

Evaluation of qualifications held by refugees – CIMEA's experience

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- Italian [ENIC-NARIC](#) centre;
- [Credential Information Service](#);
- Information on the Italian [Higher Education System](#);
- [Publications and databases](#);
- International and EU-funded [projects](#);
- [Courses](#) for Italian Higher Education Institutions.

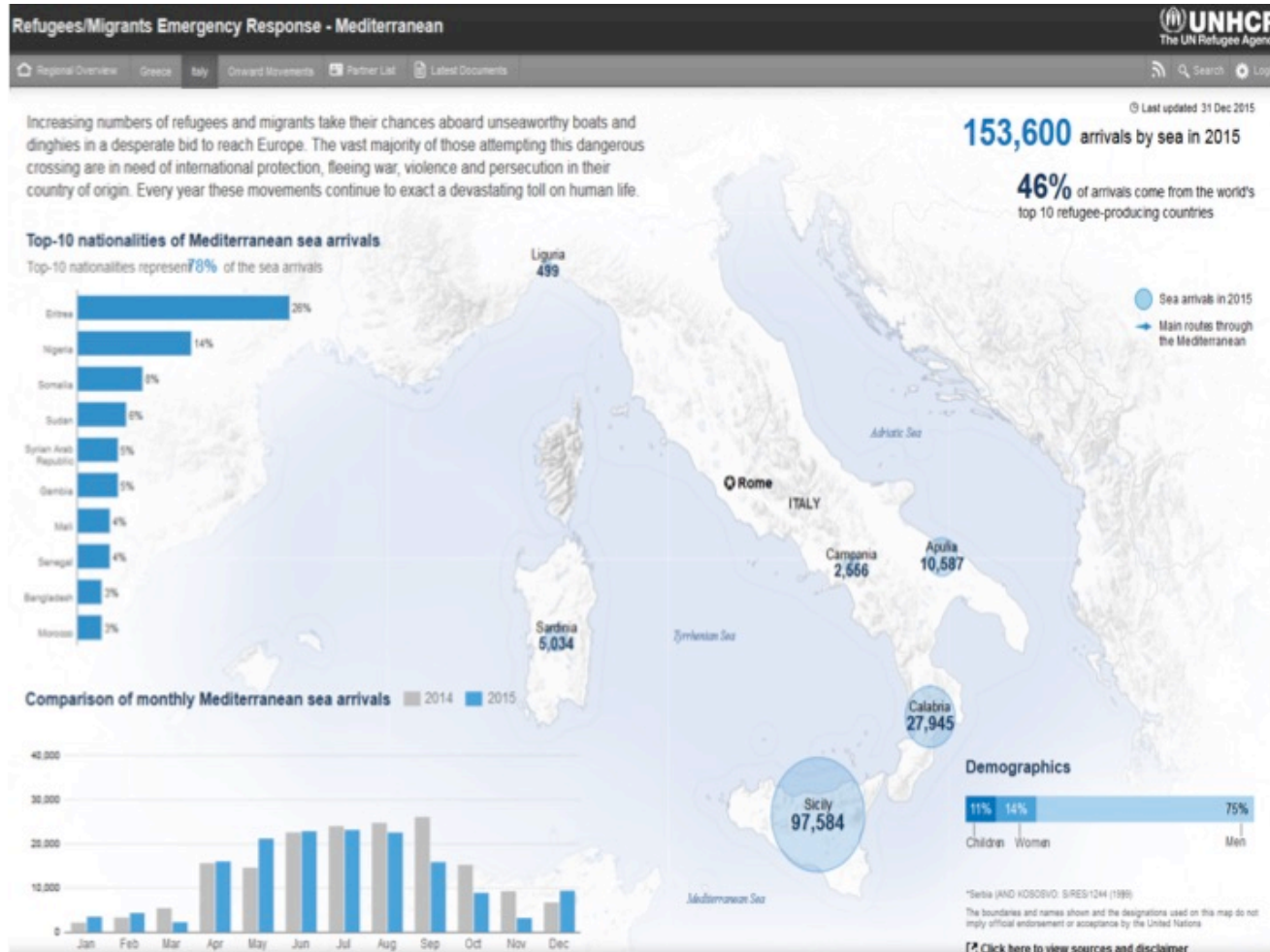
Since 1984, **CIMEA - Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence** has been engaged in the field of information and consulting services relating to the procedures for the recognition of academic qualifications and to issues relating to Italian and international higher education and training.

