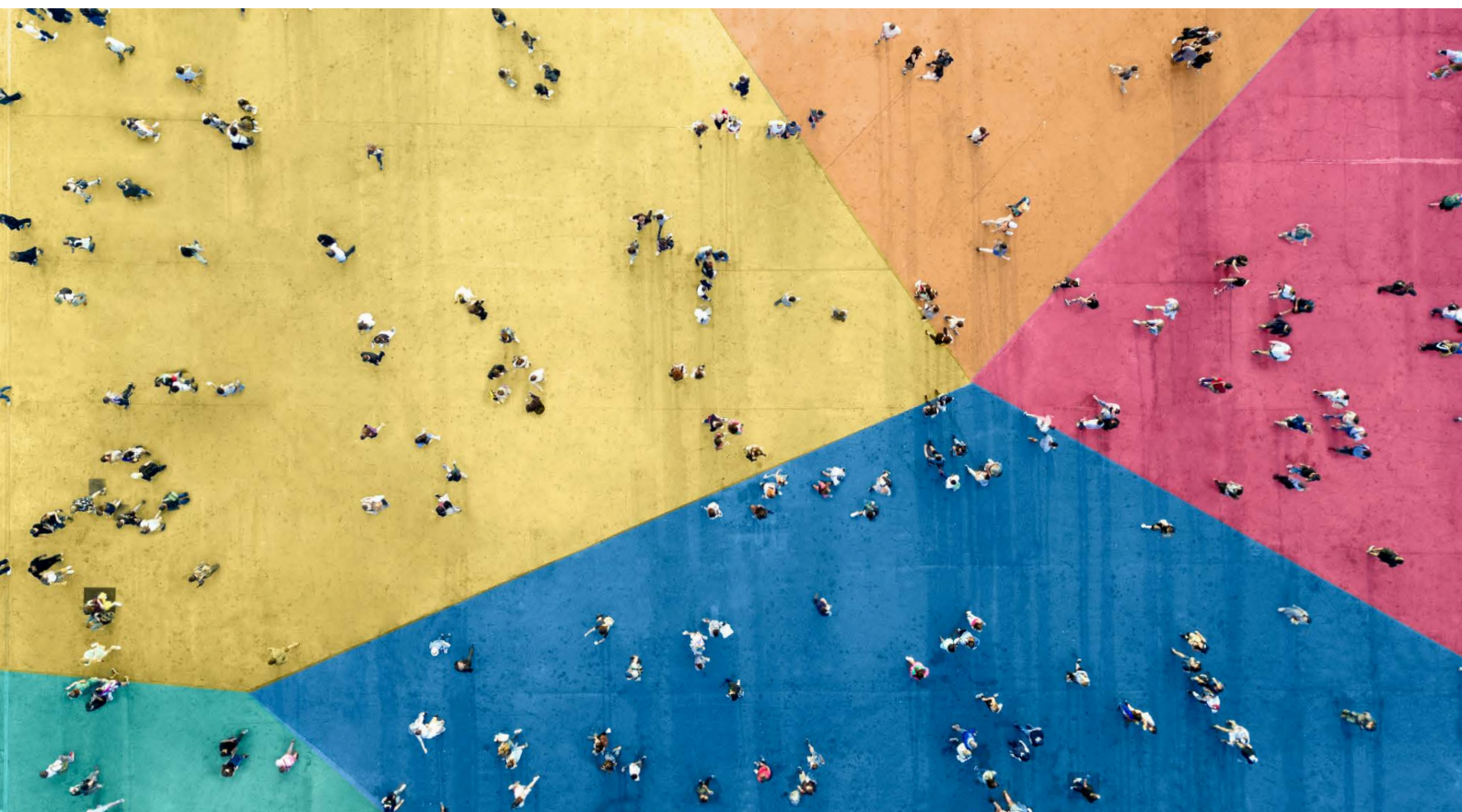




Funded by  
the European Union



# Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023 – Inform

European Migration  
Network

July 2024

## Disclaimer

This Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023 was produced by the European Migration Network (EMN), which comprises EMN [National Contact Points](#) (NCPs) in the EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (NO, GE, MD, UA, ME, AM, RS), the European Commission and is supported by the EMN Service Provider. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of the European Commission, EMN Service Provider or the EMN NCPs, nor are they bound by its conclusions. Similarly, the European Commission, the EMN Service Provider and the EMN NCPs are in no way responsible for any use made of the information provided.

## Explanatory note

This EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023 was prepared on the basis of annual National Reports on Migration and Asylum from 30 EMN NCPs (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK and NO, GE, MD, UA, RS) according to a common template developed by the EMN and completed by EMN NCPs to ensure the greatest possible comparability. More detailed information on the national developments described in this EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2023 may be found in the annual National Reports on Migration and Asylum available for 2023, and it is highly recommended to consult these as well.

The annual National Reports on Migration and Asylum provided by EMN NCPs describe the migration and asylum situation and developments in their respective countries for 2023. National Reports are largely based on desk analysis of existing legislation and policy documents, reports, academic literature, internet resources, and reports and information from national authorities and practitioners. Statistics were sourced from Eurostat, national authorities and other (national) databases.

EU-level updates were provided by the relevant units of DG HOME. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) were also consulted in the development of the Annual Report.

## Published

July 2024

## For more information

EMN website: <http://ec.europa.eu/emn>

EMN LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-migration-network>

EMN Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/emnmigration>

EMN YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/@EMNMigration>

Image: © 2024 Getty Images (cover)

Icons made by Freepik from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com) and [vecteezy.com](http://vecteezy.com)

# CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Key Points                                                                                                                      | 4  |
| 2. New Trends and Developments in Migration and Asylum Across EMN Member and Observer Countries in 2023                            | 5  |
| 3. Introduction                                                                                                                    | 7  |
| 4. Managing Migration in the Context of Growing Pressure at the External Borders                                                   | 10 |
| 5. Adapting National Procedures and Capacities to Growing International Protection Needs                                           | 10 |
| 6. Providing Safe Shelter to Persons Displaced by War in Ukraine                                                                   | 11 |
| 7. Improving Migration and Asylum Processes Through Digitalisation                                                                 | 12 |
| 8. Attracting and Retaining Workers to Address Labour Shortages                                                                    | 12 |
| 9. Enhancing the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in EMN Member and Observer Countries                                       | 13 |
| 10. Protecting Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and Addressing the Needs of Unaccompanied Minors and Other Vulnerable Groups | 14 |
| 11. A Renewed Impetus in Developing International Partnerships on Migration                                                        | 15 |



