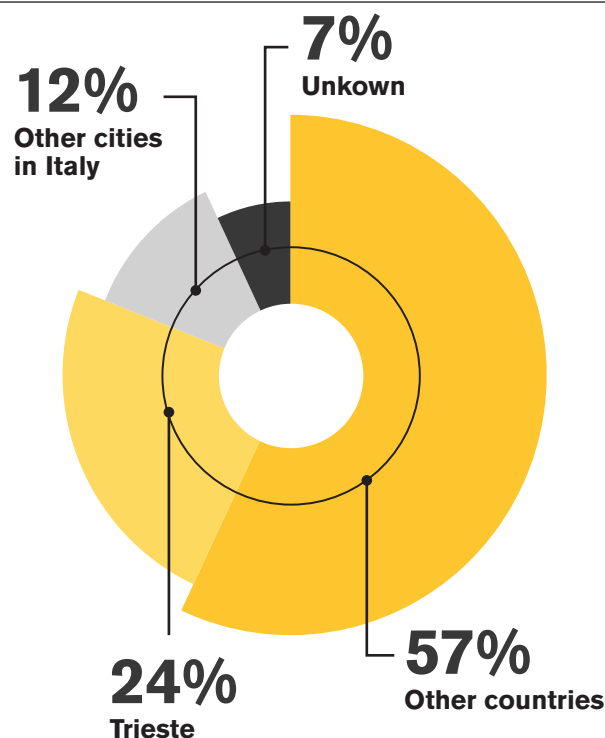
3.4 Migratory Intentions

Of the 13,460 people met in 2024, only 3,255 (24%) said they would apply for asylum in Trieste, but the real number is much lower

From January to December 2024, data on migratory intentions confirm that most people met (57%) intended to reach another country, using Trieste only as a transit point.

At the same time, 24% expressed their intention to apply for asylum in Trieste, a slight increase from 14% in 2023. The percentage of those

Fig.6 Share of stated migratory intention of people encountered by IRC Italy and Diaconia in Trieste in 2024



planning to seek asylum in other Italian cities, mainly Milan and Rome, remained stable at 6% in 2024, compared to 5% in 2023.

However, this figure should be interpreted with caution. Field observations and data comparisons with other local actors indicate that **the actual number of people who ultimately stay in Trieste and formalize their asylum application is only around 9%.**

Migratory intentions are recorded during the first encounter with IRC Italy and Diaconia field staff. However, many individuals later decide to leave Trieste due to long waiting times for international protection formalization at the Questura, a lack of immediate reception places, and difficulties in finding emergency shelter. During this period of limbo, aspiring asylum seekers are often homeless. As a result, the dropout rate among those initially intending to seek asylum in Trieste is very high, significantly reducing the number of people who remain in the city.



Additionally, 12% of the people encountered were still uncertain about their destination or preferred not to disclose this information, which was then recorded as unknown. IRC Italy has observed that most people whose final destination is still undetermined tend to leave the Trieste area.

The majority of individuals met (57%) expressed the intention to move to other destinations outside of Italy, with Germany being the top choice (declared by 57% of the total respondents who intend to move abroad), followed by France (16% - a decrease from 29% declared in 2023), Switzerland (8%) and United Kingdom (6%).

The decision of where to apply for asylum is highly complex and depends on multiple factors, including the socio-economic situation such as job opportunities, education, and social welfare, as well as asylum and integration policies, recognition rates for international protection and ease of obtaining legal status which vary across EU countries. Other factors include the presence of family, support networks and communities. These choices are closely linked to nationality, as different groups weigh these factors differently when planning their migration routes.

