

# Central Mediterranean

## Situation in 2022

The stretch of the Mediterranean Sea between North Africa and Italy is one of the main migratory routes to Europe, although the number of arrivals has come down from the peak years of 2014-2016.

In 2022, the number of detections in the Central Mediterranean rose by more than half to well over 100 000 detections.

Egyptians, Tunisians and Bangladeshis were the top three nationalities in a year that saw the most arrivals in this region from Libya since 2017 and the most from Tunisia in recent history.

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## Situation in 2021

The Central Mediterranean continued to be the most used path to Europe for the second year in row in 2021 as 67 724 migrants were detected on this route. This is an 90% increase from the previous year and accounts for 23% (or roughly one quarter) of all reported illegal border-crossings at the external borders.

A higher rate of arrivals from Libya made it the main country of departure, while more departures from Tunisian and Turkish shores also contributed to the increased migratory pressure on this route.

Tunisian migrants were most frequently detected in this region, although the year of 2021 saw the return of larger numbers of Egyptian migrants, whose number increased nearly sevenfold from the previous year. Bangladeshi nationals were also among the top detected nationalities.

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## Situation in 2020

In 2020, the number of irregular migrants detected on this route increased significantly, making it the most-used path to Europe. The number of detections doubled from the previous year to a total of 36 435.

Libya was the most common departure point: in addition to Bangladeshi, Sudanese and Moroccans were increasingly choosing it as their last point of departure to Europe. The growing number of departures from Tunisia and Turkey also contributed to the increased migratory pressure on this route.

Tunisians were the top detected nationality, accounting for over one third of all detections on this route, followed by migrants from Bangladesh and Côte d'Ivoire.

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## Situation in 2019

In 2019, this route recorded its lowest yearly number of irregular migrants since before the Arab Spring as the arrivals in the region dropped for the third year in a row. The total number of arrivals was 14 874, a 40% decline from the previous year 2018.

Nationals of Tunisia, Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire were most detected on this route.

Over half of the migrants who arrived in the EU via this route departed from Libya, although the prevention activities by the Libyan Coast Guard kept departures down throughout the year.

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## Situation in 2018

In 2018, the Central Mediterranean route experienced the biggest drop in the number of irregular migrants. The total number of irregular border crossings plunged 80% on this route to 24 800, the lowest number since 2012.

Tunisians and Eritreans were the two most represented nationalities on this route, together accounting for more than one third of all detected migrants.

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## Situation in 2017 and before

In 2017, the number of irregular migrants detected on this migratory path stood at 119 385, decreasing from the record high of 2016. After the monthly totals in the first half of 2017 roughly mirrored those seen a year earlier, the figures dropped suddenly starting in July. This sudden plunge in the number of irregular migrants reaching Italy in mid-2017 was arguably the most

significant development at the external borders of the EU since the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016.

In 2016, 181 459 migrants were detected on the Central Mediterranean route, which was the highest number ever recorded in the region. Most of the migrants departed from Libya, where well-established smuggling networks took advantage of various groups vying for control of the country.

The Central Mediterranean route was also under intense migratory pressure in 2015, although the total number of migrants arriving in Italy fell to 153 946, about a tenth lower than in 2014.

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## More information

More information about this migratory route to Europe is available in Frontex's [annual risk analysis reports](#). Frontex supports Italy with Operation Themis.

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### **Illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route (including Apulia and Calabria) in numbers.**

*As of October 2014, the data for the Central Mediterranean route include the data for the Apulia and Calabria route. Indeed, many migrants are disembarked in Apulia and Calabria even though they have been detected in the Central Mediterranean area. However, the current reporting mechanism does not break down by areas of detections, but by areas of disembarkation, thus a distinction of detections between these two routes is not available.*

