

## Key Points

- ◆ As of 4 Dec 2016, 172 229 irregular migrants have been intercepted in the Central Mediterranean, which represents a ~16% increase compared to the same period of 2015.
- ◆ Increasing number of arrivals in **October and November** compared to the same months in previous years.
- ◆ **Most of the incidents** involved rubber dinghies and small wooden boats coming from **Libya**.
- ◆ **High number of Moroccans** arriving in Italy in the reporting period.
- ◆ The number of **arrivals from Algeria** in one single week represents ~20% of the total of arrivals from this country in 2016. Simultaneous departures from Algeria suggest a higher level of complexity and coordination by smuggling networks operating in this country.
- ◆ Again the **Libyan authorities** are involved in **smuggling activities**.
- ◆ First reported case where the **criminal networks** were **smuggling migrants directly on a NGO vessel**



## Main Trends

During the period under analysis, **67 illegal immigration incidents** were reported (**26 incidents in week 47 and 41 in week 48**) involving the apprehension of **5 871 irregular migrants** (3 025 apprehensions in week 47 and 2 846 apprehensions in week 48). In particular:

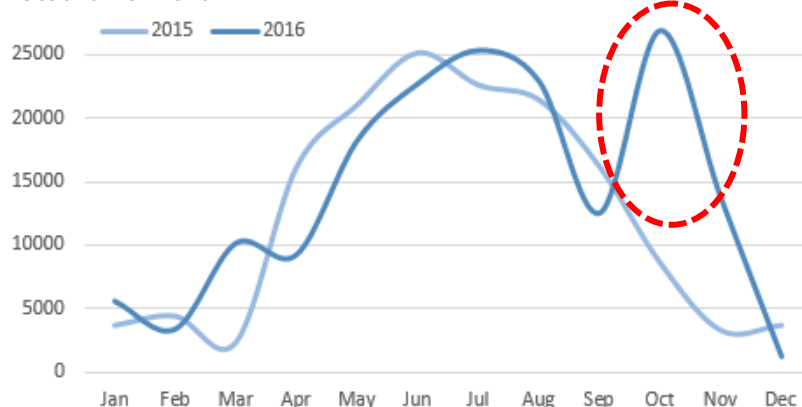
- **48 boats** arrived from **Libya** involving 5 075 migrants
- **11 boats** from **Algeria** involving 204 migrants on board
- **4 boats** from **Turkey** involving 550 migrants
- **3 boats** from **Tunisia** with 13 migrants on board
- **1 boat** from **Greece** with 29 migrants on board

Thus far in 2016, the number of migrants apprehended in the Central Mediterranean totalled **172 229** which represents a **~16% increase** compared to the same period of 2015 (147 913). As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of arrivals increased in **October and November** compared to the same months in 2015. Despite tough weather conditions during this period of the year, **migrant arrivals continued unabated mainly from Libya**. The smuggling networks are aware that the maritime assets are patrolling close to the Libyan shore, and for that reason they are encouraging the migrants to sail even when the sea is rough because they will be rescued soon after their departure. In 2015, the **average number of migrants in each rubber dinghy was 108**. Thus far in 2016, using the same type of rubber dinghy, the average number of migrants has increased to 121 in each dinghy. By overcrowding the migrant boats and **encouraging them to sail in inclement weather** the smugglers are further endanger-

Figure 2: One of the migrants' rubber dinghies capsized.  
Source: Frontex.



Figure 1: Number of arrivals in 2015/2016. In the red circle the peak in Oct and Nov 2016.



ing migrants' lives. According to IOM<sup>1</sup>, the **number of fatalities in 2016 has increased by ~48%** compared to the same period in 2015. For instance, on 21 November one incident involving two overcrowded rubber dinghies was reported; these boats had departed from Zawiya (Libya). When the migrants were on the high seas, the **smugglers who were escorting the migrant dinghies removed the engines from the dinghies and forced the migrants to hand over the life jackets**. Soon afterwards, **a huge wave hit both dinghies and the dinghies immediately capsized, with all the migrants falling into the water with only a few surviving** (Fig 2). In addition in the period under analysis, open sources<sup>2</sup> reported that a **wooden boat carrying migrants was shipwrecked approximately 15 km from the Libyan coast with dozens of people feared missed** (Fig 3). Two days later, Libyan open sources<sup>2</sup> reported that dozens of corpses had been found on Libya's coastline.

