Metadata for the Deaths at the Borders Database for Southern EU – Public Version 28 June 2016

1. Release policy

The Database is released open source on www.borderdeaths.org in Excel format, along with documentation, interactive visualisation and contact information. The Database will be made permanently available through reputable data sharing platforms such as DataverseNL and figshare.

Proper credit should be given for use of the Database and any related material via full citation.

The Database has been anonymised for reasons of privacy of the families of the deceased. People searching for missing relatives are advised to contact the most convenient Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.

2. Coverage

Records people who died attempting to cross the southern EU external borders without authorisation between 1/1/1990 and 1/1/2014, whose bodies were found and processed by authorities within EU territory. The Database is individualised; each row in the Excel file provides information about one person.

Southern EU border region includes Malta, Gibraltar, and parts of Spain, Italy and Greece. In Spain: the southern coasts from the Portuguese border to Valencia, the coasts of the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, and the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. In Italy: Sicily, the southern coasts of Calabria and Sardinia, the southern and eastern coasts of Puglia up to and including Foggia, and the international ports of Ancona and Naples. In Greece: the Cyclades and eastern coasts of Evoia, the Dodecanese, Crete, the North Aegean islands, and the Greek side of the land borders with Albania and with Turkey (often referred to as the Evros region).

There are 5 geographical gaps in Spain resulting from denial of access to source documents: the judicial districts of San Sebastian de la Gomera (La Gomera, Canary Islands), Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Gran Canaria, Canary Islands), Marbella (Cadiz region), El Ejido (Almeria), Villajoyosa (Alicante), and Palma de Mallorca (Mallorca, Balearic Islands).

3. Language

"DEATHS AT THE BORDERS: DATABASE FOR SOUTHERN EU - Public version 12 May 2015" and "DEATHS AT THE BORDERS: DATABASE FOR SOUTHERN EU - Public version 28 June 2016" are in English, data translated from national language of source documents by researchers.
National datasets derived from the Public version 12 May 2015 are available in the national language.

4. Variables explained

Data presented is organised into 48 variables and corrected during translation for errors and clarity, but is essentially raw/primary data as extracted from source documents.

In the Excel file, a filter has been created for each variable so that the data can be sorted easily.

Table presenting the description of each variable in the Deaths at the Borders Database for Southern EU, the number and percentage of cases with information recorded for each variable.

Variable	***Description***	***Number of cases (N=3188)***	***% of all cases***
Case_number	Individual numbers assigned to each case referring to the country, the registry where the data was collected, and the number of the case when collected. "Missing" case numbers assigned to cases which were collected but excluded from the Database on the basis of the certainty criteria (see Description of <Certainty>).	3188	100%
Year	There is no procedural or death-related data available for all cases in the Database. Therefore, a year was assigned to each case to enable chronological ordering and longitudinal analysis. In order of preference: year of death, year found, year of autopsy, year of inquiry, year of registration.	3188	100%
Country	Country in which the source documents were found.	3188	100%
Region/Province	Region or province in which the source documents were found. Where more than one source document used, <Region/Province> refers to where the death certificate was found or where the office in which other source documents were found.	3188	100%
City/Town/Village	City, town or village in which the source documents were found. Where more than one source document used, <City/Town/Village> refers to where the death certificate was found or where the office in which other source documents were found.	3188	100%

Variable	***Description***	***Number of cases (N=3188)***	***% of all cases***
Route	Irregular migration route on which the person is assumed to have died while attempting to cross the southern EU external border, based on the region in which the body was found and literature on irregular migration into the EU. *Adriatic (land)*: From Albania and Macedonia to northwest Greece. *Adriatic (sea)*: From Albania and Montenegro to Puglia (Italy) across the Adriatic Sea. *Atlantic*: From Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Gambia, Senegal and Cape Verde to the Canary Islands (Spain). *Central Mediterranean*: From Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Turkey and Syria to Italy (Sardinia, Sicily, Calabria) and Malta. *Eastern Mediterranean (land)*: From Turkey to Greece across the Evros/Meric river. *Eastern Mediterranean (sea)*: Predominantly from Turkey to Greece via the Aegean Sea, but also from Egypt and Middle Eastern countries to Crete and southern Aegean Islands. *International Port*: From a non-EU international port to an international port in the EU as a stowaway on a commercial or passenger ship. The only international ports covered by the Database that are not on one of the other routes described here are Valencia (Spain), and Naples and Ancona (Italy). *Western Mediterranean (land)*: From Morocco to the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla (Spain). *Western Mediterranean (sea)*: From Morocco and Algeria to the Spanish peninsula (Andalucia, Murcia and Valencia Community), Gibraltar (UK) and the Balearic Islands (Spain).	3188	100%
Date_death_registered	Deaths are registered when a death certificate is entered into a death registry. All death certificates provide space for the formal date of registration. Where only a year was provided, the date has been written as 1/1/YEAR. There are 3 cases from Spain for which death certificates have been issued without a date of registration (see publications on www.borderdeaths.org for further information about registration problems).	2259	70.9%
Where_death_registered	Administrative jurisdiction in which the death certificate is issued and archived in the death registry, usually a municipality.	2263	71.0%

