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European Union



EMN Quarterly

Period: January-March 2023

Edition: N.42

The EMN Quarterly provides policymakers and other practitioners with updates on recent migration and international protection policy developments at EU and national level. The 42nd edition provides information from **January-March 2023**, including the (latest) relevant published statistics.

The Quarterly is organised by policy theme. You can directly access your area of interest by clicking on one of the following themes:

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SPECIAL NOTE

Recent EMN publications:

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- EMN inform on [Prospects of displaced populations in non-EU first reception and transit countries](#)
- EMN inform on [Accompanied children's right to be heard in international protection procedures](#)
- EMN inform on [Displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation](#)
- EMN inform on [Statelessness in the European Union, Norway and Georgia](#)
- EMN inform on [Resettlement, humanitarian admissions and community sponsorship](#)

Stay tuned for upcoming EMN publications:

- EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (ARM), Statistical Annex and Country Factsheets
- EMN study on the Integration of international protection applicants in the labour market
- EMN inform on the Analysis of irregular migratory routes to the EU

TEMPORARY PROTECTION DIRECTIVE**EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATE**

During the reporting period, the [EU Talent Pool Pilot](#), the first EU-wide labour platform and matching tool, continued. The pilot was launched in October 2022 to respond to the challenge of facilitating access to the EU labour market for beneficiaries of temporary protection fleeing the war in Ukraine. The European Commission aims to launch the full EU Talent Pool and its web portal by mid-2023, making it permanent and open to eligible jobseekers who are nationals of non-EU countries interested in living and working in the EU.

On 28 February 2023, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) presented its findings from its [survey on experiences of displaced people fleeing the war in Ukraine](#) to the EMN. In March, the European Commission published consolidated [information on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive](#) (TPD) that had taken place over the year, and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published [a year in review on the TPD](#) to cover how crisis measures had resulted in legislative and policy changes.

In February 2023, FRA also released information on [local initiatives to host people fleeing the war in Ukraine](#) to understand how cities had reacted. The cities covered are Barcelona, Budapest, Cologne, Ghent, Gdansk, Lund, Nuremberg, Salzburg, Utrecht and Vienna from February to July 2022.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Austria: On 6 February 2023, an [amendment to the Regulation on Displaced Persons](#) entered into force extending the right to temporary residence for displaced persons from Ukraine until 4 March 2024.

Croatia: On 1 March 2023, the implementation of the EU4HEALTH project “Provision of quality and timely psychological first aid to people affected by Ukraine crisis in impacted countries” started. One of the key objectives is to provide Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to people affected by the conflict in Ukraine, who are accommodated in Croatia.

On 22 March 2023 [the decision on financing costs for housing care of displaced persons from Ukraine in individual accommodation was passed](#). This amendment made it possible to extend the lease of residential units until 4 March 2024 at the latest, in accordance with the extended status of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine.

Cyprus: On 8 February 2023, the Council of Ministers [decided](#) to automatically extend the period of temporary protection for displaced beneficiaries from Ukraine until 4 March 2024. The beneficiaries of temporary protection will not need to renew their residence permit, which will also be renewed automatically.

On 8 February 2023, the Council of Ministers [decided](#) to limit housing support for beneficiaries of temporary protection in dedicated hotels to a maximum of 6 months. This change will apply to all beneficiaries, who had completed 6 months in a hotel as of on 31 May 2023 and onwards.

Czech Republic: On 22 March 2023, the government of the Czech Republic [adopted amendments to various government regulations relating to temporary protection](#) offered to people fleeing Ukraine. The new amendments, for example, extend the activities of the Czech embassy in Ukraine, clarify current visa policy towards Russian and Belarussian citizens, bring changes into the organization of

accommodation and financial support of beneficiaries of temporary protection or bring changes into the organisation of registration centres.

Estonia: On 13 January 2023, Estonian and Finnish ministries of the interior [reached an agreement](#) whereby Finland would receive up to 100 Ukrainians displaced by war per week, if they express their wish to go. In Finland, Ukrainians displaced by the war will be able to apply for temporary protection and are guaranteed the relevant support services.

Finland: On 19 January 2023, a study was published which [reviewed the future plans of Ukrainians who had fled to Finland](#). The review is based on statistical data and qualitative interview data. The review notes that it is still difficult to predict the future plans of Ukrainians in Finland. However, it is clear that Ukrainians will continue to be an important immigrant group in Finland regardless of when and how the war ends.

On 2 March 2023, the Government [announced that thousands of people who have fled Ukraine will become eligible for a municipality of residence](#) in March 2023 after residing in Finland for one year. Applying for a municipality of residence is voluntary. Upon securing a municipality of residence, beneficiaries of temporary protection will fall within the scope of services provided by municipalities and wellbeing services provided by counties, as opposed to reception services.

Greece: On 8 February 2023, the Decision of the Minister of Migration and Asylum [extended the validity of the temporary protection status](#) for displaced persons from Ukraine in Greece. The extension as defined by the ministerial decision has a duration of six months starting on 4 March 2023, to 4 September 2023, with the possibility of an automatic extension for another six months, i.e., from 4 September 2023 to 4 March 2024.

Ireland: The Minister for Justice has [extended immigration permissions and residence permits for all beneficiaries of Temporary Protection](#) to 4 March 2024. As of 16 February 2023, persons living in Ireland with a Temporary Protection Certificate, will not need to apply for a new certificate. Expired certificates may be used as proof of entitlement to re-enter the country until 4 March 2024.

Italy: On 2 March 2023, [urgent temporary protection provisions were issued for people coming from Ukraine](#). The provision establishes an extension of assistance and reception measures until 31 December 2023. Provision has been made for the following activities: distributed reception; subsistence for the assistance of people under temporary protection who have found independent accommodation; social services offered by host municipalities. Furthermore, the duration of residency permits for temporary protection was extended to 31 December 2023.

On 2 March 2023, through the National Emergency Fund, or municipalities that are hosting foreign unaccompanied minors from Ukraine in the structures/facilities identified in the provision, increased from € 60 to € 100 per person per day.

On 2 March 2023, due to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services extended projects due to end in March until December 2023.

Luxembourg: Temporary Protection [was prolonged](#) to 4 March 2024. In view of this prolongation, the certificates issued to beneficiaries of temporary protection to testify their status, initially limited until 3 March 2023, must be renewed. All beneficiaries have been contacted by post, to inform them of the procedure to be followed.

The Netherlands: On 10 February 2023, the Minister for Migration [announced](#) that the time period during which eligible non-Ukrainian third-country nationals can apply for financial remigration assistance had been extended until 4 March 2023. As of 1 January 2023, the maximum remigration budget was lowered from € 5 000 to € 2 000 per person applying.

On 17 February 2023, the Minister for Migration [announced](#) that the financial arrangement for the reception of displaced persons from Ukraine would be continued up to and including 31 December

2023 for municipalities. The national government reimburses municipality reception costs on the basis of a ministerial regulation (*Bekostigingsregeling opvang ontheemden Oekraïne* - BooO). This measure ensures the continuity of funding for municipalities.

On 22 February 2023, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment [announced](#) that Dutch municipalities would receive € 15 million in total to offer Dutch language lessons to displaced persons from Ukraine in an accessible way. The goal is for municipalities to develop a language course that displaced persons from Ukraine can follow voluntarily. This will help them find a job at their own level, foster contacts with Dutch people and ensure that Ukrainian children can follow Dutch education.

On 4 March 2023, the six-month extension of the period during which non-Ukrainian third-country nationals in the Netherlands will still be covered by the European Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) [goes into effect](#). This concerns 4,660 persons. Eligible third-country nationals who want to stay in the Netherlands after temporary protection will need to go through the asylum process.

Poland: On 23 January 2023, the President of the Republic of Poland signed the Act of 13 January 2023 [amending the Act on assistance to Ukrainian citizens](#) in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of this state and certain other acts. The amendment provides for the introduction of partial co-financing of the costs of stay and meals in collective accommodation centres for citizens of Ukraine. There are a number of exceptions to this rule.

Moreover, [the Act provides](#) for the introduction of solutions to prevent citizens of Ukraine benefiting from temporary protection in Poland from enjoying temporary protection in another EU Member State. In addition, the Act introduces solutions for the loss of temporary protection in Poland in the event of obtaining it in another EU Member State.

On 9 March 2023 another amendment on assistance to Ukrainians was passed. It provides for the possibility for a Ukrainian citizen to include a minor who is under their parental authority in their electronic document (dtaa.pl). The new regulations will come into force on the date that specified by the Minister of Digitalisation in the Official Journal of the Republic of Poland "Monitor Polski".

Portugal: On 13 March 2023, the [Resolution of the Council of Ministers 22-D/2023](#) was published, extending the validity of the temporary protection permits granted under [Resolution of the Council of Ministers 29-A/2022](#), of 1 March, for six months, renewable for another six months.

Slovak Republic: Effective from 17 February 2023, Government Regulation No. 43/2023 [extends the payment of the allowance](#) to eligible persons (individual and legal entities – non-business entities in the accommodation sector) for the accommodation of temporary protection holders until 31 May 2023.

UNHCR [introduced the 2023 Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation](#) in the Slovak Republic, elaborated with 28 partner organizations. The Action Plan covers five main situations, from the protection of vulnerable groups, through to health care, education, social inclusion and basic needs, defining and clarifying the competences of the different organizations involved in the aid process.

Slovenia : On 4 March 2023, [Temporary Protection was automatically extended for displaced persons from Ukraine](#) until 4 March 2024, [in line with the decision of the European Commission](#). A new card, which will replace the current card, will be automatically issued to persons with temporary protection status, with validity until that date.

Sweden: On 14 March 2023, the Ministry of Justice [announced that a survey will be conducted](#) to learn more about Ukrainian Citizens' ability to enter the Swedish labour market. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the challenges Ukrainians face in Sweden. The Minister for Migration, Maria

Malmer Stenergard, explained that the International Organization for Migration will conduct the survey as the organization has carried out similar studies in other European countries.

Moldova: On 18 January 2023, the government published Government Decision No. 21, which [grants temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine](#). The implementation of the decision started on 1 March 2023. The Temporary Protection status will provide displaced people from Ukraine with a stable legal status in Moldova for up to one year, as well as access to education, health and labour rights and services without having to apply for asylum. Implementing the Temporary Protection Decision is bringing Moldova closer to European standards of providing international protection while ensuring access to basic rights and good governance.

Montenegro: On 15 February 2023 the Government of Montenegro [adopted the Decision on Amendments to the Decision on Granting Temporary Protection to Persons from Ukraine](#), in order to extend temporary protection to persons from Ukraine for another year until 11 March 2024.

During the reporting period, 643 requests for temporary protection were received. The total number of requests received since the beginning of the crisis is now 8 357. Based on the above-mentioned Amendments to the Decision on Granting Temporary Protection to Persons from Ukraine, by 31 March 2023 temporary protection status had been extended for 4 241 persons from Ukraine. Whilst the majority of persons from Ukraine who applied for temporary protection in Montenegro are from vulnerable categories (women and children), there were no unaccompanied minors from Ukraine. Any requests for approval of temporary protection on behalf of minors since temporary protection was activated have been submitted by their legal representatives (parents or guardians).

1. GENERAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATE

On 10 January 2023, Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, and Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit held the first meeting of the [Labour Migration Platform](#) with Member States' representatives from migration and employment sectors as well as European Social and Economic Partners. The platform was created to discuss labour market challenges, exchange best practices on labour migration, and contribute to filling labour and skills shortages in the EU.

On 16 March 2023, [Serbia became an Observer Country to the EMN](#).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Austria: On 7 January 2023, an [amendment to the COVID-19 Entry Regulation](#) entered into force adopting measures concerning the entry and transport to the Austrian federal territory from States and territories with high epidemiological risk which are recorded in a newly introduced Annex 2. On 1 March 2023, a [further amendment to the COVID-19 Entry Regulation](#) entered into force removing the People's Republic of China from Annex 2 resulting in no State or territory being recorded there.