Figure 3: Shipwrecked wooden boat on 3 Dec approx. 15 km from the Libyan shore. Source: Facebook.



طائرة استطلاع في هذه الساعات تلتقط صور لحادثة غرق على بعد 15 ميل عن الشواطئ الليبية، الساعة 02:42 مساءً -

<sup>1</sup> <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A4%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%86-%>

Once again Libya is the main country of departure with ~86% of irregular migrant arrivals during the reporting period. Most of the incidents continue to involve rubber dinghies that had departed from Libya bound for Italy. Sabratah was the main place of departure but it is worth mentioning that again departures from Zuwarah were reported.

It is especially noteworthy that one incident from Greece was reported after 14 weeks without arrivals from this country. In this specific case, 29 migrants managed to disembark undetected on mainland Italy. Even if this is an isolated case, is suggesting that travelling directly from Greece to Italy is an option for all those migrants stranded in Greece.

It is worth noting that there have been no arrivals from Egypt since September. The Egyptian authorities are prosecuting two maritime inspection officials accused of belonging to the smuggling network<sup>3</sup> that was involved in the most recent incident where a fishing boat capsized off the coast of Egypt in September. Furthermore, the Egyptian authorities have reported the discovery of a network which is accused of illicit international trafficking in human organs<sup>4</sup>. Apparently, some of the victims have

## Main Nationalities

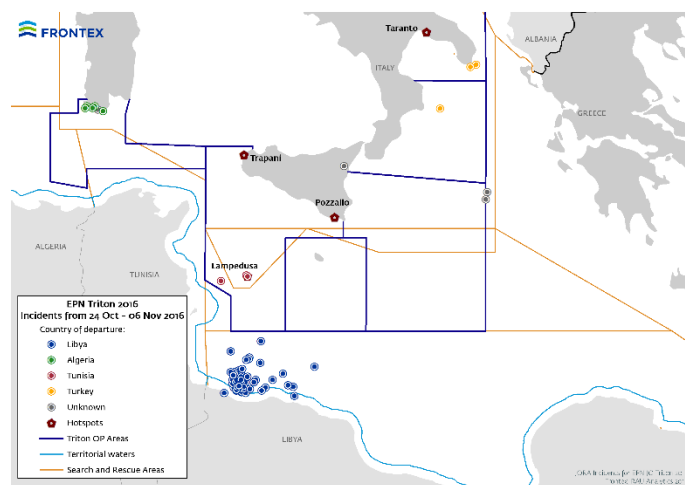
Thus far in 2016, the most common nationalities reported within the framework of the JO Triton have been from the following countries: Nigeria, Eritrea, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Sudan, Bangladesh and Somalia. During the reporting period the majority of the migrants arrived from Western and Central African countries, but it is worth highlighting the significant presence of Moroccan migrants arriving from Libya and Iraqi and Pakistani migrants arriving from Turkey.

In terms of the price paid by migrants to be smuggled from Libya to Italy, the amount varies depending of the specific deal agreed between the migrant and the smuggler. However, according to intelligence gathered through debriefing activities it turns out that in some cases the average price paid by certain nationalities, namely migrants from Horn of African countries, has increased

<sup>3</sup><http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-egypt-idUSKBN13S0MC>

<sup>4</sup><http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/details/18112>