## 1. KEY POINTS

- 2023 was marked by significant policy developments at European Union (EU) level. In December, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reached an important political agreement on five key regulations of the New Pact on Asylum and Migration. Finalised in 2024, the legislative texts strengthen migration and asylum management in the EU. These include: The Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, the Asylum Procedure Regulation, the Screening Regulation, the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation and the revised Eurodac regulation. At the end of the year, Parliament and Council also reached an agreement on the revised proposal for a Single Permit Directive, which will simplify admission procedures for all third-country workers.
- An increase in irregular migration towards the EU was recorded in 2023. Overall, there were 380 000 illegal border crossings on entry, an increase of 17% compared to 2022.<sup>1</sup> This development prompted EMN Member Countries to reinforce their border management operations and capacities and adopt new measures to tackle migrant smuggling and prevent irregular migration. EMN Member Countries such as Estonia and Finland started building or upgraded their external border infrastructure. Others such as Germany and Slovenia implemented temporary border checks at their internal land borders.
- First time applications for international protection in the EU and Norway (included in Eurostat reporting) increased in 2023, surpassing one million for the first time since 2016. The number of first and total applications for asylum dropped in the reporting EMN Observer Countries (with the exception of Norway) compared to 2022. In response to the growing volume of applicants, EMN Member Countries took measures to make asylum procedures more effective and to deal with pressure on reception capacities. Several EMN Member Countries also expanded access to various types of support – including healthcare for international protection applicants. Some EMN Member and Observer Countries introduced measures to facilitate asylum seekers' access to the national labour market.
- As Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continued throughout 2023, as of April 2024 EMN Member and Observer Countries were providing safe shelter to approximately 4.2 million nationals and former residents of Ukraine fleeing the conflict. The EU extended temporary protection for them to March 2025. In some EMN Member Countries and Norway, the process to renew temporary protection was automatic without any action required on the part of the beneficiary. Several countries introduced measures to integrate beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTP) in respect of housing, education, and access to the labour market.
- In order to align with the requirements of the new EU-wide Entry/Exit System, implement the European Interoperability Framework and/or speed up administrative procedures, several EMN Member and Observer Countries developed digital solutions, including in relation to issuing and renewing residence permits, introducing new visa application procedures, and issuing return decisions. EMN Member Countries upgraded their information technology (IT) capabilities to integrate their national systems into the growing architecture of EU-wide migration databases.
- In legal migration, attracting and retaining talent to meet labour market needs remained a key priority for the majority of EMN Member and Observer Countries. Several governments reported policy and legislative initiatives to ease and simplify admission procedures for various categories of workers, especially highly qualified and skilled workers and workers in shortage occupations. Measures addressing the mobility and entry and/or stay of students and researchers were also on the agenda of the majority of EMN Member and Observer Countries. The prevention of social dumping and labour exploitation was the subject of a comprehensive action plan by the French government.
- Nearly all EMN Member and Observer Countries undertook new initiatives to support the social and economic integration of third-country nationals in 2023. Measures covered education, recognition of skills and academic qualifications, as well as access to a wide range of basic social services, including social security, housing and healthcare. Some countries also introduced action plans or other measures to combat racism and discrimination.
- Protecting victims of trafficking in human beings and addressing the needs of unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups remained important policy concerns in 2023. EMN Member and Observer Countries took important measures including training and awareness-raising on detection, cross-border cooperation (e.g. inspections) or legislative amendments to enhance the protection of victims. Child protection and safeguarding mechanisms for unaccompanied minors (including those with temporary status), as well as support for children and their families more generally, were strengthened in several countries. In some cases, the vulnerable situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) third-country nationals received special attention.
- In 2023, most EMN Member and Observer Countries established and/or strengthened international partnerships with third countries. Cooperation revolved around all major aspects of migration, ranging from the prevention of irregular migration (including border management) and return and readmission to legal and circular migration, mobility of students and researchers, and international protection. Examples of strategic cooperation included Germany's revamped centres for migration and development in cooperation with several third countries, as well as Ukraine's work with different countries to strengthen the legislative base on readmission.

1 European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Annual Brief 2023, 20 March 2024, [https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Annual\\_Brief\\_2023.pdf](https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Annual_Brief_2023.pdf), last accessed on 6 June 2024.



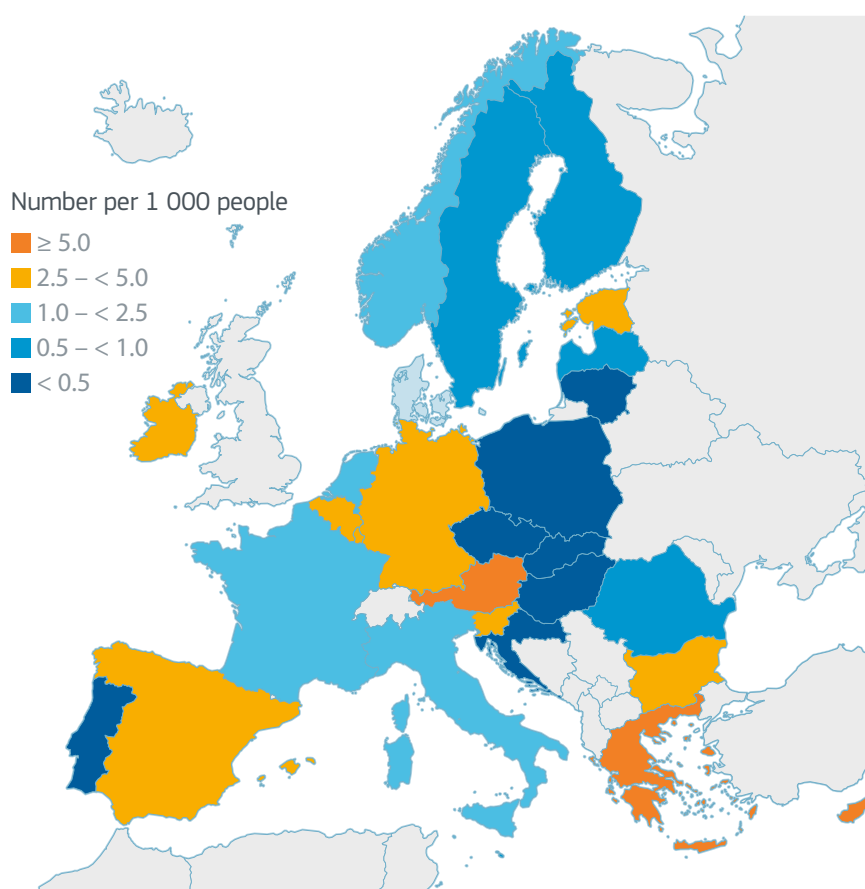
## 2. NEW TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACROSS EMN MEMBER AND OBSERVER COUNTRIES IN 2023