On 25 January 2023, an extension of the validity period of the Regulation of the Federal Minister of the Interior on the temporary re-introduction of border controls at the internal borders with the Slovak Republic until 5 February 2023 was [promulgated](#) in the Federal Law Gazette. As of 6 February 2023, the border controls with the Slovak Republic were [replaced by mobile border area controls](#).

On 4 February 2023, an [amendment to the Tuition Fee Regulation](#) entered into force exempting students with Ukrainian and Iranian citizenship from the tuition fee for the summer semester 2023.

Belgium: On 9 March 2023 the Council of Ministers approved a first package of [reform measures](#) by the Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration. These measures stipulate e.g. that reception places will be allocated to those in an ongoing asylum procedure, cooperation on return will be enshrined in law, abuses in family reunification will be combatted, and that a solution will be offered to vulnerable persons in specific situations such as statelessness.

Croatia: On 24 March 2023, the [Act on Amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection](#) was published in the Official Gazette. The amendments standardise the interpretation of the provisions of the current Act. The provisions relating to temporary protection were aligned with other legislative changes that regulate the rights accompanied by a temporary protection status. The implementation of the international protection procedure were also improved and certain rights of applicants and international protection beneficiaries were refined. For example, applicants for international protection can now acquire the right to work after three months of lodging their application (where it was previously nine months). The Act entered into force on 1 April 2023.

As of 26 March 2022, international airports in Croatia [start with the full application of the Schengen acquis](#). Passengers on internal flights, i.e. flights within the Schengen area, will no longer be subject to border control.

Finland: On 23 January and 16 March 2023, [two studies commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior were published](#). The first one gave recommendations supporting comprehensive reform of the Aliens Act. The second study looked at the organisation of migration administration in Finland. It proposed a comprehensive migration policy programme to be drawn up, and a body consisting of senior officials from the relevant ministries to be established to monitor it.

On 8 March 2023, [a final report of Immigration Dialogues was published](#). Immigration Dialogues were a series of discussions coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. The dialogues were held following the Timeout method for constructive societal dialogue. They brought nearly 700 people together to talk about immigration. Integration and challenges in finding a job were highlighted in the discussions.

Greece: On 23-24 February 2023, [the 2nd European Conference on Border Management](#) took place in Athens with co-host countries Austria, Greece, Lithuania and Poland. Representatives of EU Member States' governments, heads of European institutions and other organisations attended the event. The Conference addressed issues related to capabilities, tools and measures to enhance efforts in tackling current challenges and preventing future crises. At the end of the proceedings, a Joint Declaration of Conclusions was signed by a total of 15 participating members.

Ireland: On 27 March 2023, Immigration Service Delivery [announced a bridging immigration permission to allow English Language course students](#), who have successfully completed a 2nd or 3rd course and subsequently enrolled in a Higher Education Programme commencing by end of October 2023, to remain in the state to begin the Higher Education Programme.

Italy: On 2 January 2023, new urgent provisions were adopted for the management of migration flows, regarding the transit and the stopover on territorial waters of non-governmental ships involved in sea-rescue operations. The provision foresees the possibility for the Government to limit or forbid the transit and the stopover of ships in territorial seas. A new administrative penal sanction has been adopted, for cases of non-compliance with the provision under specific existing conditions.

On 10 March 2023 a new immigration decree was adopted. It introduces new urgent measures regarding legal entry flows of foreign workers by simplifying certain stages of the entry procedure. The second part of the provision on the permit for special protection (national protection) has been repealed, while the prohibition on *refoulement* remains in force, the reference to the protection of the private and family life of the foreign citizen has been repealed and the reference to

integration on the national territory was removed. The decree has come into force, but it is awaiting conversion into law and may, therefore, still be amended.

Lithuania: On 25 January 2023, the Government [allocated](#) an additional € 38 million to finance the educational needs of Ukrainian nationals. The funds will reach preschool, general education, and higher education institutions.

On 25 January 2023, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour [reported](#) that almost half (approximately 22 000) of Ukrainian nationals who are of working age and currently reside in Lithuania have found employment. By the end of 2022, Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania paid € 40 million in taxes to the state budget.

On 1 February 2023, the Government [approved the proposal](#) of the Ministry of Interior to speed up the process of 'losing' citizenship of the Lithuanian Republic for persons who have received citizenship from another country.

Poland: The Regulation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 18 August 2022 on the issuance of national visas to foreigners residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland established the possibility of accepting visa applications on the territory of Poland from citizens of Ukraine and Belarus. Legal provisions allowing Belarusian and Ukrainian nationals to apply for national visas within the territory of Poland are of an extraordinary and ad interim nature and were introduced after consultation with the Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration.

The solution applies to citizens of Ukraine and Belarus in the absence of Polish consular offices serving these citizens in their countries of origin and to foreigners in a situation where they have not started proceedings to legalise their stay in Poland or the proceedings have not yet ended.

The abovementioned visas can be issued by the Visa Decision Centre created within the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The operation of the Visa Decision Centre has been extended until 31 March 2023.

Portugal: On 13 March 2023, with a view to fulfilling the provisions of the [Portuguese Speaking Countries' Community \(CPLP\) Mobility Agreement](#) and the Foreigners' Act, a portal was made available to all Portuguese Speaking Countries' nationals.

This portal allows CPLP nationals coming to Portugal from countries with a CPLP residence visa or those who are already in the national territory with legal entry, to request their residence permit, immediately receiving a certificate of residence permit under the Mobility Agreement, in A4 format, which is sent electronically, and is valid for one year.

During this one-year period, the appropriate renewal procedure can be considered and decided upon, either by issuing a vignette or a physical card.

This solution allows for the quick implementation of the legal stipulations, and is also advantageous from the point of view of production and issuing costs. At the same time, the document will include an identification QR code, which will allow for the required authenticity checks.

The procedure for granting the residence permit certificates rests on automatic security searches as well as manual verification of the documentation presented by the applicants, thus guaranteeing compliance with legal requirements.

Taking into account the inherent situation of vulnerability, the verification of parenthood or parental responsibility for the purposes of granting this permit to underage citizens, is carried out in person, at one of the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF)'s attendance sites.

As of 5 April 2023, 110 440 CPLP Residence Permit applications had been registered and 85 014 Residence Permit Certificates had been issued.

Georgia: On 23 March 2023, the Parliament of Georgia [adopted](#) the Human Rights [Strategy](#) of Georgia for 2022-2030. The main purpose of the Strategy is to further strengthen the systemic guarantees of protection of human rights and freedoms in Georgia. One of the goals of the Strategy is to ensure continuous protection of the human rights of asylum seekers and persons granted international protection, as well as stateless persons, migrants, eco-migrants and returnees.

On 25 March 2023, line ministries, members of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) – Ministry of Justice ([MoJ](#)), Ministry of Internal Affairs ([MIA](#)) and Ministry of internally displaced people (IDPs) from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs ([MoH](#)) hosted the German Federal Government's Special Commissioner for Migration Agreements – Dr. Joachim Stamp. During the meetings with the respective ministers, issues related to the visa free travel of Georgian citizens to the EU / Schengen area, initiatives for the promotion of legal migration and protection of the rights of Georgian migrants in Germany were discussed. The successful cooperation between Georgia and Germany in the field of return and readmission was underlined.

On 27 February 2023, a [Migration Project Coordination Meeting \(PCM\)](#) was held in Tbilisi, gathering the member agencies of the SCMI, all partner donor / international organisations and local NGOs active in the field of migration. The aim of the meeting was to share information on ongoing migration projects, and other relevant activities. As a follow-up, the SCMI secretariat updated the project coordination matrix available on the [SCMI website](#).

On 23 March 2023, the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) [started preparatory work for the 2024 Population Census](#). The first phase of the work is being carried out in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kvemo Kartli regions and aims to compile lists of existing buildings and households in five municipalities on tablets.

Moldova: On 11 January 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Moldova approved [Government Decision No. 16](#) regarding the "organisation and operation of the General Inspectorate for Migration." As part of this decision, the Bureau for Migration and Asylum (BMA) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs will now be called the General Inspectorate for Migration (GIM). This plan also includes structural changes necessary for the effective performance of the Inspectorate. It aims to increase access to information, consultation, and documentation services for foreigners and applicants (individuals and legal entities from the Republic of Moldova) throughout the country by establishing territorial offices in the north, centre, and south of the country. Additionally, it will strengthen capacities for the legalisation and documentation of displaced persons from Ukraine, enhance the capacity to respond effectively to challenges and threats, and maintain control over the migration situation. Finally, the plan aims to prompt the operationalisation of monitoring the stay of foreigners in the country. [A press release on the changes was also published](#).



2. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 1 February 2023, [the EUAA published four scenarios for asylum-related migration to Europe in 2032](#). The aim of the project is to support policy makers on strategic planning for future challenges in international protection and to agree on the Common European Asylum System by February 2024.

On 28 March 2023, the European Parliament voted on new rules for checks at EU borders and updated its negotiating mandate on asylum procedures. Since, the European Parliament has voted on [four](#)

Judgment of the European Court of Justice [Joined Cases C-323/21, C-324/21 et C-325/21](#)

On 12 January 2023, the CJEU gave a preliminary ruling stating that, when the deadline for a take back request to the initial EU Member State has expired, the second EU Member State who issued the take back request becomes responsible to process the request for international protection. The ruling supports the interpretation of transfer periods defined in the [Dublin Regulation III](#).

[reform mandates](#) regarding the screening of third-country nationals, asylum and migration management, crisis situations, and the long-term resident directive. new rules for checks at EU borders and updated its negotiating mandate on asylum procedures. Since then, the European Parliament has voted on [four reform mandates](#) regarding the screening of third-country nationals, asylum and migration management, crisis situations, and the Long-term Residents Directive.

On 29-30 March 2023, the EUAA and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration of the German Land of Hessen held a joint high-level event for Senior Officials entitled '[Challenges and perspectives on reception](#),' to discuss reception challenges in Europe and how to increase efficiency between asylum and reception authorities.

The EUAA also released updated country guidance for [Syria](#) and [Afghanistan](#).

LATEST RELEVANT STATISTICS

In March 2023, [Eurostat published its annual asylum statistics](#), reporting that in 2022 881 220 first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the EU, showing an increase of 64% compared with the previous year. First-time asylum applicants in the EU in 2022 were at their highest since peaks seen in 2015 and 2016. [Asylum decisions went up by 40%](#) compared to 2021. Syrian, Afghan, Venezuelan and Turkish were the main citizens applying for first-time asylum; Germany, France, Spain, and Austria were the main countries of destination for first-time asylum applicants. More detailed information on 2022 can be found in the Eurostat [Statistics Explained article](#).

[In February 2023, there were more than 76 000 first-time applicants for international protection](#), mostly from Syria (9 885), Afghanistan (9 310), Colombia (5 160), and Venezuela (5 115). This was a 41% increase on 2022. More detailed and recent information can be found in the [Statistics Explained article](#).

By 31 March 2023, there were [3.9 million people with temporary protection status](#) in the EU; Eurostat's [Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine - monthly statistics](#) provides an overview of how many beneficiaries of temporary protection are hosted in each country. More detailed and recent information can be found in the [Statistics Explained article](#).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Austria: On 23 March 2023, a new [federal law](#) concerning the temporary reimbursement of costs by the federal government to the provinces for financial expenses as compensation for inflation in the context of basic services entered into force. The law governs the temporary reimbursement of costs from 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023 for accommodation and meals in organised accommodation facilities, for rent subsidies in individual accommodation and for accommodation, meals and care of unaccompanied minors in organised accommodation facilities.

Bulgaria: Bulgaria participates in the voluntary relocation mechanism from the MED 5 countries (Cyprus, Malta, Greece, Italy and Spain) as it has declared its willingness to receive 179 applicants for international protection. On 13 March 2023, the first group of 23 Syrians arrived in Bulgaria. They have been accommodated in a Registration and Reception Centre of the State Agency for Refugees and are to go through an international protection procedure under the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Croatia: On 28 February 2023, Croatia accepted the transfer of 10 persons from Italy, as part of the voluntary programme of solidarity with EU Member States under great migration pressure.