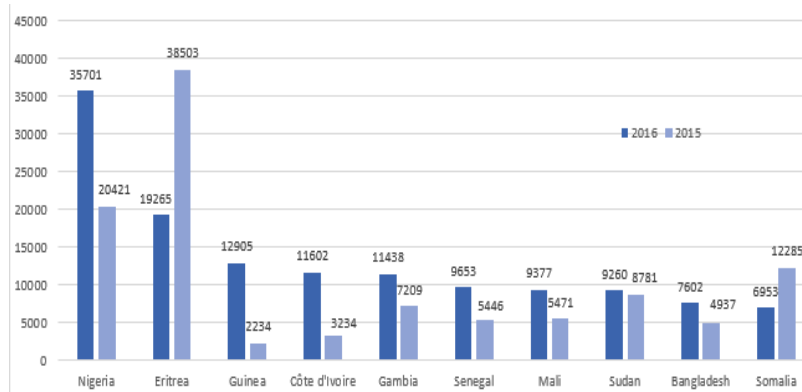
Figure 4: Incidents that occurred during the reporting period in the framework of the JO Triton 2016



been migrants. As previously reported, with these measures the Egyptian authorities are trying to tackle smuggling activities in Egypt.

During weeks 47 and 48, irregular migrant arrivals were also reported from Algeria, Turkey and Tunisia, with the following locations being identified as the main departure areas/points in each country; Annaba in Algeria, Sfax and Kerkenah Islands in Tunisia and Izmir in Turkey.

Figure 5: Main nationalities from 1 Jan to 4 Dec 2016/2015



from 500 - 800 USD, which was the regular price in previous months, to 1 500 - 2 300 USD to travel aboard a rubber boat. This suggests that the demand for smuggling services is high which allows the smuggling networks to increase the price for certain nationalities without a decrease in the number of migrants wanting to be smuggled to the EU.

## Main Findings

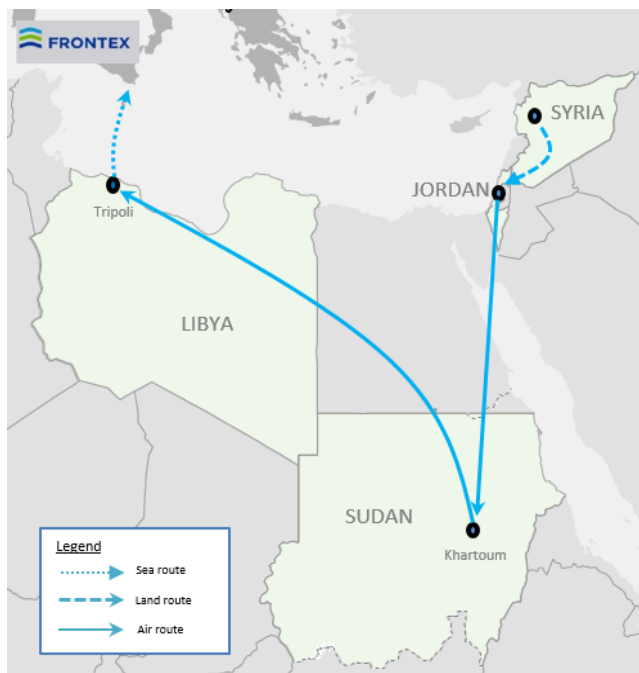
### Syrians using Libya as the last departure country

As previously mentioned, the overall increase in the number of detections in 2016 compared to the same period in 2015 is directly related to the increase in the number of arrivals in October and November. According to the figures obtained from JORA, the number of arrivals in October and November 2016 is the highest ever recorded in these months in the Central Mediterranean route since the beginning of Frontex joint operations.

From amongst the migrants that arrived in the Central Mediterranean during the reporting period, it is worth mentioning that 68 Syrian nationals reached the Italian coast. Some of them sailed directly from Turkey towards Italy by boat but most of them used Libya as the last country of departure. Of these Syrians, many had been established in Libya for several years and, due to bad living conditions they decided to try to reach Italy. According to the information gathered during the debriefing activities, the Libyan government has imposed strict restrictions on banks and these measures are preventing foreigners from withdrawing their savings from their bank accounts, which is leading many migrants to leave the country.