First time applications for international protection in the EU and Norway increased in 2023, surpassing one million for the first time since 2016



# 1 049 020

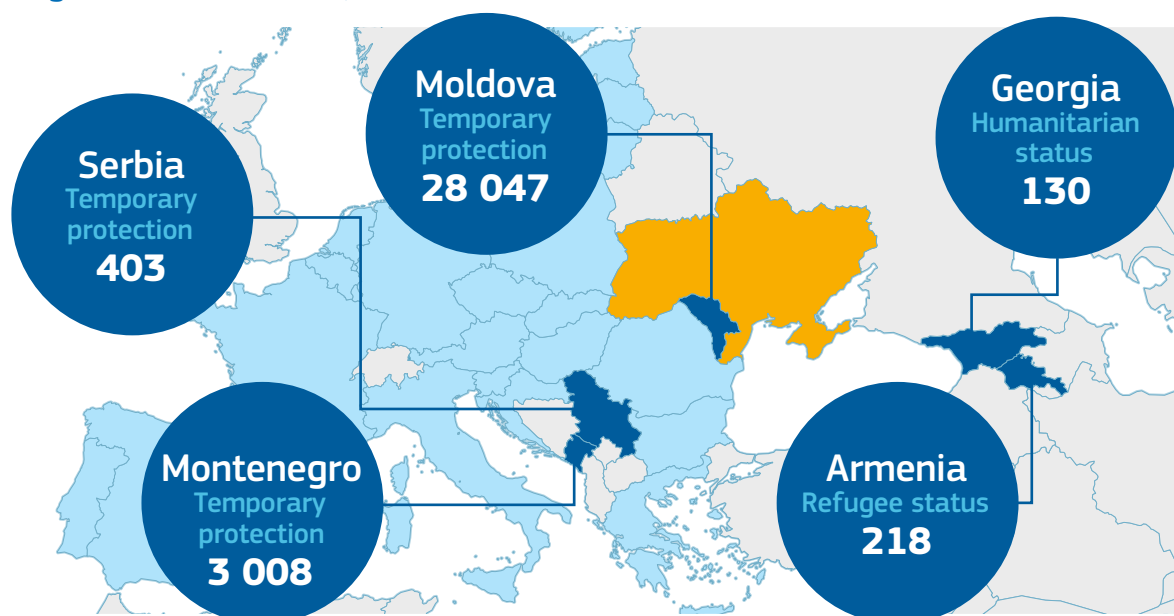
### First-time asylum applicants in 2023



Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_asyappctza](#) and [migr\\_pop1ctz](#))

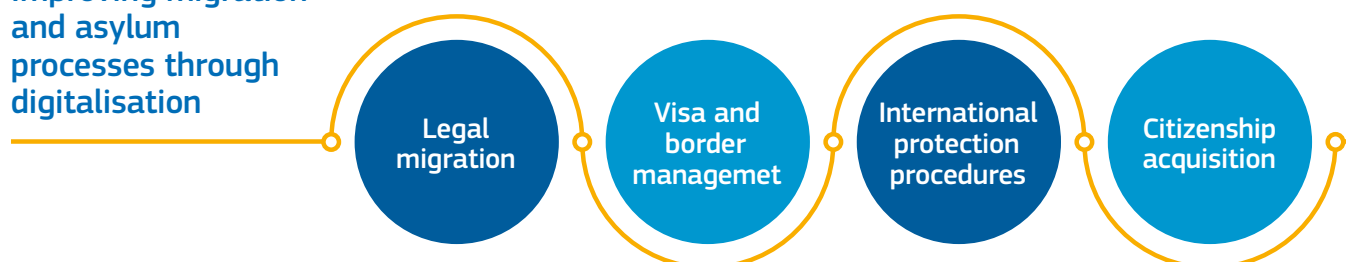
|             | Number           | Number per 1 000 people |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>EU</b>   | <b>1 049 020</b> | <b>2.3</b>              |
| Belgium     | 29 260           | 2.5                     |
| Bulgaria    | 22 390           | 3.5                     |
| Czechia     | 1 130            | 0.1                     |
| Denmark     | 2 355            | 0.4                     |
| Germany     | 329 035          | 3.9                     |
| Estonia     | 3 980            | 2.9                     |
| Ireland     | 13 220           | 2.5                     |
| Greece      | 57 895           | 5.6                     |
| Spain       | 160 460          | 3.3                     |
| France      | 145 095          | 2.1                     |
| Croatia     | 1 635            | 0.4                     |
| Italy       | 130 565          | 2.2                     |
| Cyprus      | 11 660           | 12.7                    |
| Latvia      | 1 625            | 0.9                     |
| Lithuania   | 510              | 0.2                     |
| Luxembourg  | 2 615            | 4.0                     |
| Hungary     | 30               | 0.0                     |
| Malta       | 490              | 0.9                     |
| Netherlands | 38 320           | 2.2                     |
| Austria     | 55 605           | 6.1                     |
| Poland      | 7 720            | 0.2                     |
| Portugal    | 2 600            | 0.2                     |
| Romania     | 9 875            | 0.5                     |
| Slovenia    | 7 185            | 3.4                     |
| Slovakia    | 370              | 0.1                     |
| Finland     | 4 450            | 0.8                     |
| Sweden      | 8 945            | 0.9                     |
| Norway      | 5 230            | 1.0                     |