An online brochure was created as part of the project "Legal consultation in the international protection approval procedure 2021." It features the international protection approval procedure in the Republic of Croatia and explains how to exercise rights as applicants for international

protection in practice. The application is called "The international protection approval procedure in the Republic of Croatia – legal advice for searchers," abbreviated to ["RHprotection."](#)

On 13-14 March 2023, as part of the 2023 police training plan, a seminar on "Taking fingerprints at Eurodac workstations" was held in Valbandon. That seminar is the first of a total of four planned for 2023, organised by the Border Administration.

Cyprus: On 30 March 2023, 76 applicants for international protection from Syria and Afghanistan were transferred to France under the voluntary relocation mechanism, with the cooperation of the Asylum Service of the Ministry of the Interior, the French Authorities, IOM and EUAA. The 76 applicants were added to the 210 applicants already transferred to Germany, Bulgaria and Romania as of the end of March 2023, under the Solidarity Declaration.

On 22 February 2023 the Minister of Interior [issued](#) a decision based on Article 90(1) of the Refugees Law, which extended the period from the date when the application for international protection is lodged until the applicant has access to the labour market, from one month to nine months. The decision will come into force on 1 August 2023.

On 8 February 2023, the Council of Ministers [decided](#) to develop improvement projects with a total cost of € 25 million at the Pournara First Reception Centre. The upgrade consists of replacing all the tents with residential units and will be partially financed by IOM. Furthermore, improvement works have started in the center that concern the sanitary areas, the hospitality areas, and the security areas.

On 1 March 2023, the EUAA donated 70 reception units to the Cypriot Asylum Service in order to upgrade the Kofinou Accommodation Centre. The two-million investment will help increase the centre's capacity as well as improve the living conditions for applicants.

France: On 14 February 2023, the National Court of the Right of Asylum, in a [decision based on recent analyses](#) by the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA), considered that twelve of the thirty-four provinces of Afghanistan, including Kabul, were in a situation of indiscriminate violence against civilians, resulting from armed conflict. As a result, international protection may be granted to potential victims where there is an increased risk of being exposed to the consequences of such indiscriminate violence upon return to their country, such as in a situation of disability or a specific professional activity.

Germany: On 31 January 2023, [a federal funding programme was launched](#) with the aim of making asylum procedural counselling independent of the authorities. € 20 million are available for this purpose in 2023. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) published a call for funding directed at welfare associations and other civil society organisations to apply for funds. The counselling is also intended to help better identify vulnerable asylum seekers who have special needs in the asylum procedure or in housing, for example, due to their age, sexual orientation, disability, serious illness, or as a result of torture. Participation in asylum procedure counselling is voluntary.

Greece: During the reporting period, [the terms and conditions for the provision of legal assistance to applicants for international protection were redefined](#). The lawyers/members of the Registry, established by the previous ministerial decision, remain members of the new Registry. The decision also covers the pending applications for the provision of legal assistance that were submitted during the validity period of the previous decision (No 3449/2021, G.G. B' 1482), redefining the rules and terms for their remuneration.

Ireland: On 24 January 2023 the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth [announced the pausing of provision of emergency shelter](#) for international protection applicant adults arriving into the Transit Hub at Citywest in Dublin. The Transit Hub will remain open for all other matters, including the processing of accommodation for Ukrainian Beneficiaries

of Temporary Protection (BOTP). The International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) will continue to provide accommodation for international protection-seeking families with children.

According to [official data, in January 2023](#), 108 international protection applicants were not offered accommodation. Of the 108, 81 were offered accommodation retrospectively. [In February 2023](#), 255 international protection applicants were not offered accommodation. 103 of the 255 were offered accommodation retrospectively.

Italy: On 17 March 2023 the decree of [periodical update of the list of safe countries of origin](#) for applicants for international protection was issued. The new list comprises: Albania; Algeria; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cape Verde; Ivory Coast; Gambia; Georgia; Ghana; Kosovo; North Macedonia; Morocco; Montenegro; Nigeria; Senegal; Serbia; Tunisia. In addition, the decree specifies that the inclusion of Ivory Coast, Gambia, Georgia and Nigeria has no effect on applications for international protection submitted by citizens of the aforementioned countries before the adoption of this decree.

Latvia: On 28 February 2023, [Amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers regulations "Procedures for Granting Scholarships to Foreigners"](#) were adopted in order to continue providing support to Ukrainian civilians until 31 December 2023 under the framework of the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians, with a grant fund of up to € 688 000. The amendments also aim to facilitate the process of administering scholarships for Ukrainian civilians.

Lithuania: On 24 March 2023, the Migration Department [released statistics](#) on the Dublin procedure. The data shows that since the beginning of this year, the authorities have received 263 requests from other countries, while 22 persons were returned to Lithuania under the Dublin III Regulation (the majority were citizens from Iraq).

Luxembourg: On 4 January 2023, the [inauguration of a temporary accommodation facility](#) for applicants for international protection took place. The accommodation structure was built taking into consideration accessibility criteria for people with reduced mobility. There is a maximum capacity of 120 beds and it will accommodate a mixed population. From the beginning of January to the end of February 2023, to deal with possible new emergency situations, Hall 7 of the Luxexpo was [made available as an alternative accommodation](#) centre in case of the temporary unavailability of other structures. There is a maximum capacity of 350 camp beds in tents.

On 18 January 2023, [the law revising Chapter II of the Constitution](#) was published. Chapter II concerns, among other things, civil liberties, including the right to asylum (guaranteed under the conditions determined by law). The law comes into force on 1 July 2023.

On 23 January 2023, a Grand Ducal Regulation came into force establishing a list of safe countries of origin. With this amendment, [Ukraine was removed](#) from the list of safe countries of origin.

Malta: In January 2023, the International Protection Agency updated its policy vis-à-vis Somalia, while in February 2023 it updated its policy with regards to Syria. The main driver behind this was the publication of the [EUAA Country Guidance on Somalia](#) and [Syria](#) in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The Netherlands: As of 1 January 2023, the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) has been given 15 months to decide on asylum applications. The [9-month extension of the legal decision period for asylum applications](#) will also be applied to asylum applications submitted from 1 January 2023 to 1 January 2024 due to expectations that the IND would not be able to carefully process asylum applications within the standard legal period of six months.

On 8 February 2023, the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State (*Afdeling bestuursrechtspraak van de Raad van State* - AbRvS) [ruled that a temporary measure concerning](#)

[family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection violates Dutch and European law.](#)

This measure meant that the issuing of the D-visa to travel to the Netherlands was postponed until the beneficiary of international protection had sufficient accommodation in the Netherlands to accommodate all family members. Now, if the Minister for Migration has granted an application he must ensure that the family members are allowed to travel to the Netherlands immediately.

On 17 February 2023, the Minister for Migration [announced that Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers \(COA\) initiated a package of measures to create 19 000 additional reception places](#) by 1 July 2023. Those measures range from keeping reception places open, opening new reception places, expanding hotel accommodation and using flexible accommodation at asylum seekers' centres, as well as atypical reception places. These measures are needed in the coming months to prevent a shortage of reception places for asylum seekers.

On 16 March 2023, the Minister for Migration, until 28 August 2023, given that the situation in Ukraine remains unclear. Ukraine's designation as a safe country of origin is also suspended for the same period. The decision period for pending asylum applications has been extended up to 21 months. The departure moratorium could not be extended. However, pending a formal decision, no (forced) returns to Ukraine will take place.

Portugal: Between January and March 2023, 551 asylum applications were registered. During the first quarter of 2023, evacuations from Afghanistan were ongoing. An additional group of 91 Afghans were brought to Portugal, which makes a total of 999 Afghans evacuated since mid-August 2021.

Slovak Republic: On 1 January 2023, the latest [amendment of Law no. 180/2002 Coll. on Asylum came into force](#). The changes concern the provision and reimbursement of urgent medical care for asylum seekers, persons with temporary refuge and persons in the assisted return programme, which from 1 January 2023 has been provided through a health insurance company, the costs of which are subsequently reimbursed by the Ministry of Health. Emergency health care for this target group was previously provided through the Ministry of the Interior.

Slovenia: In the reporting period, there was a notable [change in the nationality of asylum seekers](#). Citizens of Morocco lodged the most asylum applications. In addition, fewer asylum applicants left reception facilities (the percentage of applicants arbitrarily leaving fell from 97 % to 89 %) and consequently, more applications were examined on merit.

Spain: On 21 February 2023, the Government approved the National Programme of Refugee Resettlement for 2023, which will accommodate 1 200 people. At the beginning of March, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration hosted a first group of more than a hundred who were affected by the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, in response to the appeal for urgent action by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Türkiye.

Sweden: On 27 March 2023, the Swedish Migration Agency published a new legal position paper on statelessness (Rättsligt ställningstagande RS/003/2023 Bedömning av statslöshet som en del av en persons identitet). Defining statelessness gives the case officers better guidance when investigating the identity of the person, with the overall objective to contribute to the UN global action plan to end statelessness by 2024.

Georgia: During the reporting period, employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs took part in various capacity-building activities related to communication standards with people with disabilities, the protection of children's rights, the identification and referral of asylum seekers etc.

Moldova: On 20 January 2023, [the new headquarters for the Directorate of Asylum and Statelessness of the General Inspectorate for Migration was inaugurated](#). This important step modernizes the authority for foreigners and offers efficient, high-quality services. The location serves those seeking temporary protection, other forms of protection, or recognition of statelessness status in Moldova. The facilities provide optimal conditions for registration, identity

document issuance, application examination, interviews, and information on rights, obligations, and integration services. The well-organized offices also prevent overcrowding and offer 42 workstations.

Montenegro: During the reporting period, a total of 703 persons seeking international protection were accepted by the Section for the reception of foreigners seeking international protection. All persons are provided with accommodation, food, the right to health care, psychosocial assistance and support, information and legal help according to the submitted request for international protection.

From 1 January to 31 March 2023 the Section for the Reception of Foreigners Seeking International Protection provided psychosocial assistance for 48 persons and health care for 105 persons.

From 1 January to 31 March 2023, 34 requests for international protection were submitted. During this period, nine applications for international protection were approved. Of this number, one unaccompanied minor was granted asylum, two female accompanied minors were granted asylum, one male accompanied minor was granted asylum, two female adults (one asylum status and one subsidiary protection) and three male adults (two asylum statuses and one subsidiary protection).



3. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 2 March 2022, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) released a [training for guardians of unaccompanied children](#) that was created in cooperation with the European Guardianship network.

Judgment of the European Court of Justice

[Case C-484/22](#)

On 15 February 2023, the CJEU ruled that the best interests of the child and the right to family life must be protected in return proceedings regarding a minor; Article 5 (a) and (b) of the EU Return Directive must be interpreted taking these two protected interests into account. The case referred to Article 24 of the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) and the case [État belge](#).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Greece: On 17 March 2023, ministerial decision No. 138529/2023, which regulates the Standard Operating Procedures for Supervised Apartments for Semi-Independent Living, was published (GG' 1615/B/17-3-2023). The aim is to define operation rules as well as to create a single framework of standard rules that govern the operation of these facilities (including personnel, logistics, supervision and evaluation, provision of services of hospitality and support, procedures of reception of unaccompanied minors) and ensuring the quality of services provided to them.

On 31 March 2023, ministerial decision No. 187634/2023, which regulates the Standard Operating Procedures and Licensing Framework of the Accommodation Centers for Unaccompanied Minors, was published (GG' 2125/B/31-3-2023). The aim is to define the framework of Standard Operating and Licensing Rules of these accommodation centres for the housing, protection and support of minors (including personnel, building specifications, logistics, the licencing process for the operation, supervision and evaluation, provision of hospitality and support of minors).

The Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum will submit a pledge at the 2nd Global Forum on Refugees, organised by UNHCR, that will take place in December 2023, for the National Emergency Response Mechanism, showcasing the commitment of the Greek State towards the sustainability of this policy initiative. More specifically, it will be presented in the form of a political commitment, transfer of know-how, presentation of good practices, etc., even proposing the use of the work and initiatives of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in the field of protection of unaccompanied minors and in particular the abolition of the protective custody of minors and the establishment and operation of the National Emergency Response Mechanism.

On 28 March 2023, the last flight under the Voluntary Relocation Programme was completed and the programme has officially reached its end. In total 1 367 unaccompanied minors were successfully relocated from Greece to other European countries.