On the other hand, and as mentioned in previous reports, Syrians are using the route Syria-Jordan-Sudan-Libya (Mitiga airport in Tripoli) by aeroplane (Fig. 6) and further by boat to reach Italy. Syrians are paying ~8 000

Figure 6. Route Syria-Jordan-Sudan-Libya-Italy

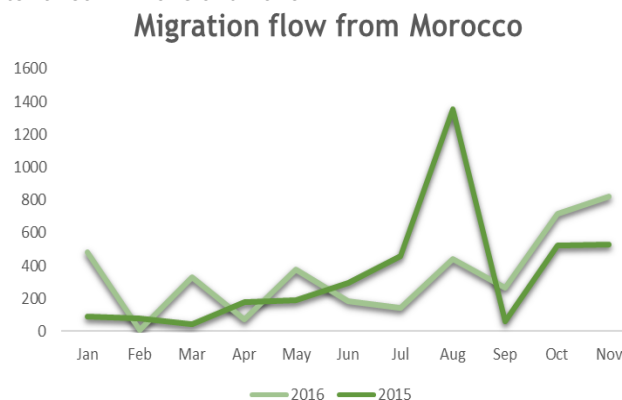


USD for the whole trip from Syria to Libya and 1 000 USD to cross from Libya to Italy. It is not possible to determine how many Syrians have recently arrived in Italy using this route and how many of them decided to leave Libya after living there for several years. With this route open and being relatively safe due to the fact that most of the trip is done by aeroplane where Syrians arrive at Mitiga airport in Tripoli, an increasing number of Syrians arriving from Libya using this route cannot be ruled out.

### Moroccans

The number of Moroccan nationals continues to increase. Information collected during debriefing activities suggests that Moroccan migrants are aware that they will not be immediately returned to Morocco and once the registration process is completed, they can continue their trip to their final destination country, which in many cases, is France. As a result of not being returned immediately is fast becoming one of the main 'pull factors' encouraging them to reach Italy. Typically, Moroccans use Tunisia as a transit country to reach Libya, and not the African route in the Sahel.

Figure 7: Moroccan nationals arrived in the Central Mediterranean in 2015 and 2016



At the beginning of 2016, Da'esh's presence was reported in the north-western region of Libya. At that time, many of the foreign fighters in Da'esh in Libya were Tunisian who, taking advantage of the lack of border controls at the Tunisian-Libyan border, crossed the border from Tunisia to Libya and vice versa.

For that reason the land border between Tunisia and Libya was at the beginning of 2016 and flights between both countries were operating under strict security measures with the result that the number of Moroccans decreased in the following months .

According to the intelligence gathered, recently flight connections between Tunis and Mitiga airport (Tripoli) were reopened, being the main reason for the increasing number of Moroccan nationals detected in the Central Med.

## Simultaneous departures from Algeria

Thus far in 2016 the number of arrivals from Algeria has increased by ~440% compared to the same period in 2015.

In the reporting period, a total of 204 migrants arrived from Algeria in 11 incidents, which represents ~20% of all arrivals from Algeria in 2016. Of these, 11 boats arrived in Italy, 10 of which were intercepted on 2 and 3 December. After the debriefing activities, it was possible to determine that the smuggling networks were performing simultaneous departures from the area of Annaba in order to make it difficult for the Algerian authorities to intercept the migrants' boats. According to the infor-

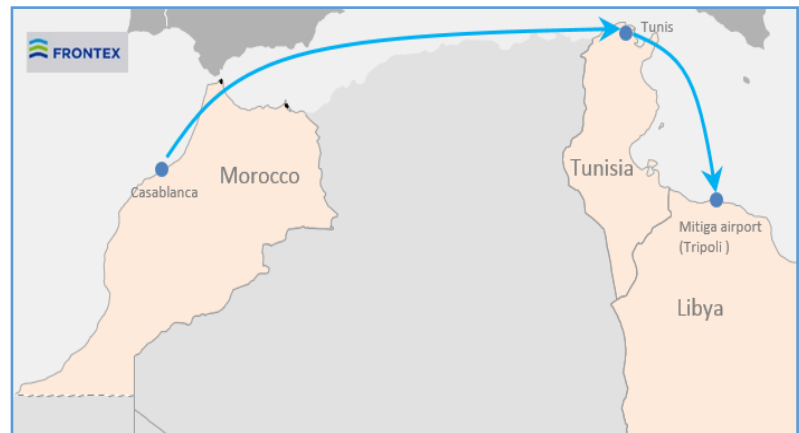
## Arrivals from Turkey

Even though during most of 2016 migration pressure from Turkey has remained lower than last year, in August 2016 the flow started to increase and reached a peak during November 2016 (the highest number since January 2015).