CIMEA is the official Italian centre within the **NARIC - National Academic Recognition Information Centres** – network of the European Union and the **ENIC - European National Information Centres** – network of the European Council and of UNESCO.

CIMEA supports academic mobility in all its forms and facilitates the understanding of the components of the Italian and foreign higher education and training systems and promotes the principles of the Lisbon Convention in the field of academic qualification recognition.

What is **CIMEA**

Refugees situation in Italy / 2015

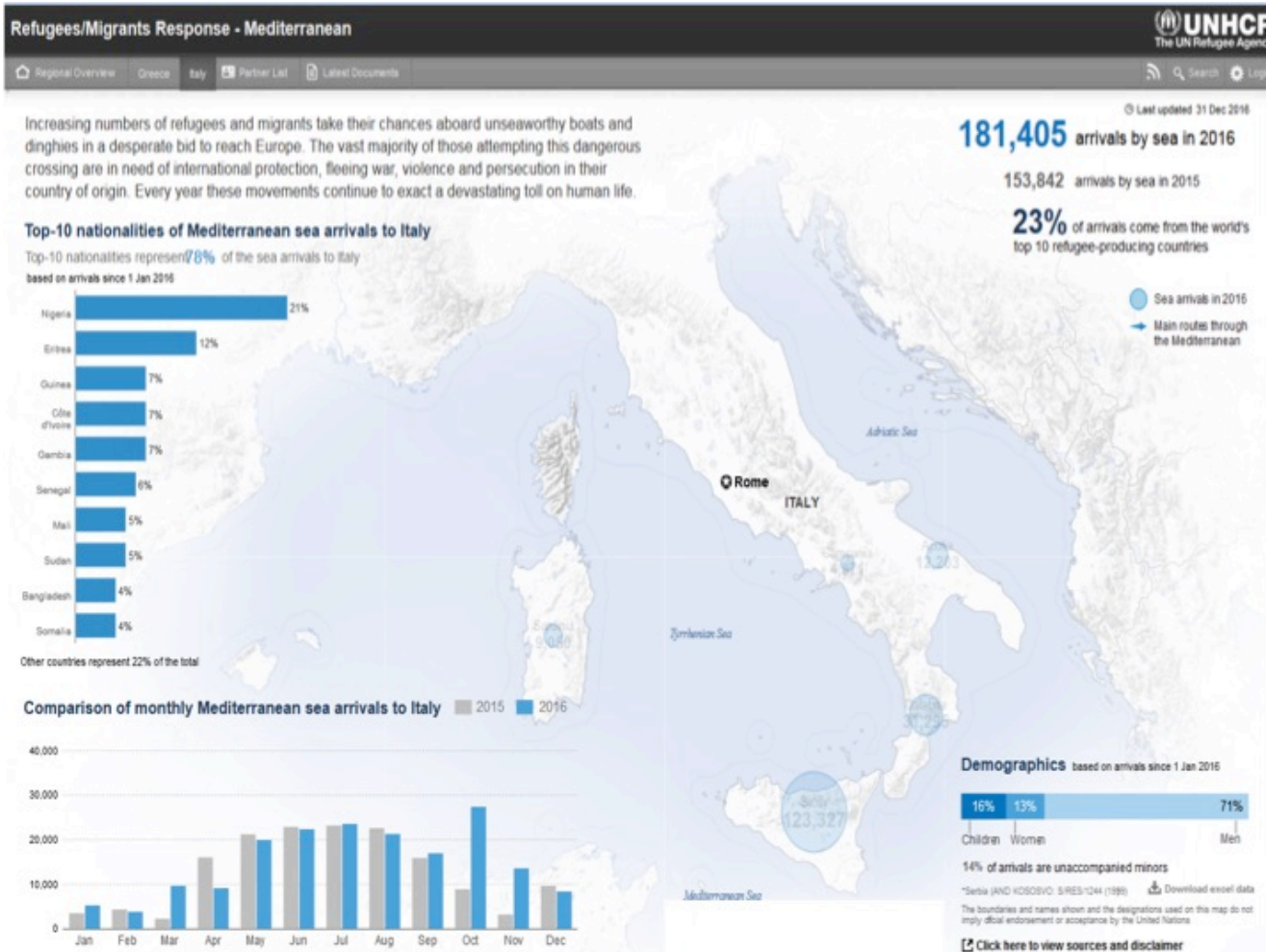


Most common nationalities:

- Eritrea
- Nigeria
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Syria
- Gambia
- Mali
- Senegal
- Bangladesh
- Morocco