Italy: On 3 March 2023, a note was issued by the Ministry of the Interior to the Prefectures (Territorial Offices of the Government), to activate emergency first-reception facilities for foreign unaccompanied minors in order to implement the age recognition procedure through the Protocol of 20 July 2020 established between the Government, the Regions and the local autonomies (Multidisciplinary protocol for the determination of the age of foreign unaccompanied minors). A monthly report is sent from the Prefectures to the Ministry of the Interior on the developments and any possible congestion in the system related to foreign unaccompanied minors, with particular regard to their reception, the results of integration projects and the 'escape' phenomenon.

On 7 February 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy published the in-depth biannual [Report on foreign unaccompanied minors in Italy](#), with data up to 31 December 2022. The report monitors the presence, characteristics, and reception of foreign unaccompanied minors, giving an account of new arrivals and removals, requests for international protection, family investigations in countries of origin and opinions on the conversion of residency permits at the age of majority.

Malta: The Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) teams (the Social Work Unit, Psychosocial Unit and Unaccompanied Minors Asylum Seekers (UMAS) Protection Unit) continued to support the beneficiaries (mainly vulnerable residents and unaccompanied minors) in different centres. The UMAS Protection Services Unit and Assessment Unit were both set up in September 2020. The Assessment Unit was supported by EUAA and from the beginning of 2023, AWAS has its own Assessment Unit. The Assessment Team continued to assess and identify the most vulnerable individuals both in the closed centres, open centres and in the community. The Psychosocial Unit continued to support the most vulnerable beneficiaries and provided therapeutic services when needed. AWAS worked closely with the International Protection Services Agency and NGOs, who helped in identifying vulnerable persons and referring them to AWAS for further assessment.

Portugal: During the first quarter of 2023, 55 unaccompanied minors and young adults were relocated to Portugal, in line with the European Programme of Voluntary Relocation from Greece of Unaccompanied Minors and families. Their transfer occurred under the procedure foreseen in article 17(2) of Regulation (EU) N. 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013. Currently a total of 380 unaccompanied minors and young adults have been transferred to Portugal.

Montenegro: During the reporting period, several vulnerable groups were received. From 1 January to 31 March 2023 a total of 703 persons were admitted in the Section for the Reception of Foreigners Seeking International Protection (Reception Department Spuž), of whom: 23 were minor males, all accompanied; 31 were adult women with an escort; eight unaccompanied adult women; 19 minor women, all accompanied.



4. LEGAL MIGRATION

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 29 March 2023, the Council of the European Union [agreed on the negotiating mandate for a proposal to digitalise the Schengen visa procedure](#).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Austria: On 31 January 2023, the [Settlement Regulation 2023](#) entered into force governing the total number of residence permits subject to quota requirements in Austria (5 951) and their breakdown by residence permit and province.

Bulgaria: In January 2023, amendments to the Law on Labour Migration and Labour Mobility came into force, which instilled the process of implementation provided for by the Directive (EU) 2021/1883 into national legislation. The Directive specifies the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment. Some amendments have also been made to the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, aiming to simplify and streamline the existing procedures regarding the conditions for entry and residence of highly qualified third-country workers.

Croatia: On 12 January 2023, the Ministry of Interior held a workshop with police administrations and representatives of employers on the employment of citizens of third countries with an emphasis on the so-called returnees – citizens of third countries who were issued permits for residence and work in tourism and hospitality during 2022 and who intend to work again in these activities during 2023.

During the reporting period, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce organised workshops in Split on 3 February 2023 and Zadar on 23 March 2023, in which representatives of the Split-Dalmatia and the Zadar Police Administrations informed employers' representatives about the procedure for employing third-country nationals and the details they must take into account in order to successfully file their requests.

Cyprus: On 24 March 2023, the Civil Registry and Migration Department introduced [new lower income criteria](#) for persons who wish to employ a third country national as a domestic worker. Persons with disabilities, beneficiaries of the Guaranteed Minimum Income, beneficiaries of Low Pensioners' Allowance and beneficiaries of Incapacity and Invalidity Pension are now exempt from the income criteria.

On 22 February 2023, the Council of Ministers approved the new [Strategy for the Employment of Foreign Workforce](#). The main change is that companies with a collective agreement can now employ foreign workers up to 50% of their total workforce.

Estonia: As of 1 January 2023, amendments to the [Aliens Act](#) came into force introducing a new type of temporary residence permit for short-term employment. Residence permits for short-term employment will allow foreigners who have worked in Estonia on a short-term basis for at least nine months to apply for a residence permit that is valid for up to two years (also called a 1+2 scheme). The employer must meet certain requirements in order for the employee to be eligible for this type of residence permit, such as being trustworthy and having paid the employee a corresponding salary during the period of short-term employment. The residence permit is exempt from the annual immigration quota but cannot be extended.

On 1 January 2023, amendments to the [Aliens Act came into force introducing new incentives](#) for hiring foreign labour in a *growth company*. A growth company is defined as a company registered in Estonia with the purpose of developing a business model with high global growth potential, that is innovative and replicable and that shall significantly contribute to the development of the Estonian business environment. Growth companies will be allowed to offer salaries to foreign employees that are at least 80% of the average salary in Estonia and residence permits issued to foreign employees of a growth company will not be subject to the annual immigration quota.

On 25 January 2023, the Parliament of Estonia (the Riigikogu) [adopted the new draft law](#) 'Assessing the reliability of foreign investment,' which establishes the basis and procedure for checking the reliability of foreign investments from third countries in order to ensure the protection of the country's strategic interests. The new law will come into force on 1 September 2023.

Finland: On 23 February 2023, [legislative amendments streamlining the application and decision-making process for work-based residence permits entered into force](#). The new provisions will increase the automation of the application process and introduce a certification for employers. In addition, two new residence permit types were introduced: one for those who have completed a

qualification or research in Finland, and one for specialists requiring an income equal to the average wage-earner's gross earnings in Finland.

On 15 February 2023, [new responsibility recommendations were published](#) that support employers in international recruitment in healthcare and the social welfare sector. The healthcare and social welfare sector in Finland suffers from a significant shortage of skilled labour. One way to meet this challenge is to recruit sector professionals from abroad. The objective of the recommendations is to promote responsible international recruitment and to combat risks of labour exploitation.

On 30 March 2023, the Ministry of the Employment and Economy announced that two studies have been published, which provide information on how to promote international recruitment in the social and welfare sector. The studies confirm that there is a great need for international recruitment in the coming years and that the Government can support it in many ways.

France: On 6 February 2023 France standardised [the online application for French naturalisation](#) to all metropolitan departments, after more than a year of experimentation across eight pilot sites. It is no longer necessary to make an application in person or to send the file by post. Applicants will be informed in real time on their personal space of the progress of their application, as well as of any additions to be made and decisions taken. It will only be necessary to go to the assimilation interview, which is carried out during the processing of the application, and to the ceremony to welcome the applicant as a French citizen, if the application is approved.

Greece: On 29 March 2023, a [new Code of Migration-Law 5038/2023 was voted by the Greek parliament](#) (published on 1.4.23 (GG A'81). The Law aims to become more rational, functional and relevant to the country's socioeconomic circumstances. The law enters into force on 1 January 2024.

On 17 January 2023, the Agreement between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt on the employment of seasonal workers in the agricultural sector was ratified by law 5009/2023 (GG A'7).

Joint ministerial Decision nr.12715/2023 (GG B'527) was adopted on the extension of the validity of the previous Decision (nr. 5269/2021, GG B'430) until 31.3.2023, regarding the maximum number of residence permits for dependent employment of third country nationals.

Joint ministerial Decision nr.24424/2023 (GG B' 1314) regarding the employment sectors in which the provisions for admission of third country nationals for seasonal employment are applied was adopted with the inclusion of the tourism sector.

Ireland: On 15 February 2023, [the Immigrant Investor Programme \(IIP\) was closed to new applications](#). The IIP was a pathway for non-EEA nationals to secure an immigration permission in Ireland on the basis of long-term investment in a range of options approved by Government under the programme. The proposed closure of the IIP will not affect existing projects already approved under the programme nor the approximately 1 500 cases in hand at the time of closure.

On 4 January 2023, employment permit statistics [published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) showed double the number of permits issued in 2022 compared to 2021. In total, there were 39 955 permits issued in 2022, compared to 16 275 in 2021. In 2019, the last pre-COVID-19 year, 16 383 employment permits were issued.

Italy: On 26 January 2023, the [decree referring to the programming of entry flows of non-EU workers](#) for seasonal and non-seasonal work in the territory of the State for the year 2022 was published. Non-EU citizens can be admitted to Italy for seasonal and non-seasonal employment and self-employment up to a maximum quota of 82 705 people. A new procedure has been introduced to check in advance that there are no workers already available in Italy. Entry applications for foreign workers can be submitted starting from 27 March up to when the total quota has been submitted or until, 31 December 2023.

Latvia: On 7 March 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers [approved Rules for the Acquisition and Loss of Citizenship Information System](#), which determine the amount of information to be included in the Information System, the procedures for inclusion and deletion and the time limits for storage, as well as the institutions to be granted access to information included in the Information System and the extent to which it is to be granted. The new system was developed because the old one was technically out of date.

Luxembourg: On 23 February 2023, [the study 'OECD Skills Strategy Luxembourg' was presented](#). The study was jointly developed by OECD and national stakeholders. As part of the study, a number of recommendations tailored to Luxembourg's specific situation were made. To address skills shortages, Luxembourg should, in particular, facilitate the recruitment of foreign talents in accordance with the needs of the Luxembourg labour market and promote the integration of these talents and their families into society and the labour market.

The Netherlands: From 1 January 2023, [new fees for the application for residency in the Netherlands apply](#). These fees are adjusted each year based on price increases and wage developments (indexing). Starting this year, fees are equalised and significantly more affordable for the applicant.

Poland: On 13 January 2023, [an amendment to the Act on assistance to Ukrainian citizens came into force](#). The amendments provide 1) a legal basis for the subsidiary granting of a temporary residence permit for a period of one year to Ukrainian citizens subject to certain conditions; 2) that as of 1 April 2023, citizens of Ukraine, who have a PESEL number with the UKR status will be able to apply for a temporary residence and work permit (a temporary residence permit for the purpose of performing work in a profession requiring high qualifications, a temporary residence permit for the purpose of conducting business activity; granting the above temporary residence permit will result in the loss of temporary protection in Poland); and 3) an extension until 24 August 2023 of a legal stay of Ukrainian citizens who are staying in the Republic of Poland based on national visas and temporary residence permits.

Portugal: On 28 February 2023, [Ordinance No. 97/2023](#) was published, approving the administrative residence permit model, within the scope of the Mobility Agreement between Member States of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries.

Slovak Republic: Since 1 January 2023, a government regulation to grant a national visa to highly qualified third-country nationals has been amended. It stipulates a broader range of highly qualified professions that can be occupied by third-country nationals in the interest of the Slovak Republic.

On 1 January 2023, [an amendment of Law no. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services entered into force](#) enabling employers to hire in an accelerated way a third-country national for labour shortage professions in all districts of the Slovak Republic. It also contains measures on retaining foreign workers in the same job position, enumerates the number of national visas that can be granted for certain positions, as well as broadens the list of countries whose nationals are eligible for the national visa.

The Bureau of Border and Foreign Police of the Police Force Presidium [published the Statistical Overview of Legal and Illegal Migration in the Slovak Republic for the year 2022](#), which provides data on both legal and irregular migration including returns.

Slovenia: On 9 March 2023, the Government [adopted a proposal for an amendment to the Foreigners Act](#), which enables faster issuance of residence permits. Adoption of the amendment was necessary to support administrative units to eliminate administrative obstacles and enable faster management of procedures for issuing and serving residence permits and EU registration certificates.

On 13 March 2023 the Government [adopted a proposal on amendments to the Employment, Self-employment and Work of Foreigners Act](#). Key changes will include the right to free access to the

labour market for asylum seekers three months after obtaining status, while foreigners changing employers or being employed by several employers will no longer require a decision of the administrative unit, only the consent of the Employment Service. Additionally, provisions of the Act will not apply to foreigners working in the state or public sector. 2023

Georgia: On 3 February 2023, an [“Agreement between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Republic of Paraguay on Visa Exemption for Ordinary Passport Holders” entered into force](#). Citizens holding ordinary passports from contracting countries are allowed to enter and stay on the territory of another contracting party without a visa for a period not exceeding 90 days in any 180-day period.