## Types of protection provided by EMN Observer Countries to those fleeing the war in Ukraine, 2023

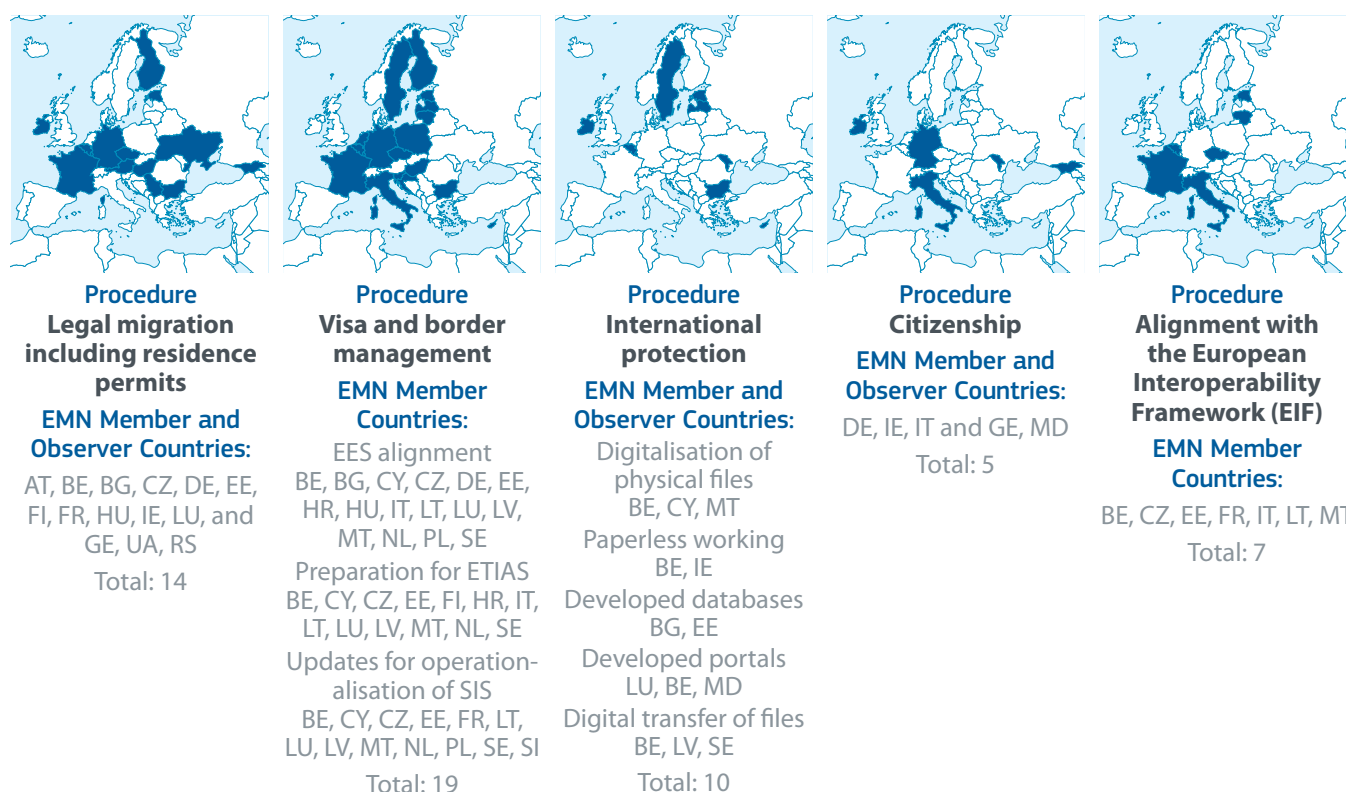


Figures refer to new temporary protection statuses provided in 2023, not those extended in 2023. See table 3 in section 4.4 for figures referring to 2022.  
Source: relevant authorities from EMN Observer Countries

## Improving migration and asylum processes through digitalisation



## Digitalisation of migration procedures in 2023 in EMN Member and Observer Countries



## Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups

EMN Member and Observer Countries took different measures to support vulnerable groups in situations of migration, including:



**Victims of trafficking in human beings**



**Children**



**Victims of gender based violence**



**LGBTIQ third-country nationals**



## 3. INTRODUCTION

The year 2023 was marked by geopolitical instability in the European neighbourhood. In October, in response to the persisting challenge of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the stabilisation of the number of BoTP (at approximately 4.2 million in the EU as of April 2024), the Council of the EU extended temporary protection for persons displaced due to the war in Ukraine for an additional year, until March 2025.<sup>2</sup> Fuelled by political instability in West Africa and in the Middle East, the year also saw an ongoing resurgence of high levels of irregular migration (following a drop in 2020). There was a further increase of applications for international protection overall in EMN Member Countries and Norway, whilst applications decreased in other EMN Observer Countries.

After years of limited change, the beginning of 2023 saw the share of third-country nationals regularly residing in the EU and Norway increase in both relative and absolute terms, growing from 5.3% (or approximately 24 million) to 6.1% of the total EU population and Norway (or 28 million) (see Figures 1 and 2).

Migratory pressure was at its highest since 2015–2016: more than 380 000 illegal border crossings on entry to the EU were detected – 17% higher than 2022.<sup>3</sup> Much of the increase reflected the growing share of migrant arrivals at sea borders, from the Central Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean and Western African routes. For the first time since 2015–2016 applications for international protection surpassed one million in the EU and Norway. Syrians continued to comprise the vast majority of applicants, followed by Afghan and Turkish nationals.

To address security concerns, prevent irregular migration and combat migrant smuggling, EMN Member Countries reported actions to strengthen border management operations, including reinstating temporary internal border controls or building new border infrastructure, streamlining forced and voluntary return operations, and reinforcing cooperation with third countries of origin and transit throughout 2023. Countries such as Estonia and Finland

started building or upgraded their external border infrastructure. Among other countries, Germany and Slovenia reported the implementation of temporary border checks at their internal land borders. France extended its cooperation with the United Kingdom (UK) on the management of the Franco-British area to address illegal crossings.

2023 also witnessed the inclusion of new members in the Schengen area. In addition to Croatia joining Schengen from 1 January 2023, Romania and Bulgaria also completed their respective Schengen evaluations during the year, keeping them on track to join the Schengen area from 31 March 2024.<sup>4</sup>

In the realm of international protection, countries adopted measures to cope with the increased influx of applicants, for example to deal with pressure on reception capacities, including by (where possible) expanding accommodation infrastructure or digitalising the asylum procedure. Some EMN Member and Observer Countries also introduced measures to facilitate asylum seekers' access to the national labour market.

In December 2023, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reached an important political agreement on five key regulations of the New Pact on Asylum and Migration.<sup>7</sup> Finalised in 2024, the legislative texts strengthen migration and asylum management in the EU. The Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (EU) 2024/1351<sup>5</sup> will replace the Dublin Regulation 604/2013/EU. It will clarify the responsibility criteria while establishing a flexible mandatory solidarity mechanism to support countries experiencing a high number of irregular arrivals. The Asylum Procedure Regulation (EU) 2024/1348<sup>6</sup> and the Screening Regulation (EU) 2024/1356<sup>7</sup> will improve the management of the asylum system by introducing mandatory security, identity, health and vulnerability checks for all irregular migrants and asylum seekers and allowing authorities to swiftly identify the correct procedure (asylum or return) applicable to persons entering the EU without fulfilling its entry conditions. The Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation

<sup>2</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409 of 19 October 2023 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202302409](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302409), last accessed on 7 April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> FRONTEX, Annual Brief 2023, 20 March 2024, [https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Annual\\_Brief\\_2023.pdf](https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Annual_Brief_2023.pdf), last accessed on 6 June 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Council Decision 2010/0820 (NLE) on the full application of the provisions of the Schengen *acquis* in the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania of 30 December 2023, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-17132-2023-INIT/en/pdf>, last accessed on 22 April 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1351>, last accessed on 6 July 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL\\_202401348](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL_202401348), last accessed on 6 July 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 introducing the screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amending Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1356/oj>, last accessed on 6 July 2024.