Taking into account that migrants from Morocco are currently facing difficulties in entering the EU via the Western and Eastern Mediterranean routes, they are now entering Tunisia and continuing further to Libya in order to enter the EU. **This route has recently become the best alternative route into the EU for Moroccans.**

It is worth mentioning that the overall flow of Moroccans in 2016 remains stable compared to the same period of 2015.

Figure 8. Route by aeroplane Casablanca-Tunis-Tripoli



mation gathered, the number of boats departing at the same time was much higher than the number of boats which successfully reached Italy. Some of the migrant boats were intercepted by the Algerians authorities but, by launching many boats at the same time the smuggling networks were assuring that dozens of migrants would successfully reach Italy.

The change of modus operandi with the smuggling networks performing simultaneous departures from Algeria suggests a higher level of complexity and coordination by the smuggling networks operating in Algeria.

The main reason for the increasing trend has to be found in the situation that thousands of migrants are facing on the Greek Eastern Aegean Islands, where they remain stranded with little possibility of reaching the Greek mainland. As an alternative, people smuggling networks operating from Turkey are offering migrants different alternatives to reach the EU:



- Through Sudan, flying from Istanbul to Sudan and then from here to Libya by land or air route.
- Directly from Turkey by sea to Italy, mainly aboard sailing vessels and to a much lesser extent aboard wooden/fishing boats and yachts.

Figure 9. Arrivals from Turkey in 2015/2016



## Libyan local authorities involved in the smuggling activities

As mentioned in previous reports, some members of Libya's local authorities are involved in smuggling activities. Some of the migrants that recently arrived in Italy stated that they had been smuggled by criminal networks with Libyan smugglers wearing uniforms. Some of the interviewed migrants gave a description of the uniforms worn by the smugglers as "grey and black with the word "police" or "الشرطة" (police in Arabic) written across the back. In light of the foregoing, it is worth

highlighting that this has been reported several times by the Italian Coast Guard and EUNAVFORMED. For instance, they have reported the presence of skiffs with a few people on board pretending to be fishermen but suspected of being involved in smuggling activities. During the reporting period, one of the supposed fishermen was again wearing the uniform of the Libyan police with the person being photographed by one of the EUNAVFORMED aerial assets.

## First reported case where the criminal networks were smuggling migrants directly on a NGO maritime vessel

It is also worth highlighting that during the reporting period and, according to the Italian authorities, during a SAR operation, which was being carried out by two NGOs vessels *Minden* and *Topaz Responder*, there was a small fibreglass boat in the area displaying a Libyan flag with persons pretending to be fishermen. At a certain point, this fibreglass boat approached one of the NGO vessels '*Minden*' and transferred two Libyan citizens from the small boat to the EU vessel claiming that they were migrants. The NGO vessel took them aboard and let the Libyan boat leave the area. After the debriefing activities, the migrants stated that the crew aboard the small Libyan boat were the people smugglers.

This is the first reported case where the criminal networks directly approached an EU vessel and smuggled the migrants directly into Europe using the NGO vessel.

Identification, and arrest of smugglers as well as seizure

or disposal of the migrants' boats are crucial steps in tackling and curbing smuggling activities in the Central Mediterranean.