Data from UNHCR: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

Refugees situation in Italy / 2016



Most common nationalities:

- Nigeria
- Eritrea
- Guinea
- Ivory Coast
- Gambia
- Senegal
- Mali
- Sudan
- Bangladesh
- Somalia

Sea arrivals in 2018

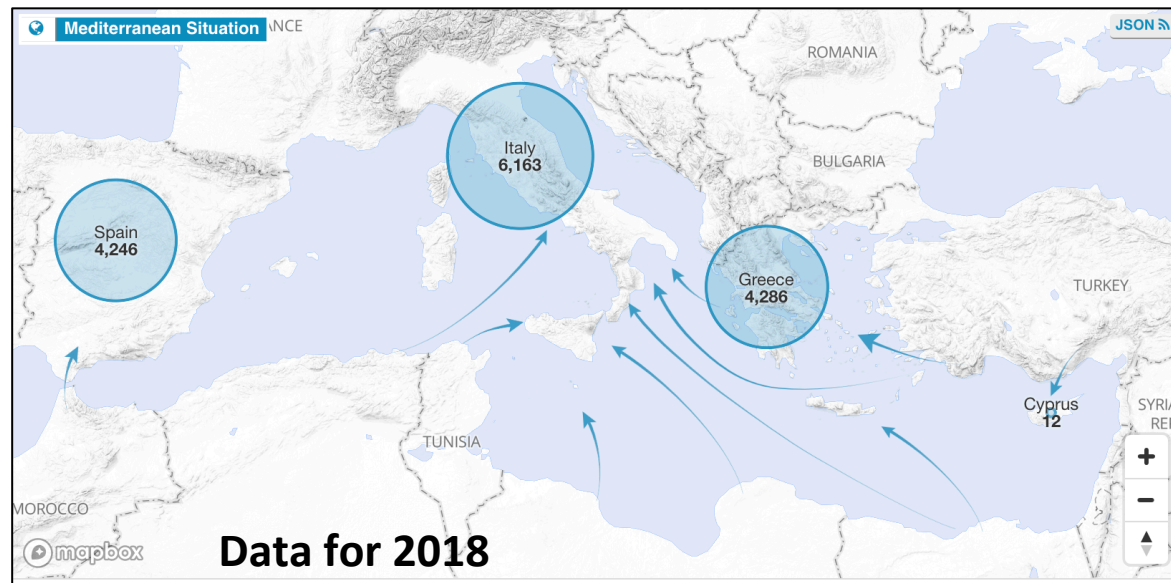
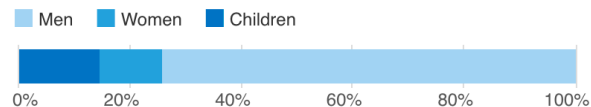
6,163

Last updated 23 Mar 2018

Previous years

Previous years	Sea arrivals	Dead and missing
2017	119,369	2,873
2016	181,436	4,578
2015	153,842	2,913
2014	170,100	3,093

Demographics (based on data from January 2017)



Most common nationalities:
Nigeria, Guinea and Ivory Coast

Most common nationalities of sea arrivals (since 1 January 2017)

Country of origin	Source	Data date	Population
Nigeria		28 Feb 2018	15.6% 18,484
Guinea		28 Feb 2018	8.3% 9,878
Côte d'Ivoire		28 Feb 2018	8.2% 9,718
Bangladesh		28 Feb 2018	7.6% 9,043
Eritrea		28 Feb 2018	7.0% 8,364
Mali		28 Feb 2018	6.1% 7,256
Tunisia		28 Feb 2018	6.1% 7,211
Sudan		28 Feb 2018	5.3% 6,353
Senegal		28 Feb 2018	5.2% 6,172
Morocco		28 Feb 2018	5.2% 6,140

Refugees situation in Italy / 2017

Data from UNHCR
<http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

Applications for Asylum in Italy

- **2014:** 63.456 from Nigeria, Mali and Gambia
- **2015:** 83.970 from Nigeria, Pakistan and Gambia
- **2016:** 123.600 from Nigeria, Pakistan and Gambia
- **2017:** 130.119 from Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan
- **2018 (28 Feb):** 5.942 from Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan

Lisbon Recognition Convention

Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention:

Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence.

The Convention has been ratified in Italy with the **Law n. 148 of 2002**.

The Lisbon Convention is the only international act that has binding effects upon the signatory Countries.