(EU) 2024/1359<sup>8</sup> will allow EU Member States to deviate from certain rules on asylum and return procedures in case of instrumentalisation of migration by third countries. With the Eurodac Regulation (EU) 2024/1358,<sup>9</sup> the Council and the Parliament also agreed on the expansion of the Eurodac fingerprint database to better tackle irregular movements and monitor the paths of asylum seekers and persons in an irregular situation throughout the EU.

EMN Member and Observer Countries continued to take cross-cutting measures on migration, such as in France, where the year 2023 was marked by the examination of the law 'to control immigration, improve integration. The law was presented to the Council of Ministers in February 2023 and promulgated in January 2024, following a decision of the Constitutional Council. The main objectives of the law were to: control access to residence and combat illegal immigration; ensure better integration of foreign nationals through work and language; improve the system for removing foreign nationals who pose a serious threat to public order; take action to ensure that removal decisions are effectively implemented; sanction the exploitation of foreign nationals and control borders, undertake structural reform of the asylum system and simplify litigation rules.

To address increasing labour shortages and the growing demand for highly skilled workers, several EMN Member and Observer Countries implemented measures to

facilitate the entry and stay of several categories of workers, as well as students and researchers. In November 2023, as part of a Skills and Talent Mobility package, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool to match EU employers with jobseekers in third countries in EU-wide shortage occupations at all skills levels.<sup>10</sup> In December 2023, the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the proposal for a Single Permit Directive,<sup>11</sup> which will simplify admission procedures for all third-country workers.<sup>12</sup>

Nearly all EMN Member and Observer Countries continued to adopt initiatives supporting the social and economic integration of third-country nationals in 2023. Measures spanned education, recognition of skills and academic qualifications, as well as access to a wide range of basic social services, including social security, housing, and healthcare. Some countries also introduced action plans or other measures to combat racism and discrimination.

Likewise, introducing measures to protect and support vulnerable groups, such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, single women or children and their family remained on the agenda of several EMN Member and Observer Countries. In some cases, countries also paid special attention to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) third-country nationals.

8 Regulation (EU) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1147, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1359>, last accessed on 6 July 2024.

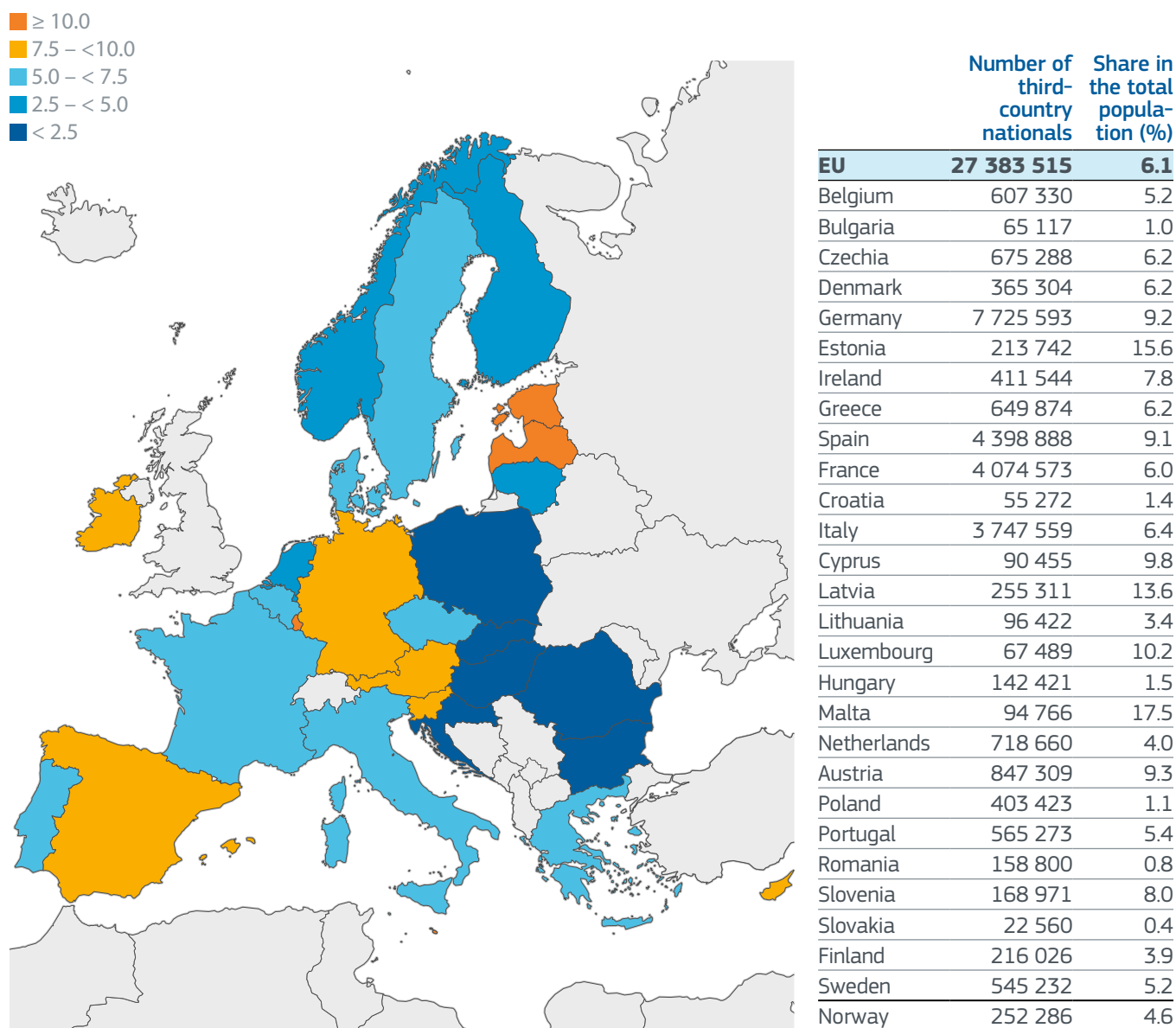
9 Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of biometric data in order to effectively apply Regulations (EU) 2024/1351 and (EU) 2024/1350 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Directive 2001/55/EC and to identify illegally staying third-country nationals and stateless persons and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1358>, last accessed on 6 July 2024.