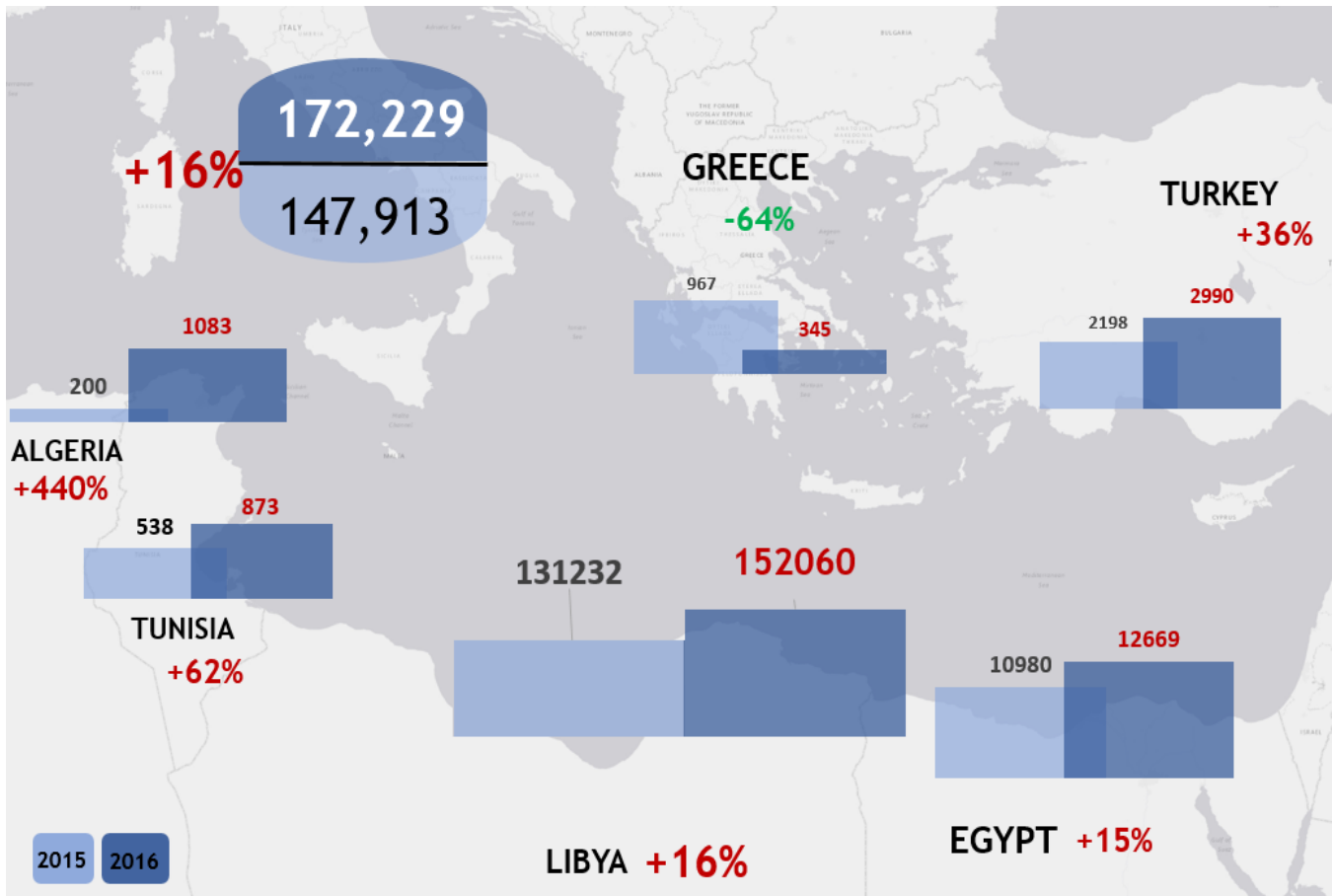
Figure 10: Libyan smugglers approaching the NGO vessel to transfer the two Libyan migrants. Source: MOAS



## Main trends by country of departure in 2016

In 2016, the breakdown by migratory routes in the Central Mediterranean shows an increasing trend (+16%) of arrivals from Libya which has remained the main country of departure. Moreover, the number of arrivals increased from Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia and Algeria but decreased from Greece.