On 24 February 2023, [Governmental Ordinance N.255 “On Approval of the List of Countries Whose Citizens May Enter Georgia without a Visa” was amended](#), allowing Ukrainian citizens to enter and stay in Georgia without a visa for two years, instead of one year.

Montenegro: In the first quarter of 2023, the Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Foreigners was drafted, which transposed articles of EU directives, harmonised the law with the Law on Life Partnership, simplified procedures for issuing/extending temporary residence permits and work, and removed certain deficiencies that had become apparent during the application of the current law. In the first quarter, a total of 8 737 permits for temporary residence and work were issued.

STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS

Poland: On 9 March 2023, [amendments to the Act of foreigners and certain other acts](#) provided for a change in how knowledge of Polish language is confirmed for the purpose of granting a long-term EU residence permit; these regulations will enter into force on 24 June 2023. An intermediate level of B1 language proficiency will be assessed through the updated regulations. The changes also extend the scope of entities exempt from needing approval to allow foreigners to begin or continue specific studies. These areas of study are detailed in the Act of 30 April 2010 on the Polish Academy of Sciences and in the Act of 30 April 2010 on research institutes.



5. INTEGRATION

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 2-3 February the Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union have hosted a meeting of the [European Integration Network](#) on “Addressing accommodation challenges in a migration context: third-country nationals’ integration pathway in the host society”.

On 16-17 February 2023, the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union hosted a high-level [conference on the implementation of national action plans against racism](#).

On 24 March 2023, ECRE [published a policy note that analyses challenges](#) faced by applicants for international protection in the EU to access education.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Belgium: On 1 March 2023 the Flemish integration exam became stricter when it comes to [“fundamental values”](#). Newcomers have to take a standardised exam for the social orientation course. In this exam, 41 questions are asked, 30 of which are on practical knowledge about Belgian society. Eleven questions are on fundamental values like equality between men and women and the separation of religion and state. Now newcomers have to respond correctly to nine out of the 11 questions. Before they only had to respond correctly to half of the 41 questions.

Croatia: From 1 January 2023, the Croatian Red Cross and its local branches is implementing a two-year project “Integrated and holistic support to migrants and refugees.” The [first of a series of trainings took place](#) on the topic of acceptance of diversity and collaborative learning as a method of integrating foreign-language students into schools. The project is financed by the Swiss Red Cross.

From 9-11 March 2023, the organisation Center for Cultural Dialogue held a training for public officials on education and health in the city of Zadar, within the AMIF co-funded project “New neighbors – inclusion of persons under international protection in Croatian society.” The aim of this training was to present the scope of rights and obligations of beneficiaries of international protection and also to point out the challenges of exercising these rights in practice. The training was attended by 15 health workers and 17 workers from the education sector.

On the 20 March 2023, the organisation [Center for Cultural Dialogue held the final conference of the AMIF co-funded project](#) “New neighbors – inclusion of persons under international protection into Croatian society,” called Integration outside the frame. Through this project, as an implementing partner of the Ministry of the Interior, the Center supported and advised 152 beneficiaries of international protection in achieving their short-term and long-term goals in integration in the early stages of their adaptation in Croatia. Along with support, they organised and conducted 28 public events of various social, educational, cultural, religious and sports activities, as well as sensitisation activities for the general public and local communities where beneficiaries live.

Cyprus: On 1 February 2023, informational and educational material produced in the framework of the Erasmus+ project [PASSAGE](#) was made available to all teachers and their schools in participating countries, both in their national languages and in English. The aim of the material is to promote inclusive and qualitative education, and it is addressed to all newly arrived students with migratory background from the initial stages of their integration process.

Estonia: As of January 2023, the Police and Border Guard Board launched a new counselling service for Ukrainian temporary protection holders for when they need to prolong their residence permit (coordinated by the Integration Foundation). The objective was for Ukrainian temporary protection holders to be informed about their rights and obligations, especially those who have not fulfilled the criteria for prolongment (for example, if they have not taken part in a welcoming programme, nor have a registered address).

Finland: On 27 January 2023, a plain language handbook of integration was published. The handbook serves individuals who work on integration but who do not speak Finnish or Swedish as their native language. The handbook is also useful for guiding immigrants. In total, about 750 000 individuals in Finland have a need for plain language.

On 7 February 2023, the Ministry of the Employment and Economy announced that municipalities hosting resettled refugees can apply for additional financial support to employ a new employee who will work on the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

France: On 8 February 2023, [instruction NOR IOMV2303177J](#) established the priorities for 2023 for the integration policy for newly arrived foreign nationals, including refugees. Four areas will be prioritised: the management of the AGIR refugee support programme (“Global and Individualised Accompaniment of Refugees”), integration of foreign nationals through language and employment, the involvement of the host society and effective coordination in partnership with local authorities.

Greece: [The HELIOS integration programme](#) (Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection and Temporary Protection) has been implemented since June 2019 by IOM and was initially funded by AMIF. Since the end of 2021, through a programmatic agreement between IOM and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (last amended in February 2023), the HELIOS project will continue to be implemented through direct funding from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum until 31 May 2023, when it was planned to be integrated and funded by ESF+ in the framework of the new programming period 2021-2027.

Implementation of the “Promote integration of the refugee population into the labour market” action started in 2022 in the framework of the (Greek) National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Greece 2.0) which was formulated by the Social Integration Directorate of the Ministry of

Migration and Asylum. It is funded by RRF, on the basis of two Programme Agreements between the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Responsible Ministry) and IOM (Implementing Body). The Action is planned to last three years, at a cost of 35 million euros, providing services to 18 000 beneficiaries. The programmatic agreement "Strengthening of social inclusion and raising awareness of beneficiaries of international protection, through training and their inclusion in a holistic framework of civil protection" was initially signed on 20 June 2022 and amended on 20 February 2023 (in terms of duration and target group) and will now include beneficiaries outside Open Facilities of asylum applicants and vulnerable individuals from across Greece.

In March 2023, an amendment of the programmatic agreement between the Ministry for Migration and Asylum (Social Integration Directorate) (MoMA (SID)) and the Municipality of Athens was signed, regarding the [project "Multaka: Intercultural Tours in Athens."](#) "Multaka" is a pilot project which started in June 2022 and will end in June 2023 through which migrants, refugees and persons with a migrant background have been trained as "intercultural guides" and perform intercultural tours in four museums and archaeological places in Athens, in Greek, Arabic, Farsi, English or French.

On 27 March 2023, an online conference entitled "[Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils \(MRIC\): Institutional framework and their role in the integration of citizens of third countries](#)" was organised by the SID of the MoMA. The MRICs conduct activities that enable civic participation. The conference was held as a follow-up to a survey which was preceded by input from municipalities on issues concerning the formation, operation and role of MRICs. The results of the research are recorded in a report entitled "Migrant and Refugee Integration Councils. Institutional framework, operation and their role in the integration of citizens of third countries".

Ireland: On 21 March 2023 the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth [announced the publication of the National Action Plan Against Racism \(NAPAR\) 2023-2027](#). The Ireland Against Racism Fund was announced in tandem, which will include up to € 1 million in funding for local and regional/national projects that have a focus on anti-racism.

Italy: On 9 February 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy [published the 2022 biannual note "Foreigners in the Italian job market"](#). From the note the number of work relationships as employee and self-employed increased by over 500 000 units between the 2nd semester of 2021 and the 2nd semester of 2022; of these units, 100 000 work relationships refer to foreign citizens. Furthermore, there were around 66 500 management contracts activated during the same period, of which over 19 000 were intended for EU workers and non-EU citizens working in the EU.

Luxembourg: On 26 January 2023, the municipality of Leudelange [signed](#) the "*Pakt vum Zesummeliewen*" with the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region and Syvicol. The pact is aimed at regionalising integration policies. By signing the agreement, the municipality has expressed their commitment to a multi-annual process based on three pillars: communication, access to information and the participation of all people living or working in the municipality.

On 8 March 2023, the Chamber of Deputies [adopted a bill that supplements the Penal Code](#) by introducing a general aggravating circumstance for crimes, misdemeanors and minor offenses committed due to a motive based on one or more of the elements referred to in Article 454 of the Penal Code, such as particular origin, skin colour, membership or non-membership, real or supposed, of an ethnic group, nation, race or particular religion.

On 25 March 2023, [the Law of 8 March 2023 establishing the Luxembourg National Language Institute came into force](#). The law redefined the mission of the Institute in order to promote the Luxembourgish language, multilingualism, facilitate integration and social cohesion, intercultural exchange and contribute to the employability of individuals.

On 31 March 2023, the law of 29 March 2023 amending the [amended electoral law of 18 February 2003](#) was published. The amended law ensures that third-country nationals who are in possession of a legitimization card can exercise their active or passive right to vote in municipal elections.

Sweden: On 16 March 2023, the Ministry of Employment [announced it is boosting efforts to bring more foreign born women into work](#). This is an agreement with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions to further use the nursery school to reach mothers on parental leave that are in need of learning and practicing Swedish. The Labour Minister Johan Pehrsson emphasised the importance of work, language and equality to improve integration and to reduce social exclusion.

Georgia: During the reporting period, 111 Ukrainian citizens, beneficiaries of the State Language Teaching and Integration Programme completed the initial phase of the study process including the alphabet. 59 of them successfully completed the programme.

Moldova: On 26 January 2023, [a Memorandum of Understanding was signed](#) by the General Inspectorate for Migration, the National Employment Agency, the National Association of European Trainers from the Republic of Moldova, the Center for Policies, Initiatives and Research Platform, and the National Congress of Ukrainians from Moldova. The memorandum demonstrates the commitment of the signatory parties to collaborate in facilitating the integration process of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova. The aim is to promote and streamline integration through the acquisition of the state language, improved access to the labour market, and the realisation of their full potential as members of society.

Montenegro: During the reporting period, 55 foreigners granted international protection stayed in Montenegro (17 foreigners under subsidiary protection, 38 foreigners with asylum status). Of that number, 23 foreigners were assisted in integrating into Montenegrin society through the development and monitoring of individual integration plans. The most represented countries of origin of persons with approved international protection were Russia, Iran and Yemen.

During the reporting period, the most significant activities carried out were:

- A system of electronic receipt of requests for personal and travel documents was established for foreigners granted international protection.
- In order to include asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection in Montenegrin society, in cooperation with the Ministry responsible for education, a basic and advanced Montenegrin language course was implemented. Six persons successfully completed the basic level of the course, while one person completed the advanced level.
- In the first quarter of 2023, six returns were accepted, for which a Questionnaire for returnees and an Individual Reintegration Plan were completed. Of the total number of returnees, five returnees were from Germany, while one returnee was from Sweden.

6. MANAGEMENT OF THE EU EXTERNAL BORDERS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 20 February 2023, the European Union [launched a EU civilian mission in Armenia](#) to contribute to stability in border areas.

On 24 February 2023, the Council of the European Union [concluded agreements with North Macedonia](#) on operational activities conducted in cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in an effort to manage migration flows, counter illegal immigration, and counteract cross-border crime.

On 7 March 2023, the European Commission announced that the [revised rules for the Schengen Information System](#) went into force.

In March 2023, the European Commission continued to disburse the allocated [€ 10.7 billion to boost border management and security](#) across EU Member States from 2021–2027, including for the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI), and the Internal Security Fund (ISF).

As of March 2023, [guidance on monitoring fundamental rights at borders](#) by the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA) is available in Croatian, English, Finnish, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, and Spanish.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Croatia: During the reporting period, there were legal changes due to the entry of Croatia into the Schengen area. As part of the full implementation of the Schengen acquis, appropriate changes were made to the State Border Surveillance Act, which were published in the Official Gazette 151/22 and entered into force on 1 January 2023. The Regulation on Border Crossings, Republic of Croatia NN 1/2023 was adopted, which now defines a total of 88 border crossings on the external border.