Variable	*Description*	*Number of cases (N=3188)*	*% of all cases*
Date_of_inquest/investigation	Investigations take place over time, but there is often a date on which a formal decision (e.g. case has gone cold) or judicial declaration (e.g. no criminal element to the death) is made. Therefore, what the date represents varies by country. No special effort made to collect this data; provided only if readily available in source documents. Where only a year was provided, the date has been written as 1/1/YEAR.	172	5.4%
Judicial_authority	Discovery of a dead body or an unnatural death triggers the responsibility of a judicial authority. As a general rule, in Italy and Greece, the judicial authority that presides over such cases is a public prosecutor; in Malta, a magistrate; in Gibraltar, the Coroner's Court; and in Spain, a court of first instance or justice of the peace. As it is the responsibility of the judicial authority in question to declare the death of a discovered dead body or to release the body of a person who died an unnatural death from criminal proceedings, this information is often found in the death certificate (with the exception of Greece). Translated but written as stated in documents.	2312	72.5%
Date_of_medical_examination	Mostly available for cases recorded in Malta, Lampedusa (Italy) and the Evros region (Greece) because data was collected from pathologists as well as registries for these jurisdictions. Relatively common for this information to be recorded in death certificates in Greece. No special effort made to collect this data; provided only if readily available in source documents. Where only a year was provided, the date has been written as 1/1/YEAR.	1011	31.7%
Forensic_medical_institute	All dead bodies being investigated by a judicial authority in Greece, Spain, Malta and Gibraltar should undergo external and internal medical examinations. In Italy, only external medical examinations are uniformly done. The examination can be conducted by (or under the supervision of) any licensed doctor, but are usually done (where such facilities exist) by a team of specialised pathologists and forensic experts in a legal or forensic medical institute. Such institutes are found in cities and most provinces. All names of doctors were excluded, leaving only their qualification or affiliation.	1255	39.4%

Variable	***Description***	***Number of cases (N=3188)***	***% of all cases***
Identification_status	*Identified* or *unidentified*, based on whether the identity of the person was known from any of the source documents. If only a "possible" identity or a first name was provided, then counted as *unidentified*. If a deceased person is identified after a death certificate has been issued, the judicial authority should order a formal amendment to the death certificate or the cancellation of the original death certificate and a new registration of the death. If the body will be retrieved for repatriation, this is absolutely necessary as it cannot leave the country without an accurate death certificate. It is possible that bodies have been identified since the research was conducted, but the number is likely to be low if there have been any at all.	3188	100%
Details_of_identification	Identification of a body can be made in different ways (recognition by a living person, fingerprints, DNA). This information is rarely provided in the source documents. If a "possible identity" or first name was provided in the source documents, that information is recorded here.	124	3.9%
Date_burial_authorised	It is not possible to bury a body without a burial permit/authorisation. This is issued by the police or by the judicial authority responsible. It is not the same as the date of burial, although it is possible that the burial is done the same day as the permit is issued.	148	4.6%
Date_buried	This information is recorded in cemetery registers and in some death certificates. However, with death certificates it is possible that the date provided is the date of the burial authorisation (which is often among the documents provided when requesting a death certificate). Where only a year was provided, the date has been written as 1/1/YEAR.	462	14.5%