The following map shows the volume of the migratory flows by country of departure since the beginning of 2016 compared to the same period in 2015



## For the Debriefing Teams:

- Continue with the deployment of the joint debriefing teams and joint screening teams to the landing areas.
- Acquire information about migrants stranded in Libya and the situation in the main departure areas along the west coast of Libya, as well as from the main areas of departure in Egypt. In the case of migrants stranded for months in Libya, the reasons behind this delay in their departure.
- In relation to the conflicts in Libya, Syria and Iraq try to gather as much information as possible.
- Gather information regarding the participation of Libyan law enforcement or military personnel in smuggling activities.
- Western and Central African migrants: if they chose to cross Mali instead Niger towards Algeria and further Libya. The reasons behind this decision.
- In the incidents arriving from Egypt:
  - Try to gather information about the route from the Horn of African countries, the crossing of the Sudanese-Egyptian border.
  - The situation in Aswan
  - The measures (if any) taken by the Egyptian authorities in Egypt to tackle the illegal immigration.
- In those incidents arriving from Turkey try to get information about the offers and advices done by the smugglers to the migrants.
- Obtain information with regard to people smuggling networks operating in the EU involved in the smuggling of migrants from Italy to other EU Member States.
- Increasing number of Moroccans. Reasons behind this increasing flow. *Modus operandi* mainly focused in those arrived in Libya a few weeks/months ago.
- In the case of migrants settled in compound safe houses, obtain information about the *MO*, the smuggling network and geo-coordinates in google maps (or similar application).
- Please remember that processing personal data collected during the interviews is limited to personal data regarding persons who are suspected, on reasonable grounds, by the competent authorities of the Member States of involvement in:
  - cross-border criminal activities (CBC), and/or
  - illegal immigration activities or in human trafficking activities (THB)

## For the Screening Teams:

- Pay attention when screening Horn of African migrants because of cases involving Ethiopian and Sudanese migrants claiming to be Eritrean (nationality swapping) in order to avoid repatriation.
- Pay attention also, to those migrants claiming to be Syrian – some migrants of other nationalities are claiming to be Syrian.
- Focus on female minors from sub-Saharan countries trying to pose as adults or young females being accompanied by adult males posing as their husbands or fathers (possible case of trafficking in human beings).
- Difference Sudanese from South Sudanese during the screening process.



## Statistics 2016 (1 January – 4 December)

The JO Triton 2016 was launched on 1 February 2016 and it is planned to finish on 31 December 2016.

### In 2016 (1 January - 4 December)

1 501	Incidents occurred related to illegal border-crossing.
172 229	Irregular migrants were apprehended.
	Most common nationalities - Nigerian (35 701), Eritrean (19 265), Guinean (12 905), Ivorian (11 602), Gambian (11 438), Senegalese (9 653), Mali (9 377), Sudanese (9 260) and Bangladeshi (7 602).
	The countries of departure were Libya (152 060), Egypt (12 669), Turkey (2 990), Algeria (1 083), Tunisia (873), Greece (345). → Unknown (2 209).
598	People smugglers were arrested in 308 incidents.
390	Fatalities were reported in 81 incidents.
16	Incidents related to the prevention of departure.
~2 153	Irregular migrants were prevented from departure.
21	Incidents related to the smuggling of goods.
24	Smugglers were arrested.
9	Incidents related to pollution.
~85%	Of detections were recorded outside the operational area, ~15% inside.
~88%	Of incidents were reported as SAR operations.

### In 2016, from the beginning of the operation on 1 February to 4 December 2016

1 502	Incidents occurred related to illegal border-crossing.
166 621	Irregular migrants were apprehended.
562	People smugglers were arrested in 287 incidents.
381	Fatalities were reported in 77 incidents.
21	Incidents related to the smuggling of goods.
24	Smugglers were arrested.
9	Incidents related to pollution.

### During the reporting period between 21 November - 4 December 2016

67	Illegal border-crossing incidents occurred.
5 871	Irregular migrants were apprehended.
	Most common nationalities - Nigerian (713), Eritrean (512), Gambian (386), Moroccan (360), Guinean (343), Iraqi (322), Ivorian (278), Pakistanis (236), Malian (219 and Senegalese (203).
	The countries of departure were Libya (5 075), Turkey (550), Algeria (204), Greece (29) and Tunisia (13).
22	People smugglers were arrested in 11 incidents.
30	Fatalities were reported in 2 incidents.
70%	Of detections were recorded outside the operational area while 30% occurred inside.
79%	Of incidents were reported as SAR operations.

Note: all the figures were extracted from JORA on 7-12-2016 at 13:00 hrs