In the Official Gazette 1/2023, the following acts were adopted and published:

- [The Regulation on amendments to the Regulation on border crossings of the Republic of Croatia;](#)
- [The Regulation on amendments to the Regulation on standards and conditions that must be met by border crossings for effective and safe border control;](#)
- [The Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on State Border Surveillance;](#)
- and [The Ordinance on amending the Ordinance on determining temporary border crossings.](#)

Estonia: On 22 February 2023, a legislative amendment was [adopted](#) by Parliament (the Riigikogu), which allows for the introduction of the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) in Estonia.

As of 1 January 2023, [the Police and Border Guard Board \(PBGB\) maritime patrol vessels officially became a part of the Estonian Navy](#) (structural unit of the Estonian Defence Forces, EDF) following a merger between the two services. The EDF's task is to defend and protect the Estonian maritime border, while overall border control remains the task of the PBGB.

Finland: On 8 March 2023, the Ministry of the Interior announced that they [launched three projects with a view to amending border guard legislation](#). One of the stated aims of these proposals is to enable a more effective response to potential hybrid influencing operations against Finland that exploit migration.

Latvia: On 31 January 2023, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the extension of [the state of emergency](#) on the Latvian–Belarusian border in *Ludza*, *Krāslava*, *Augšdaugava* and *Daugavpils* regions until 10 May 2023, taking into account the continuing risks of irregular migration and hybrid attacks by the Belarusian regime on the Latvian–Belarusian border.

On 2 March 2023, [Amendments to the Law on Construction of the External Land Border Infrastructure were adopted](#) in order to determine the rapid and effective process of construction of the border surveillance technical infrastructure necessary for guarding the external land border. This includes presence capture systems and observation equipment and related infrastructure, its performance was delegated to the State Joint Stock Company “Latvia State Radio and Television Centre”.

Lithuania: On 18 January 2023, the Government [terminated the agreement](#) with the Government of Belarus setting out areas of cross-border cooperation. According to the authorities, under the current geopolitical circumstances and in response to the instrumentalisation of migrant flows by the Belarus regime, the implementation of the agreement is no longer possible.

On 24 March 2023, the Ministry of Interior [announced the installation of modern surveillance equipment](#) along the entire Belarus-Lithuania border. For comparison, at the beginning of 2022, 53.3 % of the border with Belarus was monitored by surveillance systems.

Poland: As of 10 February 2023, the Minister of the Interior and Administration [decided to suspend traffic at the Polish-Belarusian border crossing](#) in Bobrowniki until further notice due to state security.

As of 21 February 2023, [traffic suspension went into effect](#). In connection with the restrictions introduced by the Belarusian authorities on Polish carriers crossing the border at the Belarusian-Lithuanian and Belarusian-Latvian border crossings, the Minister of the Interior and Administration decided to limit traffic for Belarusian freight vehicles at the Kukuryki-Kozłowiec border crossing. The restriction does not apply to passenger traffic at the border crossing in Terespol.

Slovenia: On 7 March 2023 the upgraded Schengen information system entered into operation. The upgrade is important as it will also deter irregular migration due to the inclusion of return decisions into the SIS.

Georgia: On 9 March 2023, the Government of Georgia [adopted the Integrated Border Management Strategy of Georgia for 2023-2027](#). The Integrated Border Management model applied by Georgia, envisages a four-tier model of integrated border management, promoting a legal movement of people and goods and ensuring efficient control of state borders, thus creating a foundation for security and sustainable economic development.

A video surveillance system on a segment (area of responsibility of 2 border sectors) of the Georgia-Azerbaijan State Border has been installed with the support of the EU funded project - „[EU4 Security, Accountability and the Fight against Crime in Georgia \(SAFE\)](#)“ implemented by the IOM. The video surveillance system unites thermal imaging, night-vision-capable cameras mounted on towers, complimented by long-range ground radar system and a protective fence equipped with alarm systems and fixed surveillance cameras.

In the framework of the MIA-Frontex cooperation, Georgian patrol police inspectors (border guard/controllers) were placed in several airports in EU/Schengen or associated countries. Moreover, three officers participated in a Joint Operation held in Latvia (Riga Airport).

Based on the Entry/Exit Law requirements, from January to March 2023, 760 citizens of Georgia intending travel to the EU/Schengen area were refused permission to depart from the country.

On 20-24 March 2023, employees from the MIA's respective units participated in a Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model ([CIRAM](#)) Intensive Awareness Course, organised by Frontex, in Warsaw. The course aimed at enhancing the participants' capabilities to better forecast the risks and improve border control mechanisms in Georgia.



7. IRREGULAR MIGRATION EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

During the reporting period, the project 'Measuring irregular migration and related policies' ([MIrreM](#)) continued to examine estimates and statistical indicators on irregular migration to the EU. The project is projected to go on until 2025.

On 13 January 2023, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) [reported that irregular border crossings in the EU are at their highest since 2016](#) and increased 64% in 2022 compared with the previous year; the Western Balkans was reported as the main route, accounting for 45% of all irregular entries in 2022.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Finland: On 6 February 2023, a [study was published which examined how undocumented migrants are registered in the public social welfare service system](#), what the key challenges and potential solutions are for them. The results of the study indicate that regional differences occur in the definition of an undocumented migrant, the recognition of the different groups of undocumented people, the grounds for support, the quality of the services, cooperation between the different sectors, and the resources invested in services. The study is part of the implementation of the Government Plan for Analysis, Assessment and Research.

Italy: Between 1 January and 28 March 2023, [27 057 migrants landed on Italian coasts](#).

Lithuania: On 1 March 2023, the State Border Guard Service [closed its Foreigners' Registration Centre](#) in Kybartai. The decision was made in response to decreased flows of irregular migration via the Belarus-Lithuania border. As such, there is no longer a need to provide rapid accommodation to asylum seekers who have entered the territory of Lithuania irregularly.

Luxembourg: On 8 March 2023, the Chamber of Deputies adopted the bill amending the [amended law of August 29, 2008 on the free movement of persons and immigration](#). The text of the draft aims to structure the different categories of expulsion measures in a clear and coherent manner, for better management of the phenomenon of illegal residence of third-country nationals on Luxembourg territory.

Georgia: Within the reporting period, the infrastructure of the Temporary Accommodation Center (TAC) for irregular migrants was improved. In particular, [outdoor gym equipment was installed](#) to ensure the physical activity of the foreign migrants placed at the TAC. The outdoor gym facility was donated by the IOM within the EU funded project "Border and Migration Management Action for Georgia (BMMAG)".

Moldova: In January 2023, employees of the General Inspectorate for Migration, along with the General Inspectorate for Border Police, [participated in a training](#) workshop titled "Combating Abuses in Migration Legislation, Focusing on Residence and Work Permits, and Expulsion Procedures for Foreigners" in Warsaw, Poland. The workshop was part of the "Consolidation of the Migration Management System in the Republic of Moldova" project, funded by the EU MPF III mechanism. Partners included the Polish Border Guard, the General Inspectorate of the Border Police, and the Migration and Asylum Bureau, with ICMPD implementing the project through Poland's Ministry of Interior and Administration's European Project Implementation Centre. The training covered various topics such as abuse of procedures by foreigners, rules for legalizing stay in Poland, hiring and business requirements, border procedures, visa consultation, legal migration for professional purposes, and best practices from Latvia and Lithuania. The workshop aimed to enhance cooperation and strengthen efforts to combat abuses in migration legislation.

8. RETURN

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 24 January 2023, the European Commission [presented a policy document 'Towards an operational strategy for more effective returns'](#), that highlights the importance of a common European system with the objective to increase the overall number of returns and increase efficiency through a streamlined process.

On 16 March 2023, the European Commission [presented a recommendation](#) on the mutual recognition of return decisions after changes to the Schengen Information System came into force meaning that an alert will be included in the system when return decisions are issued, and expediting returns regarding the implementation of the Return Directive

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Finland: On 30 March 2023, a study was published that proposed expanding the target group for assisted voluntary return. The study was commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior in order to assess which client groups should be included in the target group for assisted voluntary return. The Ministry of the Interior is continuing the work and examining which legislative changes will be necessary in order to expand the target group.

Italy: On 31 March 2023, the Italian Council for Refugees, which realised one of the three projects regarding Assisted Voluntary Return that is still operating, concluded 458 Assisted Voluntary Returns in total (starting in 2019), of which 18 were conducted in January 2023.

The other two projects of Assisted Voluntary Return also continued and are still operating, promoted by the CIES (*Centro Informazione e Educazione allo Sviluppo*) Onlus and ARCI (*Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana*). From the start of the activities (February 2019), CIES Onlus achieved 163 returns with reintegration, 13 of which took place this quarter; ARCI has concluded 87 returns, three of which took place this quarter. These two projects will conclude in September 2023.

Poland: In March 2023, [legal amendments were made regarding border guard units](#) and the chain of command for cases regarding foreigners that had been established in the code of administrative procedure of 1960. Cases that will be impacted include: a foreigner's obligation to return, organising assistance in voluntary return, periods of voluntary departure, withdrawal of re-entry bans, withdrawal of residence permits for humanitarian reasons, issuing or replacing 'permits for tolerated stay', and transfers to another EU Member State. The regulations entered into force on 7 April 2023.

Georgia: Within the reporting period, the Migration Department of the MIA participated in seven Collecting Return Operations (CRO) coordinated by Frontex. As a result, 359 Georgian citizens were safely returned from EU Member States.

Within the reporting period, expulsion decisions on 85 foreigners were issued and 55 foreigners left the country based on those decisions.

9. ACTIONS ADDRESSING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

On 16 March 2023, the EUAA published a [situational update on EU and national level developments to identify and support victims of human trafficking](#) in the asylum procedure. The update covers EU strategies (e.g. [the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025](#), [the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan](#)), availability of data, the use of technology in trafficking in human beings, information campaigns, national reports and internationally available guidance and tools. It also reaffirms that applicants have a right to a reflection and recovery period and the necessary measures to avoid risks of retaliation or re-trafficking.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Cyprus: On 1 February 2023, a series of Memorandums of Cooperation was [signed](#) by the Minister of Justice and Public Order, the Minister of Labor and Social Insurance and the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare. The objective of the Memorandums of Cooperation is primarily to institutionalise and further strengthen cooperation between the services of the three ministries with the aim of preventing and combating trafficking in human beings as well as protecting and supporting victims of trafficking.

Finland: On 24 January 2023, [a study was published which examined the foreign workforce in the greenhouse industry in the Närpes region](#). The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment after extortion of foreign labour in the small town of Närpes

was revealed at the beginning of 2022. The report presents proposals to improve resilience in terms of foresight and responding to challenges in a situation of rapidly increasing work-based immigration.

On 9 February 2023, [the suspension of the issuing of visas to berry pickers was discontinued](#). The Ministry for Foreign Affairs had suspended the issuing of visas to Thai berry pickers in November 2022 on the grounds of ambiguities concerning wild-berry picking, including risk of trafficking in human beings, an ongoing police investigation in Finland and the possible amendments to the status of wild-berry pickers prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. In February 2023, it was decided that the amendments require more time, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stated that visa applications were being accepted once again. When processing applications, particular attention will be paid to the risks of trafficking.

On 9 March 2023, the Government [adopted a resolution on a strategy to prevent and combat labour exploitation](#). The strategy includes long-term objectives to help Finland respond more effectively to the exploitation of foreign labour. The objectives also support cooperation between the authorities and the inclusion of immigrants in the Finnish society.

Greece: From 6 to 10 March 2023, the Centre for Security Studies (KEMEA – Ministry of Citizen Protection) [organised a “Simulation-based Exercise”](#) with the participation of the Office of National Rapporteur (ONR) and the National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (NRM), and of all relevant national and international stakeholders. The project, entitled “ERADICATING – Enhancing prevention and multi-agency cooperation against Trafficking,” is co-funded by the EU and aims at strengthening the capacities of Law Enforcement Agencies and improving the services provided, through the development of mechanisms for the prevention and early identification of victims of trafficking in human beings, with emphasis on sexual and labour exploitation.