10 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an EU talent pool (SEC(2023) 716 final) - (SWD(2023) 716 final) - (SWD(2023) 717 final) - [SWD(2023) 718 final], [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d74d42e8-96b7-416b-b5b7-b3b7334317d8\\_en?filename=Regulation%20establishing%20an%20EU%20Talent%20Pool\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d74d42e8-96b7-416b-b5b7-b3b7334317d8_en?filename=Regulation%20establishing%20an%20EU%20Talent%20Pool_en.pdf), last accessed on 18 February 2024.

11 Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State (recast), COM/2022/655 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A655%3AFIN&qid=1651221925581>, last accessed on 18 February 2024.

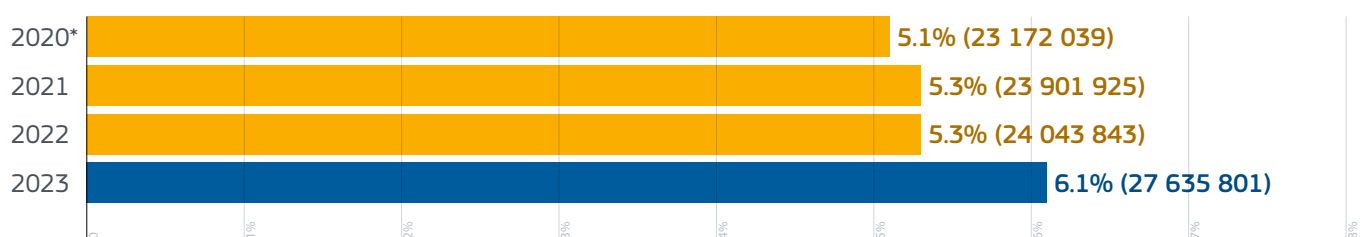
12 European Commission, 'Commission welcomes political agreement on revised rules for a combined work and residence permit in the European Union', Press release, 20 December 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_6710](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6710), last accessed on 18 February 2024.

**Figure 1: Share of third-country nationals in the total population, EU and Norway, 1 January 2023**



Note: Estonia and Latvia, the number of third-country nationals includes recognised non-citizens.  
Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_pop1ctz](#)), date of extraction: 8 April 2024.

**Figure 2: Share of third-country nationals in the total population, EU and Norway, 1 January 2020-2023**



Note: including recognised non-citizens.

\* Excluding Cyprus and Malta for which data are not available.

Source: Eurostat ([migr\\_pop1ctz](#)), date of extraction: 8 April 2024.



## 4. MANAGING MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GROWING PRESSURE AT THE EXTERNAL BORDERS

The protection of the EU's external borders, prevention of irregular migration, and the fight against migrant smuggling remained high priorities in the EMN Member and Observer Countries throughout 2023. The return of third-country nationals without permission to stay was also a priority topic in migration management at EU and national level. In response to an increase in illegal border crossings, nine EMN Member Countries<sup>13</sup> stepped up their border management capabilities and/or reinforced border controls. Incidents at the land borders with Belarus were reported on a daily basis throughout 2023,<sup>14</sup> while attempts to instrumentalise migration at the Finnish-Russian border were recorded towards the end of 2023.<sup>15</sup> As a result, several EMN Member Countries implemented new measures to protect the EU's external borders: Estonia completed a significant portion of its Southeastern border infrastructure, Finland started constructing similar infrastructure and implemented border closures, and Latvia introduced procedures for refusing entry to vehicles from the Russian Federation. Poland introduced a legislative amendment to extend the entry ban where a person is believed to pose a threat to national security, public security, public order and the Polish interest, or when there is a fear that the foreigner may conduct terrorist acts or espionage or is suspected of having committed one of these crimes.

Eight EMN Member Countries<sup>16</sup> responded to security risks arising from increased migratory flows and secondary movements by extending, reintroducing, or introducing different internal border control measures. Slovenia extended temporary controls with Croatia and Hungary, while Germany introduced temporary checks at land borders with Austria and reintroduced such checks at land borders with Poland, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. During the year, 10 EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>17</sup> introduced

legislative or policy changes to prosecute smugglers, establish more stringent sanctions for smuggling activities, and/or counter irregular migration. Conversely, France and Greece adopted measures granting access to legal solutions for certain categories of irregularly staying migrants on their territory.

Two EMN Member Countries continued to strengthen their operational capacity in respect of border management.<sup>18</sup> For example, France extended its cooperation with the UK on the management of the Franco-British area in order to limit the number of illegal crossings.

The European Commission launched several initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of return proceedings and readmission cooperation with third countries along major migration routes.<sup>19</sup> The renewal of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in March 2023 enables EU Member States<sup>20</sup> and Schengen Associated Countries to exchange information and monitor compliance with third-country nationals' return decisions.<sup>21</sup> To further facilitate and speed up returns, the European Commission encouraged EU Member States to use mutual recognition of return decisions when implementing Directive 2008/115/EC and to establish strong cooperation between authorities responsible for the decisions ending legal stay and those responsible for the issuance of return decisions.<sup>22</sup> Six EMN Member Countries undertook initiatives to streamline their return procedures and improve their effectiveness,<sup>23</sup> while 15 EMN Member and Observer Countries introduced measures on reintegration support.<sup>24</sup> Several EMN Member Countries introduced measures to increase security in detention centres<sup>25</sup> and implemented changes on alternatives to detention<sup>26</sup> to ease pressure on available capacity.<sup>27</sup>



## 5. ADAPTING NATIONAL PROCEDURES AND CAPACITIES TO GROWING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION NEEDS

Throughout 2023, many EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>28</sup> introduced policy, legislative and operational changes in relation to international protection. In December 2023, the Council of the EU and the European

Parliament reached a political agreement on the five key regulations presented under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum: the Asylum Procedures Regulation, Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR), Screening

13 AT, CY, CZ, FR, HU, IT, LT, PL, SK.

14 European Border and Coast Guard Agency, 'FRONTEX Annual Brief', 2023, [https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Annual\\_Brief\\_2023.pdf](https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/Annual_Brief_2023.pdf), last accessed on 12 April 2024.

15 Ibid.

16 AT, CZ, DE, EE, FR, PL, SI, SK.

17 BE, BG, CZ, DE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, and UA.

18 FR, LT.

19 European Commission, 'Towards an Operational Strategy for More Effective Returns', COM(2023) 45 final, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:3cc-3ccc-9bd8-11ed-b508-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:3cc-3ccc-9bd8-11ed-b508-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF), last accessed on 24 June 2024; European Commission, 'EU Action Plan for Western Mediterranean and Atlantic Routes', 2023, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b5aef566-afca-4b90-bc01-0c3d0a7f67d5\\_en?filename=EU%20Action%20Plan%20for%20the%20Western%20Mediterranean%20and%20Atlantic%20Routes.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b5aef566-afca-4b90-bc01-0c3d0a7f67d5_en?filename=EU%20Action%20Plan%20for%20the%20Western%20Mediterranean%20and%20Atlantic%20Routes.pdf), last accessed on 19 February 2024; European Commission, 'EU Action Plan for the Eastern Mediterranean route', YYYY, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/eu-action-plan-eastern-mediterranean-route\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/eu-action-plan-eastern-mediterranean-route_en), last accessed on 19 February 2024.