Variable	***Description***	***Number of cases (N=3188)***	***% of all cases***
Where buried	Where known: place, country (cemetery). Aims to report the final resting place of the body, according to the source documents. Unclaimed and unidentified bodies are usually buried in a cemetery nearby where they were found or their death investigated. In places that have witnessed many border deaths, bodies may be buried in neighbouring provinces. If the place of burial is stated as another country, this body was claimed by family and repatriated to their location for burial. Information most commonly provided in death certificates in Spain. In Malta and parts of Sicily (Italy), data collection included cemeteries. Arabic place names are reproduced as written in source documents. In a few cases the death certificate reported that the body was repatriated but did not specify where to.	1487	46.6%
Label(s)_used_in_administration	Unidentified bodies are often given an identifying number or description in order to distinguish their case from others. This number should be the same on all documentation and be traceable to their grave if they remain unidentified, or be replaced with their name if identified. Where contradictory labels are provided (e.g. different identifying numbers) this is because different authorities allocated different labels or because there was a mistake on some source documentation.	2093	65.7%
Sex	*Male* or *female*. As stated in the source documents, either in the provided space for sex or in the label used to describe the unidentified body. On occasion the sex was a guess ("possibly" or "probably"). If this guess was reported in the death certificate only, the data was excluded. If this guess was reported in several source documents or by the pathologist, then it was included as the sex. There was only one case found (in Malta) in which there was contradictory information about the sex in the source documents; in this case, the sex reported by the pathologist was assumed to be the correct one.	2697	84.6%
Age	In years. As stated in the source documents, or calculated from the date of birth and date of death or date found. Value *0* provided for babies under the age of 1.	958	30.1%
Estimated_age	In years. If stated in the source documents as a range of years or *young*, or if age was stated for an unidentified body. Value *0* provided for babies under the age of 1.	1207	37.9%

Variable	***Description***	***Number of cases (N=3188)***	***% of all cases***
Stated_nationality	Only if stated as the confirmed nationality in the source documents.	915	28.7%
Place_of_birth	Country only. As stated in source documents.	269	8.4%
Place_of_last_known_residence	Country only. As stated in source documents or learned from last known address stated in source documents.	168	5.3%
Guessed_nationality	If nationality described in the source documents as "probably", "possibly", "presumably", "originally from" or similar, or if nationality stated for an unidentified body.	137	4.3%
Descriptions_of_race/ethnicity	Descriptions of migrant bodies, in particular unidentified bodies, are strongly racialized in many source documents. This information has been included in the Database because it may give some indication of the region of origin of the deceased person, and because it sheds light on the culture and accuracy of assumptions of local authorities dealing with migrant bodies along the southern EU external borders.	850	26.7%
Personal_items	What items were found on or with the body, usually recorded during the medical examination. Descriptions of the items (e.g. colour, patterns) not included as not commonly found in source documents.	182	5.7%
Features	Tattoos, scars, hair type and colour and other features that could be used to identify the body. Details such as the design of a tattoo not included for anonymity reasons. If the woman was pregnant, information about this pregnancy and the fetus are included here.	678	21.3%
Day_died	Can be a number between 1 and 31, or can be a range or otherwise indicate a part of the month (e.g. *around…*, *beginning*, *Friday*), as found in the source documents. Sometimes date of death is more likely to be the date the body was found, but data entry followed what was written in the documents.	2298	72.1%
Month_died	Can be a number between 1 and 12, or can be a range. If documents stated explicitly date found and how long dead, then calculated month and/or year of death. Sometimes date of death is more likely to be the date the body was found, but data entry followed what was written in the documents.	2658	83.4%

Variable	*Description*	*Number of cases (N=3188)*	*% of all cases*
Year_died	Range of years given in a very few cases because that was all that was provided in the source documents. Year can precede 1990 if body was found and registered in 1990 or later. Year cannot be later than 2013. If documents stated explicitly date found and how long dead, then calculated month/year of death. Sometimes date of death is in fact date found, but data entry followed what was written in the documents.	2703	84.8%
Location_of_death	Simplified and standardised format and phrasing, but kept variations that could reflect local knowledge of area. Ordered according to the specificity of the information, from most to least specific (e.g. GPS coordinates, beach/river/cliff/sea, then town, then region). Followed what was written in the source documents to determine whether the location mentioned was the location of death or where the body had been found. Boat names are in italics. Abbreviations of distance units: n.mi. = nautical miles, mi. = miles, m = meters, km = kilometres. Directions abbreviated to N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW, unless part of a name of a place.	1807	56.7%
Day_found	Day the body was discovered and, usually, recovered. Can be a number between 1 and 31, or can be a range.	1502	47.1%
Month_found	Month the body was recovered. Can be a number between 1 and 12, or can be a range.	1522	47.7%
Year_found	Year the body was recovered. Range given in only one case because different in source documents. Year can be between 1990 and 2014 (if deceased estimated to have died in 2013).	1534	48.1%
Where_found	Simplified and standardised format and phrasing, but kept variations that could reflect local knowledge of area. Ordered according to the specificity of the information, from most to least specific (e.g. GPS coordinates, beach/river/cliff/sea, then town, then region). Followed what was written in the source documents to determine whether the location mentioned was the location of death or where the body had been found. Boat names are in italics. Abbreviations of distance units: n.mi. = nautical miles, mi. = miles, m = meters, km = kilometres. Directions abbreviated to N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW, unless part of a name of a place.	1578	49.5%