In the framework of the memorandum of cooperation signed between the Independent Governor of the Authority “Labour Inspection” and the NGO A21 “Sport Trafficking in the 21st Century,” educational seminars and joint actions with informative and promotional material (a short video film about forced labour in Greece) will be organised to raise awareness on the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings. Meanwhile, the first educational action for labour inspectors and police officers under the auspices of the Office of National Rapporteur (ONR) took place on 21 March 2023.

On 9 March 2023, [Law 5028/FEK A 54/9-3-2023, Article 2](#), established the appointment of Special Investigators for cases of trafficking in human beings. It is believed that the establishment of Special Investigators, who will be in charge of investigating cases of trafficking in human beings, will contribute to strengthening the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking in human beings and to a faster and more efficient investigation of such cases.

Hungary: On 28 March 2023, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with the Ministry of Interior organised a one-day workshop on combating trafficking in human beings at the Ministry of Interior. The workshop focused on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the risks of trafficking in human beings in the online space. The experts discussed the current situation, needs and opportunities, and learned about the OSCE’s recommendations in the context of the fight against trafficking in human beings. The workshop was attended by professionals from the law enforcement, consular, child protection, social and employment sectors from both the capital and the countryside involved in the fight against trafficking in human beings, as well as Hungarian and international CSOs and NGOs assisting victims.

Italy: From 13-17 February 2023, with the arrival in Italy of the delegation of the Group of experts of the EU Council against the trafficking in human beings (GRETA), many meetings took place between European members and Italian administrations, civil society, local centres and institutions which manage contact services, shelter services, safeguard, education and social

inclusion, with the coordination of the Department for Equal Opportunities acting as a focal point regarding trafficking in human beings. The report on Italy shall be discussed at the 48th GRETA meeting from 26-30 June 2023.

The Ministry of Defence continues its activity of capacity building for local forces in third countries, to support their actions against trafficking in human beings. In particular, attention is given to Libya, Niger and Mali.

The Italian Police Department is actively working on the criminal phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and related crimes. In particular, between January and February 2023, three police operations conducted in Sicily brought the arrest of ten people responsible for illicit brokering and work exploitation, aiding and abetting illegal immigration, sexual exploitation.

Under the Regional Development Protection Programme for Nord Africa (RDPP NA), five projects carried out by the IOM from January 2023 onwards, regarding anti-trafficking activities and strengthening the management capacity of traffic in Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia were presented to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME).

Luxembourg: On 30 March 2023, the Grand Ducal Regulation of 22 March 2023 relating to the Prostitution Committee [was published](#). The Regulation specifies the composition and functioning of the committee, which works in close collaboration with the Monitoring Committee for the fight against trafficking in human beings. The Committee consists of nine full members, at least once a year, and no later than on 1 May every year, the Committee submits a written report on its work to the government.

Malta: Malta continues to benefit from the Joint EU/CoE Technical Support Instrument Project. The inception phase was closed with the final inception report which was adopted in the first meeting of the Advisory Group (AG) of the Project on 30 January 2023. The findings of the inception report were presented at the first meeting of the Human Trafficking Monitoring Committee on 2 February 2023. An analysis of the current situation of trafficking in human beings in Malta, including institutional structures, policies, public consultation feedback and processes to identify the needs for the development of the pre-strategy were launched in February 2023.

Since the reform of the legislative framework in relation to trafficking in human beings is part of a wider plan of the Human Rights Directorate, the Ministry for Justice, were introduced as the leading ministry to implement the proposed targeted revision of the EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims. The Malta Permanent Representation to the EU (PREU) and the European Commission Representation in Malta (EUCD) gave a presentation during the 2nd Anti-Human Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) meeting, held on 23 March 2023, and brought the attention of all Ministries the Presidency to this dossier.

Poland: There has not been any significant development, however the Ministry of the Interior and Administration continues to monitor crimes related to trafficking in human beings, in particular in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Due to the recent increase in the number of victims from Latin America, in the beginning of February, 250 000 leaflets in Spanish were distributed among all provinces for further dissemination.

In March, another Polish NGO – Czas Wolności– joined the Committee for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings under Ministry of the Interior and Administration.

Portugal: On 9 January 2023, the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings jointly with the Coordination of the Specialized Multidisciplinary Teams to Support Victims' of Human Trafficking and with the support of the High Commission for Migration/Nucleus for the Support of Migrants Integration provided a Training Action to several organisations responsible for accompanying

migrants' integration. The main objective was to present the National Referral Mechanism and indicators to flag presumed victims of human trafficking.

On 2 February 2023, the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings provided a Training Action to the 8th Course of Criminal Investigation/National Republican Guard. The Training Action presented the National Referral Mechanism and indicators to flag presumed victims of trafficking in human beings. Total number of trainees: 24.

On 28 February 2023, the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings with a pool of trainers from different organisations, including the Portuguese Immigration and Borders service (SEF) concluded the Training Action on "Child Trafficking: from Prevention to Detection" aimed at the Public Security Police. This Training Action – based on the National Referral Mechanism on children (presumed) victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – started in October 2022. Overall number of actions: 13 (1.5 days per action). Total number of trainees: 343.

On 1 and 9 March 2023, the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings jointly with the Coordination of the Specialized Multidisciplinary Teams to Support Victims' of Human Trafficking and with the support of the Institute of Social Security, provided 2 Awareness Raising Activities to several structures responsible for temporary shelters to economic migrants. The main objective was to present the National Referral Mechanism and indicators to flag presumed victims of trafficking in human beings.

On 8 March 2023, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) in partnership with JurisApp (State Legal Competence Center) developed a Training Action for Central and Local Public Administration. The main objective was to present the public policy connected to Trafficking in Human Beings and the National Referral Mechanism.

On 20 March 2023, an element of the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) delivered a lecture to senior high school students, on the topic "Trafficking in human beings' victims and their vulnerabilities."

The Portuguese Immigration and Borders Services took part in a Thematic Encounter, organised by the Coimbra Hospital Center, to discuss the trafficking in human beings phenomena, and the role of social workers as first responders.

During the reporting period, The Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service is delivering training on trafficking in human beings and transnational crime indicators to the elements of the Public Security Police and of the Republic National Guard, on the context of the Portuguese Internal Security System restructuring.

During the reporting period, the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service was chosen to be the national leader of the Joint Action Day on Labour Exploitation operational activities (May 2023) and has drafted the National Action plan on the topic.

Slovenia: [The new Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the 2023–2024 period was adopted](#) by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on 26th January 2023. Based on the action plan, certain projects already underway will continue and some new activities upgrading the current work will be implemented.

Spain: On 24 January 2023, a Resolution of the Directorate-General for the Management of the International and Temporary Protection Reception System was approved. Changes were made to the protocol for the prevention, detection, care and referral of possible victims of trafficking in human beings in reception, care and referral centres (CREADE).

- The Directorate General of Humanitarian Attention and Social Inclusion of Immigration launched a call for grant on the area of migration co-financed by European Union funds which aims to defend migrants human rights and to promote social cohesion. Its main

objective is to stop and prevent trafficking in human beings. The most important programmes are DESACTIVA LA TRATA and NOVICOM.

- A protocol was adopted, aiming to harmonise information on essential aspects of reception, access to international protection, and administrative status as well as the crime of trafficking in human beings.
- Development of a protocol on vulnerabilities aimed at establishing a common procedure for the prevention and mitigation of risks as well as identification, assessment, and response to the special needs of vulnerable people in the Humanitarian Attention programme.
- Promotion of training activities designed with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) for greater knowledge of the professionals in the centres and the ones who carry out the management of the Humanitarian Attention programme in the General Directorate.
- Development of the Second Human Rights Plan.
- The referral of questions were changed according to the report of the last follow-up round of the GRETA Varsovia Convention.

Georgia: On 15-16 March 2023, Georgia hosted two workshops on issues of trafficking in human beings, co-organised by the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In the framework of the workshops, the [Judicial Cooperation Network for Central Asia and Southern Caucasus \(CASC\)](#) under UNODC set up a regional mechanism for cross-border coordination and cooperation for investigating and prosecuting trafficking in human beings. Furthermore, the network has created a multi-stakeholder inter-agency working group as a complementary platform to share operational information and coordinate actions related to the mutual legal assistance and extradition processes.

10. EXTERNAL DIMENSION

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

In January 2023, the Council of the European Union [prolonged sanctions on Russia](#) for an additional six months until 31 July 2023 that target specific sectors of the economy, and in February the EU [prolonged restrictive measures on Belarus](#) for an additional year until 28 February 2024.

In March 2023, the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) adopted an updated [External Cooperation Strategy](#). The Strategy was revised in close cooperation with EU Member States, the European Commission, and other relevant stakeholders. The strategy established objectives regarding third-country support, as well as resettlement and humanitarian admission.

On 9 March 2023, the Council of the European Union [adopted its position to allow visa-free travel for holders of a passport issued by Kosovo](#).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Czech Republic: On 8 March 2023 the Czech Government [approved budgets and priorities](#) of the Aid in Place and MEDEVAC programmes – two external programmes of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic – for 2023. The annual budget of the Aid in Place programme amounts to 150 mil. CZK, the annual budget of the MEDEVAC programme amounts to 60 mil. CZK.

France: On 23 February 2023, the Director General of Foreign Nationals in France and the Senegalese ambassador to France signed a new protocol in Paris completing the agreement on the concerted management of migratory flows between France and Senegal, in particular concerning readmission procedures.

On 22 March 2023, [Decree no. 2023-129](#) published the “working holiday” visa agreement signed between France and Ecuador on 18 June 2021, designed to authorise young nationals of each of the two States to stay in the territory of the other State, on an individual basis, with the aim of spending holidays there, with the possibility of taking up employment, within the limit of the validity of the visa issued, in order to supplement the financial resources at their disposal.

On 5 January 2023, [Decree No. 2023-8](#) published the agreement in the form of an exchange of letters between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Republic of Congo, signed in Brazzaville on 19 and 28 September 2022, aimed at extending the effect of a clause in the agreement of 25 October 2007 relating to the concerted management of migratory flows and co-development.

Germany: On 1 February 2023, Joachim Stamp, former Minister for Integration of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, assumed the [newly created position of Special Representative of the Federal Government for Migration Agreements](#), which is located in the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. His task is to prepare further practicable and cooperative migration agreements with key countries of origin in compliance with human rights standards. These agreements can include the expansion of economic cooperation, qualification measures for the German labour market, but also collaboration on return of rejected asylum seekers.

Hungary: In 2017, the V4 countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic) made a pledge of € 35 million, to hand over four patrol ships to the Libyan coast guard together with the Italian authorities. The aim of the ships is to support the Libyan Coast Guard to carry out their tasks, such as border protection and rescuing people at sea.

The patrol ship completed with the support of the V4 was received by the Libyan Foreign Minister on 6 February 2023. The ship is 20 meters long, six meters wide and can carry 200 people.

Italy: On 31 January 2023, [the PASPED programme ended](#). It was co-financed by the Senegalese government and the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance. Its aim was to fight against irregular migration through sustaining the private sector and job creation in Senegal. The project promoted a series of concrete opportunities for companies and young Senegalese people, sustaining with financial and technical support 195 companies, protecting over 7 000 jobs, and assuring 2 306 young people a professional stage contract, over 51 businessmen of diaspora were financed for the creation and the reinforcement of their activities.

On 4 February 2023, the fourth edition of the Summit of Diaspora was held, aimed to promote protagonism and leadership of diasporas in the Development Cooperation. The Summit has been developed under the project “Draft the Future,” financed by the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The occasion enables a meeting between institutions, third sector authorities and associations of diasporas from all over Italy.

The Netherlands: On 1 February 2023, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and the Minister for Migration [announced that the Netherlands and Niger want to cooperate more closely to combat irregular migration](#) in the African country, improve border control and combat trafficking in human beings. There will also be more consultations on the protection of migrants and their voluntary return from Niger to countries of origin.

Poland: On 24 January 2023, the [Minister of the Interior and Administration met with Swiatłana Cichanouska, the leader of the democratic opposition in Belarus](#). The talks concerned issues including the situation of Belarusian refugees in Poland. During the conversation, the Minister emphasised that Poland constantly supports activists of the Belarusian opposition. The needs of Belarusian refugees related to the legalisation of their stay in the European Union had been the subject of a special letter sent by Minister to Ylva Johansson, EU Commissioner for Internal

Affairs. Poland had declared itself ready to actively participate in all initiatives undertaken by the European Commission to regulate these issues.