20 Except CY and IE. BG and RO joined on 31 March 2024.

21 European Commission, Schengen Information System, n.d., [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-information-system\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-information-system_en), last accessed on 12 April 2024.

22 Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/682 of 16 March 2023 on mutual recognition of return decisions and expediting returns when implementing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H0682>, last accessed on 24 June 2024.

23 FI, FR, IE, IT, LU, PL.

24 BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, HU, IT, LT, MT, NL, PL, SE, and MD.

25 BE, CY, CZ, EE, FI, HU, IT, LU, PL, SE, and NO.

26 BE, HU, IT, LT, LU, SE.

27 IT.

28 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, and MD, RS.

Regulation, Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation, and the revised Eurodac Regulation.<sup>29</sup> The legislation targets a more effective EU asylum system and enhanced solidarity across the EU Member States (see section 1.3).

To cope with the increasing number of asylum applications, nine EMN Member Countries<sup>30</sup> took measures to expand the ways in which asylum can be lodged and to improve the effectiveness of asylum procedures. Estonia and Lithuania expanded the number of locations for lodging asylum applications, while the Netherlands' government granted the national immigration agency (Immigration and Naturalisation Service, IND) a nine-month extension to examine asylum applications submitted between 1 January 2023 and 1 January 2024. France expanded its use of videoconferencing, while Luxembourg (as per the Coalition Agreement 2023-28) considered the possibility of using DNA tests to prove family ties in the absence of documentation.

On reception, 11 EMN Member Countries<sup>31</sup> reported capacity issues and adopted measures to increase and improve accommodation facilities to ensure that the right to accommodation is guaranteed, especially for the most vulnerable groups. For example, in the Netherlands the 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. In four countries, international protection recipients and/or applicants also

benefitted from new policy measures to increase or expand access to healthcare.<sup>32</sup> Ireland introduced a priority public health programme providing applicants for international protection and BoTP with catch-up immunisations and infectious disease screening.

Eight EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>33</sup> introduced measures to facilitate asylum seekers' access to the national labour market. For example, Belgium's Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) strengthened its partnerships with private actors and public employment services (PES) to foster labour market integration of applicants of international protection. Four EMN Member and Observer Countries reduced the waiting period to access the labour market after submitting an application for international protection.<sup>34</sup>

Following the launch of a European Commission pledging exercise in May 2023, 14 EU Member States collectively agreed in December to offer nearly 61 000 new places for resettlement and humanitarian admission.<sup>35</sup> Four EU Member States reported changes to national quotas for resettlement compared to the previous year (two reduced the national quota,<sup>36</sup> one increased,<sup>37</sup> one renewed<sup>38</sup>) and related achievements in 2023. This included specific attention to resettling women, girls and LGBTQ+ persons.

The Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM) was continued.



## 6. PROVIDING SAFE SHELTER TO PERSONS DISPLACED BY WAR IN UKRAINE

The situation of persons fleeing Ukraine remained high on the policy agenda of many EMN Member Countries, Norway, Georgia, Moldova, and Serbia. A major development in 2023 was the decision by the Council of the EU to extend temporary protection for such persons until 4 March 2025 across all EU Member States.<sup>39</sup> The Norwegian government proposed an amendment to its national Immigration Act to allow for the extension of the period of temporary protection on an individual basis from three to five years. Georgia also amended its legislation to allow Ukrainian citizens to enter and stay in the country without a visa for two years (instead of one).

The vast majority of EMN Member and Observer Countries reported developments in temporary protection.<sup>40</sup> Given

the high number of renewals expected, 13 EMN Member Countries and Norway<sup>41</sup> renewed temporary protection status automatically while some other countries required BoTP to lodge a request for renewal. Other developments included a shift towards long-term housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection,<sup>42</sup> renewed efforts to support the integration of children from Ukraine into national education systems<sup>43</sup> and measures to enhance access to the labour market.<sup>44</sup>

29 Council of the EU, 'The Council and the European Parliament reach breakthrough in reform of EU asylum and migration system', Press release, 20 December 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/20/the-council-and-the-european-parliament-reach-breakthrough-in-reform-of-eu-asylum-and-migration-system/>, last accessed on 8 April 2024.

30 BE, BG, EE, FR, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL.

31 BE, CY, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL.

32 BE, IE, IT, LU, MT.

33 BE, CY, EL, HR, LT, LU and MD, RS.

34 CY, EL, HR, and RS.

35 European Commission, 'EU announces 61 000 new resettlement and humanitarian admission places at the Global Refugee Forum', Press release, 15 December 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_6633](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6633), last accessed on 21 April 2024.

36 FI, SE.

37 DE.

38 MT.

39 Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409 of 19 October 2023 extending temporary protection as introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202302409](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302409), last accessed on 7 April 2024.

40 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SK, and NO, MD.

41 AT, CY, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, SK, and NO.

42 BE, CY, CZ, EL, FI, FR, HU, LT, NL, PL.

43 AT, BE, EE, FR, HR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SK and NO, MD.

44 AT, BE, CZ, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, SE, SK, and MD.



## 7. IMPROVING MIGRATION AND ASYLUM PROCESSES THROUGH DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation was a cross-cutting trend in all major areas of migration and asylum. Such developments aimed to streamline and optimise migration management processes and were driven by longstanding challenges such as administrative backlogs and long processing times for applications.