The Italian legislation concerning recognition of qualifications held by refugees

In line with the stipulation of the Lisbon Convention, Italy has adjusted its own legislation in terms of refugee qualification recognition by introducing **Legislative Decree 251/2007 Art. 26 comma 3bis:**

«For the recognition of professional qualifications, diplomas, certificates and other foreign qualifications by holders of refugee status or subsidiary protection status, the competent administrations must identify appropriate evaluation, convalidation and accreditation systems which allow qualification recognition as stipulated by Art. 49 of the Presidential Decree n. 394 of 31 August 1999, **even in the absence of certification on the part of the State that in which the qualification was awarded, in cases where the interested party demonstrates the impossibility of obtaining such certification».**

Who is eligible for an alternative procedure?

- **Refugees (who already obtained the asylum status)**
- **Persons who obtained the subsidiary protection status**

These procedures can not be carried out in case of **asylum seekers**. They can enter universities only “under condition” as every person that enters in the territory of an EU Country must ask for the asylum status not to be considered as an illegal migrant (Dublin Regulation).

If these people do not obtain the status, they will not be able to stay in the Country of arrival and fulfil their study path.

Changing the method of evaluation

In case of absence of documentation or insufficient documentation that can't be directly verified, the **COMPETENCES** declared by the student will be evaluated:

a **QUALIFICATION** is a **FORMAL CERTIFICATE** (issued by an authority) that certifies some specific **COMPETENCES**.

From an **INSPECTIVE PROCEDURE** to an **EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

Together with the evaluation of the competences, the **DECLARATIONS** of the candidate will be verified.

The migration phenomenon and the rising number of refugees is leading to a **REVOLUTION** in our recognition system and also in mostly all European higher education systems.

NB: this sector is highly innovative, so all the existing procedures are constantly evolving and must be improved continuously.

Verifying competences

This methodological part is **ESSENTIAL** in both the cases presented before and comes after preliminary examination phase.

If in the first phase the declarations of the students are found false or partially true, the student can be denied the access to the second phase.

In this phase **professors must be involved** in order to evaluate if the competences declared by the student meet the requirements of the course he/she wants to enrol in and if they allow him/her to complete the course of studies.

Methods to verify the competences

Written exams: this is the most common method that can be organised by professors of one or more subjects to verify the competences of the student.

Practical exam: some disciplines may require a practical verification of the competences.

Writing an essay: the student may be required to write a composition (project, thesis or essay), to verify the competences declared (especially in case of second and third cycle).

Oral exam: if available at the university, it would be better to have an expert of the system being examined in order to verify not only the contents and didactics but also more general information concerning the system itself.

CIMEA Statement of Comparability

CIMEA provides a **Statements of Comparability** free of charge to **refugees**, displaced persons and people in a refugee-like situation (and also to prisoners). This document can help Italian Universities in evaluating the foreign qualifications.

- ❖ 139 evaluations:
 - ❖ 119 Statements of comparability provided to refugees (2016/2017);
 - ❖ 53 cases statement not awarded: insufficient level of study in order to access to HE or fake qualifications;
 - ❖ Countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Guinea, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- ❖ Around 800 requests of information on refugees qualifications (2016/2018)

National Coordination for the Evaluation of Refugee Qualifications - CNVQR

Coordinamento Nazionale per la valutazione dei titoli dei rifugiati

Aim: Creating a network of experts from the administrative sector who operate inside higher education institutions and who deal with recognition of qualifications, to share evaluation procedures, problem cases, sources of information and methodological practices in cases of evaluation of qualifications held by refugees, even in cases of little or no documentation.

Main elements:

- Voluntary and auto-financed participation;
- The whole institution must be involved: membership agreement signed by the University Rector, indicating one responsible person and 2 experts;
- Activated and coordinated by CIMEA;
- 28 HE institutions involved (August 2017).

Why a National Coordination is needed in Italy?

- In Italy **the responsibility for academic recognition procedures is in the hands of HE institutions**: this means that we need to create and improve internal competences within our institutions.
- It is **in line with the official status of CIMEA** that is an information centre: we do not directly manage recognition procedures, our statements have the value of non-legally binding advice and it does not entail any obligation for institutions or third parties.
- We want **to increase a “recognition culture”** at national and international level and inform our institutions on the existing rules and procedures to better prepare them for future challenges.
- Taking into account that **Italy is one of the main arrival countries**, this topic is very sensitive at national level.