Below is a breakdown of migratory intentions of the top 5 nationalities served:

- **Afghanistan:** Most Afghans (83%) intended to reach other countries, mainly Germany and France.
- **Syria:** Almost all Syrians (90%) expressed the preference to move to other countries and none stated that they intended to stay in Trieste.
- **Turkey:** about 1 in 2 people from Turkey (49%) stated they want to travel to other countries, with a particular preference for Germany, while only 2% identified Italy as their final destination. The rate of “unknown” responses to this question among Turks was very high (43%)¹⁰.
- **Bangladesh and Pakistan:** The vast majority (96% of Bangladeshis and 93% of Pakistanis) intended to stay in Italy, with a strong preference for Trieste (84% for both groups).

Overall, data on migration intentions should be interpreted with caution, as it does not necessarily reflect migrants’ final decisions, which are ultimately influenced by multiple factors. In many cases, information, assistance, and orientation activities provided to newly arrived people have played a crucial role in increasing their awareness of their rights and options, enabling them to make more informed decisions about their migration journey.

¹⁰ This was mainly due to language barriers (IRC Italy and Diaconia workers do not speak Turkish or Kurmanji) and the fact that most of the Turkish citizens interviewed were families, who tend to be more reserved and are less likely to share their migratory intentions.



Urgent Needs and Protection Concerns

The thousands of people who arrive every year in Trieste, including many unaccompanied children, adult single women and families, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and accurate

information on their rights. Many arrive in Italy after a long and dangerous journey from their country of origin, often exposed to precarious conditions, malnutrition, physical and psychological violence, detention and violations of their rights, including pushbacks.

As highlighted in the previous section, most people on the move consider Trieste just a transit point, typically only staying for a few hours or days to rest, gather resources, and plan the next steps of their journey. Their **main needs are**:

The infographic consists of eight dark blue rounded rectangular boxes arranged in two columns on a yellow background. Each box contains an icon and a text description of a need. The needs are: 1. Access to overnight shelters (house icon), 2. Access to emergency assistance (house, apple, shirt, and cross icons), 3. Access to health and mental health services (heart and cross icons), 4. Access to toilets and showers (toilet icon), 5. Access to accurate legal information (scales icon), 6. Access to the internet and phone (signal tower icon), and 7. Support in accessing the asylum process and reception (award and document icon).

- Access to overnight shelters** to spend the night in a warm and safe place
- Access to emergency assistance** including food, medicine, hygiene kits, clothes, shoes, and sleeping bags
- Access to health and mental health services**
- Access to toilets and showers**
- Access to accurate legal information** in their language and in a safe space to understand their rights and duties
- Access to the internet and phone** to talk with family members and their loved ones
- Support in accessing the asylum process and reception** through interpretation and accompaniment

Testimonies and evidence collected by IRC Italy staff highlight critical **protection risks** for newly arrived people in Trieste, particularly those forced to survive on the streets for weeks while waiting to access asylum and reception facilities.

These individuals endure harsh weather and unsafe, unsanitary conditions in abandoned areas such as the silos and the old port buildings, with no access to toilets or a warm place to sleep at night.

Additionally, prolonged waiting periods and harsh conditions expose them to heightened dangers and exploitation. Reports include violent incidents

such as threats, robbery, physical assault, and even cases of people being held hostage by criminal gangs. Psychological distress is also a major concern, as many face mental health challenges stemming from trauma, uncertainty, and the dangers encountered during their journey.

These issues underscore the urgent need for protective measures to safeguard newly arrived individuals. Ensuring timely access to asylum and reception and reducing the time spent in unprotected environments is crucial to mitigating these risks and providing essential support to hundreds of people in need.



Access to Asylum

Throughout 2024, people seeking international protection in Trieste often faced significant barriers, such as prolonged waiting times and discretionary practices, when attempting to access the Questura to file their asylum claim. These obstacles violate current legislation¹¹ and leave many aspiring asylum seekers in precarious situations for weeks — without legal status, unable to access accommodation through the reception system, and entirely dependent on NGOs to meet their basic needs.

On average, the waiting time for asylum seekers to access the immigration office at the Questura ranged from 7 to 20 days, depending on the period. Reports from asylum seekers indicate that only 10 to 15 people per day are allowed entry to formalize their applications.