Variable	*Description*	*Number of cases (N=3188)*	*% of all cases*
Circumstances	Descriptions of how the body was found and retrieved. Explicit details about the condition of the body when found have been removed out of respect for the deceased. Boat names are in italics.	535	16.8%
How_long_dead	Usually estimated by a doctor during the medical examination, which can take place anytime from a few hours to a couple of weeks after the body is found, depending on the circumstances, the number of fatalities and the facilities and resources available.	988	31.0%
Incident_number	An incident is defined here as an event resulting in more than one fatality recorded in the Database (and possibly many more missing or retrieved elsewhere). Cases were grouped into incidents based on the information known about each individual case as well as about the incident itself. Each incident is named after the region and given a number merely to distinguish it from others in that region. The symbol * indicates that this case is only possibly part of an incident.	1851	58.1%
Details_of_incident	What kind of incident it was (usually a shipwreck) and any details provided in source documents regarding the incident in which the person died. Boat names are in italics.	891	27.9%
Primary_cause	Medical cause of death reported in source documents. Some medical causes grouped to overcome regional and country differences in terminology and improve clarity and useability. Most common terms in source documents used as standard (e.g. myocardial infarction standardised to heart attack). Only one cause of death listed as <Primary_cause>. Where blank no cause of death was found in source documents. Where source documents gave contradicting causes of death, then the cause found in the death certificate is listed as <Primary_cause>, and the cause found in other documents (e.g. autopsy report/cadaver inspection) is listed as <Secondary_cause>.	2352	73.8%
Secondary_cause	See Description of <Primary_cause>. Uncertain causes of death (“presumed” or “possible” according to source documents) all listed under <Secondary_cause>. If more than two causes of death in source documents, then additional causes listed under <Secondary_cause>.	436	13.7%

Variable	***Description***	***Number of cases (N=3188)***	***% of all cases***
Other_information	Basic information about decomposition of the body, judicial determinations about the death (e.g. violent/non-violent, accidental, investigation ongoing, awaiting lab results) and details from autopsy relating to non-fatal injuries or absence of injuries.	326	10.2%
Death_certificate	If *yes*, this source was used to provide or corroborate the information on this case. If blank, this source was not obtained during data collection for this case.	2263	71.0%
Cemetery_register	If *yes*, this source was used to provide or corroborate the information on this case. If blank, this source was not obtained during data collection for this case.	218	6.8%
Coroner_archive	If *yes*, this source was used to provide or corroborate the information on this case. If blank, this source was not obtained during data collection for this case.	460	14.4%
Other_documents	If *yes*, this source was used to provide or corroborate the information on this case. If blank, this source was not obtained during data collection for this case.	1603	50.3%

Variable	*Description*	*Number of cases (N=3188)*	*% of all cases*
Certainty	Each case is ascribed a certainty level according to the following criteria: Confirmed cases (*certainty level 1*) include: cases confirmed to be border deaths in the documents or by the local authorities involved; cases in an incident we found involving more than two deceased persons, with nothing to suggest that it is not a border death; and cases matched with an incident recorded in UNITED's List of Deaths or the Fortress Europe blog. Likely cases (*certainty level 2*) include cases in which (a) the nationality/race is associated with irregular migration in that region and/or the age is between 18-40 years; (b) the place of death is appropriate for a border death (including vague places strongly associated with border deaths, such as simply "Tarifa"); and (c) the cause of death is common for border deaths. Drowning, hypothermia, suffocation, dehydration, starvation are common causes of death for migrants at sea borders, while hypothermia, suffocation, dehydration, starvation, vehicle accidents near border-crossing points and violent deaths are common causes of death for migrants at land borders. In Italy the cause of death was rarely recorded in death certificates, so in Italian cases for the purpose of establishing certainty the cause of death was assumed to be drowning if the body was found in the sea. Possible cases (*certainty level 3*) include: cases that fit some of the criteria of likely cases but some vital information is missing, unusual or vague; Spanish cases that met the criteria of likely cases but were not investigated by a judicial body and the place of death is not a hospital; cases in which only the place of death is known and the place is at sea/on a beach/very close to a land border, and there were no details to suggest that it is not a border death; cases in which the place of death is a hospital, the nationality or presumed ethnicity/race is associated with irregular migration in that region, and the date of death is less than a month after an incident recorded in UNITED's List of Deaths or the Fortress Europe blog in the same geographical area as the hospital; and cases of unidentified persons with insufficient or no information to determine whether it is a border death or not.	3188	100%