1st meeting CNVQR - 7 April 2017



- ❖ 25 participating HEIs, with the participation of the **Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research** and **UNHCR**
- ❖ Presenting the **Academic Pass of Refugee qualifications** (developed in the framework of the “Refugees and recognition: a toolkit” project)
- ❖ Starting the testing phase of **Academic Pass of Refugee qualifications** (May-June 2017)



The Academic Pass of Refugee Qualifications

- An instrument created for the benefit of Italian HE institutions and according to the Italian context
- We started from the format of the “European Qualification Passport for Refugees”
- The term “Academic Pass” is in line with the purpose of the instrument (access to further studies within HE institutions) and with the nature of CIMEA within the Italian context
- Two languages: Italian and English
- Signed by two credential evaluators + a supervisor
- The Academic Pass is issued jointly by CIMEA and at least one HE institution participating within the CNVQR
- The Academic Pass is not a legal document, but a useful tool intended to be of help in connection with applications for further studies within higher education institutions and it does not guarantee the recognition of assessed foreign qualifications.

How we organised the testing phase of the Academic Pass

- We asked to HEIs participating in the CNVQR to send us open cases of evaluation of refugee qualifications.
- We selected 11 interesting cases and we organised visits to 6 universities (defined as hosting institutions).
- We divided the HEIs of the CNVQR in 6 different groups of experts that participated in the evaluation procedures during each visit within 6 hosting institutions (Cagliari, Catania, Sassari, Torino, Trento, Trieste).
- We issued 9 Academic Pass out of 11 cases evaluated (one applicant presented fraudulent documents and another one did not convinced experts on his declarations).

Lessons learned

- The applicant is one of the main sources of information to better understand different element of an education system and each “academic culture”: also mistakes during the filling in of the questionnaire could have some reasons (applicants are not experts in educational systems).
- The evaluation procedure is different to the normal one because different elements are to be evaluated, but it does not mean that it is easier for the applicant to obtain recognition only based on his/her status (we evaluate the study path and not the personal situation).
- The personal situation that let them get the refugee status was already evaluated by other competent authorities.
- There are different proofs to determinate if a person followed a course of study instead of only considered educational documents.
- We based our evaluation on the concept of “beyond all reasonable doubt”.
- It is useful that a credential evaluator fills in the questionnaire with his/her personal study experience in order to understand that not all the details can be provided and remembered.

Projects relevant to the topic

CIMEA is currently involved in two projects concerning the recognition of qualifications held by refugees:

- ❖ Testing of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees;
- ❖ Refugees and recognition: Toolkit for recognition of higher education for refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation;
- ❖ MERIC-net: Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications.



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Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Testing of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees

The Council of Europe together with the Greek Ministry of Higher Education funded a pilot project in Greece to test the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees:

- four centres of the ENIC-NARIC network are involved: NOKUT, CIMEA, DOATAP and the UK NARIC;
- interviews to refugees;
- assessment of the The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees

Refugees and recognition: Toolkit for recognition of higher education for refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation

Creation of useful tools finalized for recognition of qualifications held by refugees and, more in general, by persons not in possession of the documentation relative to the qualifications held necessary for recognition procedures.

The delivery of the project is the toolkit to be used by Higher Education Institutions comprehensive of Country Briefings, methodology guidelines and questionnaires.

MERIC-net: Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres on the Recognition of Qualifications

The MERIC-net project's objective is to **revitalise the MERIC network (Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres)** in order to favour and increase the recognition of qualifications within the Mediterranean Region, and to **raise the quality of vertical and horizontal mobility in the higher education systems** of the involved countries.

With the revitalisation of the MERIC network, this project intends to promote a better **mutual understanding by sharing of information and practices** not only in the beneficiary countries, but also within the EHEA. In order to have a more fluid circulation of information, the objective of the project is to create operational national recognition centres, providing training activities on recognition practices for people working in national bodies and HEIs.

Resources and good practices

EUA – Refugees Welcome Map:

<http://www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map>

ENIC-NARIC:

<http://www.enic-naric.net/recognise-qualifications-held-by-refugees.aspx>

EAR Manual:

<http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/>

CoE - Guidelines for the recognition of refugee's qualifications:

http://www.aic.lv/ace/WP/Refugees/guid_ref.htm

NOKUT:

<https://www.nokut.no/en/foreign-education/Recognition-Procedure-for-Persons-without-Verifiable-Documentation/>

To conclude...

Thou shalt abandon all that thou hast loved
with greatest tenderness; and of its shafts
this is the one which exile's bow shoots first.
Thou shalt find out how salt another's bread
is wont to taste, and what a painful thing
is going up and down another's stairs.

(Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, Paradise XVII)



Thank you!

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<https://youtu.be/020sJzh5uJs>