Moreover, many newcomers reported being turned away at the entrance without clear justification, prolonging their precarious situation and increasing their vulnerability. A major concern in 2024 was the

role of cultural mediators employed by the Questura. Multiple testimonies suggest that mediators conduct informal interviews at the entrance, allegedly inspecting individuals' mobile phones to check GPS data, messages, and photos in order to verify their recent travel history. In some cases, those found with train tickets from other Italian cities were redirected elsewhere, based on the claim that they should apply for asylum in the location where they first arrived in Italy. These practices, which appear to be carried out without issuing any administrative records, raise serious concerns about arbitrary decision-making and the infringement of asylum seekers' rights.

In response to the ongoing challenges, IRC Italy and other local organizations have intensified efforts to support asylum seekers, including accompanying individuals to the Questura to advocate for their right to access the procedure and referring cases with special needs.

However, without strengthening the capacity of the registration system, these support mechanisms remain insufficient to address widespread challenges. Ensuring timely and equitable access to asylum procedures is crucial for preventing homelessness, reducing exposure to unsafe conditions caused by legal limbo, and upholding fundamental rights.

11 Legislative Decree 142/2015 and subsequent amendments



Access to Reception

Access to reception facilities for asylum seekers remained challenging in 2024, with waiting times for entry into first reception camps fluctuating throughout the year, ranging from a few days to several weeks. However, this represents a slight improvement compared to the previous year, when waiting periods often extended to several months.

One notable improvement has been the increased frequency of asylum seeker relocations to other Italian regions, now occurring often on a biweekly basis. This measure has helped reduce pressure on local reception facilities and significantly shortened the average waiting time for asylum seekers to enter first reception centers.

However, broader challenges persist. The reception system capacity in Trieste has not expanded, and no comprehensive plan has been implemented to support those who do not intend to remain in the city. As a result, many people, including those possessing documents attesting to the formalization of their asylum applications, have been forced to shelter in abandoned buildings at the train station and old port area, lacking viable alternatives. This situation exacerbates existing humanitarian concerns and has broader social implications for the city.

Conclusions

As the first major Italian city along the Balkan route, Trieste remains a key entry point for people fleeing conflict and persecution, particularly those coming from Asia.

In 2024, despite stricter border controls and the prolonged suspension of Schengen at the Italian-Slovenian border, data presented in this report indicate that Trieste experienced only a slight decrease in arrivals compared to 2023.

Humanitarian needs remained high, with over 13,000 people, including an increasing share of vulnerable groups, arriving in the city requiring essential support, such as food, clothing, blankets, access to restrooms and showers, emergency shelter, medical care, service orientation, and legal assistance.

Local migration management in Trieste remained largely reactive and relied heavily on third-sector and voluntary-based organizations. Local authorities primarily responded with eviction operations to clear informal settlements and transferred

homeless asylum seekers to reception facilities in other regions — such as the relocation of those from the Silos in June and from the old port area in November. While these measures aimed to address urban management concerns, the scale and complexity of humanitarian needs and protection risks outlined in this report underscore the urgent need for long-term, sustainable solutions.

Although biweekly asylum seeker relocations to other Italian regions provided some relief during the year, capacity in first reception centers did not increase, and emergency dormitories remained at 2023 levels. Additionally, the removal of public restrooms in Piazza Libertà further worsened already dire living conditions for those without shelter.

At the time of closing this report — February 2025, thanks to the joint effort of several third-sector, a new facility offering a significant number of emergency shelter places near the train station is being launched. While this initiative represents a crucial addition to the existing services, a more collaborative and coordinated approach between institutions and third-sector organizations remains a key priority to effectively manage migration in a border city and to ensure sustainable solutions.





IRC ITALY MONITORING REPORT 2024

People arriving from the Balkan route to Trieste

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IRC Italy Protection Monitoring Reports and monthly updates:

<https://www.rescue.org/eu/country/italy/reports#trieste>



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