Spain: On 2 February 2023, Spain and Morocco signed two memoranda of understanding to exchange knowledge on migration management and integration, with a special focus on groups such as women, children and young people and victims of trafficking or violence.

UPDATES ON EU LEGISLATION TRANSPOSITION

Bulgaria: In January 2023, an interinstitutional working group was established to support the transposition of Directive (EU) 2021/1883 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment.

Czech Republic: On 9 February 2023, [a draft law amending the Asylum Act and the Act on the Residence of Foreigners on the Territory of the Czech Republic](#) was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The draft law transposes, among other things, the new EU Blue Card Directive (OJ L 382, 28 October 2021, p. 1–38). The Directive concerns the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment.

Italy: On 15 February 2023, the EU Commission started an infringement procedure against Italy, considering that the 10-years of residence necessary to get Citizen Income is not aligned with European Union Law. The Commission sent a letter of formal notice to Italy (INFR(2022)4024) on the grounds that this requirement is not aligned with EU rights of free movement of workers, citizen rights, long-term residence and international protection.

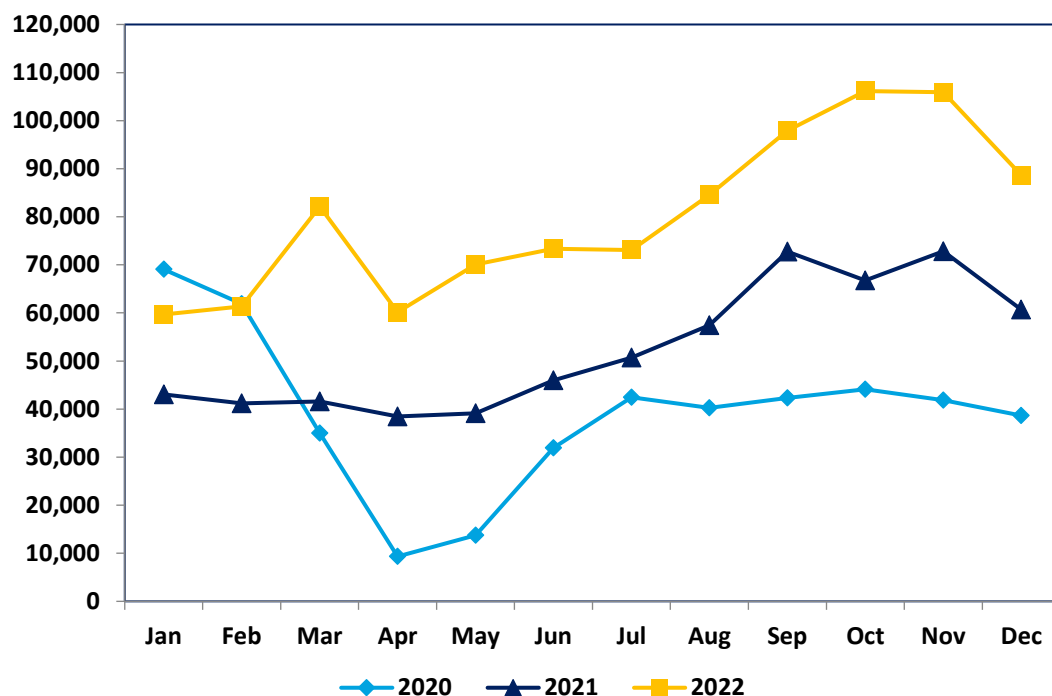
Malta: Legal notice amending the Reception of Asylum Seekers Regulations (S.L420.06) was drafted and published with a view to transposing the provisions of Directive (EU) 2013/33 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast). This legal notice was published on 6 January 2023.

Poland: On 7 April 2023, [the Act of 9 March 2023 amending the Act on foreigners](#) and certain other acts will come into force. The amendments introduce provisions to ensure the application of:

- Regulation (EU) 2018/1860 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the use of the Schengen Information System for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals, and
- Regulation (EU) 2018/1861 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in the field of border checks, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, and amending and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006, in the area of entry and stay of third-country nationals on the territory of the Republic of Poland and other countries of the Schengen area.

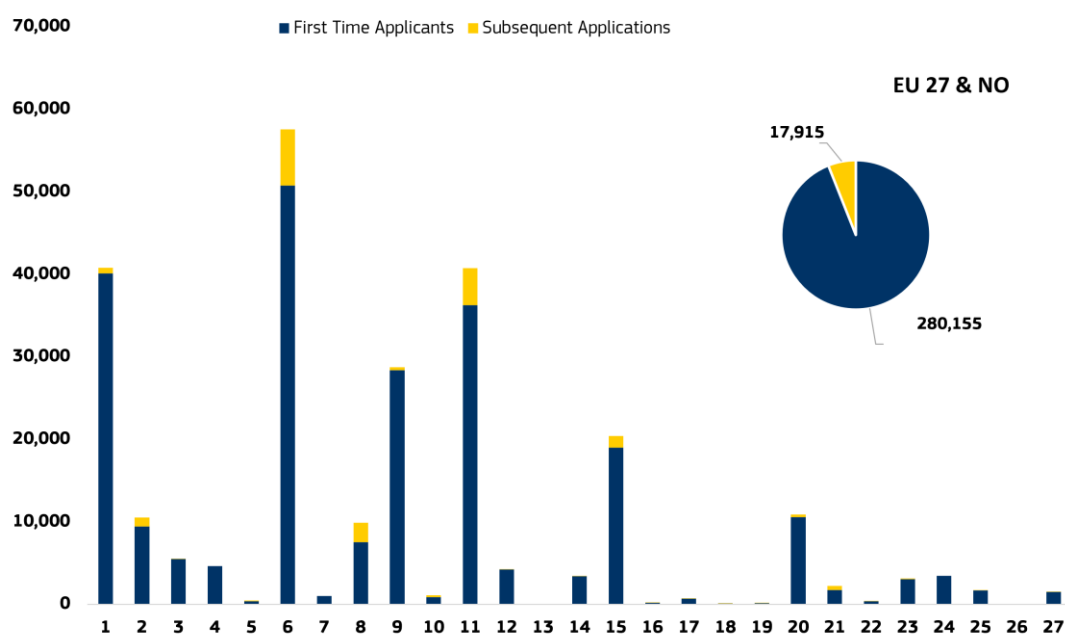
ANNEX: EU & COMPLEMENTARY STATISTICS, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, OTHER EMN OUTPUTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Figure 1: Asylum applications in the EU-27, January – December 2022



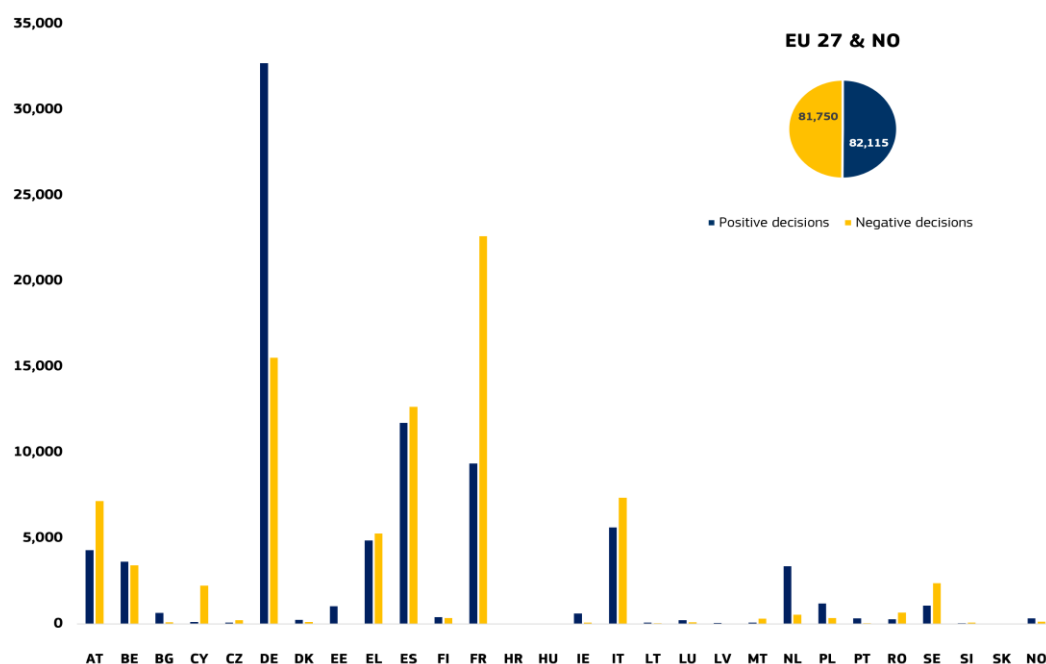
Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], total asylum applicants, extracted on 18 April 2023.

Figure 2: First time asylum applicants and subsequent applicants (together, total asylum applicants) in the EU-27 and Norway, Q2 2022 (quarterly data)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], extracted on 18 April 2023.

Figure 3: First instance asylum decisions in EU-27 and Norway for non-EU citizens, Q2 2022



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asydcfstq](#)], extracted on 18 April 2023.

Updates on EU legislation transposition

No new developments.

EMN National Contact Points: National Events and Publications

Recent National EMN conferences:

- **EMN Belgium:** On 21 March 2023 EMN Belgium gathered about 80 stakeholders at its [policy event](#) to share and discuss the results of the annual report 2022. Key developments on migration and asylum in Belgium from last year were presented and numerous key experts explained important issues and perspectives for 2023. The event also provided ample networking opportunities.
- **EMN Czech Republic:** On 19 April 2023, EMN Czech Republic organised a [seminar/conference](#) in connection with the preparation of a new act on the entry and residence of foreigners and the forthcoming digitisation of the residence permit agenda. During the seminar, representatives of the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior presented the main principles of the proposal, which is currently subject to an inter-ministerial comment procedure.
- On 27 April 2023, EMN Czech Republic organised a [workshop on Destination Europe](#) in the building of the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic. Selected students from Czech universities had the opportunity to have a joint discussion on migration issues. EMN Czech Republic also invited EMN Luxembourg to present some information on Destination Europe through a short video call.
- **EMN Luxembourg:** On 15 February 2023, EMN Luxembourg together with CEFIS and the Integration Department of the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region [organised](#) a training of multipliers with an aim to increase interest and motivate

young people with a foreign background to participate in the upcoming municipal elections.

- On 9 March 2023, EMN Luxembourg [organised](#) an awareness raising event to support the information campaign *Je peux voter* of the Integration Department of the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration and the Greater Region. The event brought together 10 different stakeholders with activities and information dedicated to the importance of social and political participation. Voting in municipal elections is open to all residents of Luxembourg.
- **EMN the Netherlands:** On 9 February 2023 EMN the Netherlands organised its national conference in cooperation with the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) on flexible reception capacity in the Netherlands and Europe. Challenges, good practices and lessons learned on dealing with pressure on the asylum housing system were discussed, as well as the creation of flexible housing capacities within the context of Temporary Protection for refugees from Ukraine.
- **EMN Georgia:** EMN Georgia and EMN Latvia organised a [joint conference](#) “A Commonly Understood Language as a tool in Migration Management: the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary,” which took place in Tbilisi, Georgia on 7 June 2023. The purpose of the conference was to highlight the essence of the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary and its meaning for the EU and beyond (observer countries, other users); and to provide a wider discussion platform, where representatives of EMN NCPs, academic circles and migration practitioners from different countries could share knowledge and experience on their own approaches.

Upcoming EMN National conferences

- **EMN Slovak Republic:** From 3 to 5 July 2023, the 9th EMN Educational Seminar on migration organised by EMN Slovak Republic will take place as an in-person event in Bratislava. The main focus will be put on vulnerabilities and protection of migrants. More information on the programme as well registration will be published at the website: www.emnseminar.sk in due course. Outputs and podcasts from the previous seminars are also available at the seminar’s website.