Fourteen EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>45</sup> implemented changes to digitise their legal migration procedures and speed up the process of issuing and renewing various types of residence permits. France, Hungary, and Luxembourg all introduced the possibility to apply online for a wide range of permits. Georgia's government launched a new online portal that shares information on the certification of employment intermediaries abroad, as well as information for Georgian citizens abroad and third-country nationals in Georgia.<sup>46</sup> Several EMN Member Countries and Georgia also reported the introduction of digital tools for aspects of integration, such as making language and civic integration provisions more available and flexible, or determining migrants' eligibility for employment applications.<sup>47</sup>

Digitalisation in visa and border management was strongly driven by policy and legislative developments at EU level. In line with the EU's policy to encourage the digitalisation of public services, several EMN Member Countries reported initiatives to fully digitalise visa applications. Throughout 2023, 16 EMN Member Countries<sup>48</sup> have either amended existing laws, implemented new regulations, or upgraded their border control systems to align with the requirements

of the Entry/Exit System (EES) for those travelling for short stays,<sup>49</sup> expected to be launched in late 2024. Likewise, 13 EMN Member Countries<sup>50</sup> implemented changes in preparation for the implementation of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) for travelling for short stays.<sup>51</sup> Thirteen EMN Member Countries reported updates to the operationalisation of the SIS.<sup>52</sup>

The international protection process was also impacted by digitalisation. Three EMN Member Countries reported measures on the digitalisation of physical files,<sup>53</sup> two moved towards paperless working methods,<sup>54</sup> two developed databases,<sup>55</sup> three developed/launched portals,<sup>56</sup> and three worked on their ability to digitally transfer/handover files.<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, five EMN Member and Observer Countries adopted initiatives to simplify citizenship acquisition by moving the process entirely online and introducing more user-friendly tools.<sup>58</sup>

In 2023, seven EMN Member Countries implemented updates on the development and implementation of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF).<sup>59</sup> The latest version of the EIF was adopted in 2017 and guides public administrations on setting up interoperable digital public services.<sup>60</sup> In 2023, efforts related to national legal and organisational amendments for compliance with the EIF Regulation (2024/903/EU)<sup>61</sup> and steps to achieve interoperability between IT systems.<sup>62</sup>



## 8. ATTRACTING AND RETAINING WORKERS TO ADDRESS LABOUR SHORTAGES

Attracting skilled workers to address labour shortages in critical professions remained a high priority at EU and national level throughout 2023. In November's Skills and Talent Mobility package, the European Commission put forward a series of new initiatives to make the EU more

attractive and address skills and labour shortages across the Union.<sup>63</sup> Notable measures included a proposal for a regulation establishing an EU Talent Pool to match EU employers with jobseekers in third countries in shortage occupations,<sup>64</sup> as well as measures to develop national capacity

45 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, LU, and GE, UA, RS.

46 Georgia, 'Labour Information Migration Portal', n.d., [https://labourmigration.moh.gov.ge/?lang\\_id=en](https://labourmigration.moh.gov.ge/?lang_id=en), last accessed on 9 March 2024.

47 AT, BE, DE, EL, FR, SE, and GE.

48 BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE.

49 European Commission, 'Entry/Exit System (EES)', n.d., [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/smart-borders/entry-exit-system\\_en#:~:text=The%20Entry%20Exit%20System%20%28EES%29%20will%20be%20an%20automated,each%20time%20they%20cross%20an%20EU%20external%20border](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/smart-borders/entry-exit-system_en#:~:text=The%20Entry%20Exit%20System%20%28EES%29%20will%20be%20an%20automated,each%20time%20they%20cross%20an%20EU%20external%20border), last accessed on 13 March 2024.

50 BE, CY, CZ, EE, FI, HR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SE.

51 EMN, 'EMN Glossary', v 10.0, 2024, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/european-travel-information-and-authorisation-system-etias\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/european-travel-information-and-authorisation-system-etias_en), last accessed on 24 June 2024.

52 BE, CY, CZ, EE, FR, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI.

53 BE, CY, MT.

54 BE, IE.

55 BG, EE.

56 BE, LU and MD.

57 BE, LV, SE.

58 DE, IE, IT and GE, MD.

59 BE, CZ, EE, FR, IT, LT, MT.

60 European Commission, 'ISA<sup>2</sup> - Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses, and citizens', n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/eif\\_en/](https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/eif_en/), last accessed on 13 March 2024.

61 EE, IT.

62 CZ, FR, MT.

63 European Commission, 'Commission proposes new measures on skills and talent to help address critical labour shortages', Press release, 15 November 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_5740](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_5740), last accessed on 18 February 2024.

64 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an EU talent pool (SEC(2023) 716 final) - (SWD(2023) 716 final) - (SWD(2023) 717 final) - (SWD(2023) 718 final), [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d74d42e8-96b7-416b-b5b7-b3b7334317d8\\_en?filename=Regulation%20establishing%20an%20EU%20Talent%20Pool\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d74d42e8-96b7-416b-b5b7-b3b7334317d8_en?filename=Regulation%20establishing%20an%20EU%20Talent%20Pool_en.pdf), last accessed on 18 February 2024.

to simplify and expedite the recognition of third-country qualifications and skills.<sup>65</sup> In December 2023, the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the revision of the Single Permit Directive.<sup>66</sup> The final text will simplify admission procedures for all third-country workers and provide for stronger safeguards for those at risk of exploitation.<sup>67</sup>

To facilitate admission of workers in highly qualified and shortage occupations, 16 of the reporting EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>68</sup> reported changes to ease requirements, extend eligible occupations lists and simplify various procedures. In Austria, where the number of shortage occupations reached an all-time high in 2023, the government simplified language requirements for Red-White-Red Card applicants and adopted the first cross-government strategic action plan to tackle the shortage of skilled workers. The plan covers (1) skilled immigration, (2) labour market integration of migrants (in particular, those granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status) already living in Austria, and (3) labour market integration of BoTP. The Czech Republic launched a programme for 'digital nomads' to attract IT specialists. Thirteen EU Member States<sup>69</sup> amended or started parliamentary consultation processes to amend their legislation on highly skilled workers to integrate the new provisions of the revised Blue Card Directive (2021/1883/EU),<sup>70</sup> namely its more flexible admission criteria (see section 2.2.3).

Norway, Ukraine and Serbia also took policy initiatives to attract highly skilled workers, for example establishing quotas for residence permits for highly qualified specialists (IT, doctors),<sup>71</sup> or increasing existing quotas.<sup>72</sup> Fifteen EMN Member and Observer Countries introduced measures to facilitate the entry and/or stay of students and researchers.<sup>73</sup> In four EMN Member and Observer Countries,<sup>74</sup> measures in this field were more restrictive, such as tightening entry requirements to educational institutions.<sup>75</sup>

Twelve EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>76</sup> adopted measures to prevent social dumping and labour exploitation. Three countries in particular increased and/or strengthened fines and penalties for companies for illegally employing third-country nationals.<sup>77</sup> In May 2023, the French government published a national plan to combat illegal employment for 2023–2027, containing thirty-four measures to combat fake documentation and fraudulent legal statuses, tackle human trafficking, improve monitoring of illegal employment, introduce new penalties for employers, and provide for compensation for damage caused by illegal employment.<sup>78</sup>

Eleven EMN Member Countries reported developments on family reunification.<sup>79</sup> Developments in EU and national jurisprudence led to changes in Belgium and the Netherlands, in particular.



## 9. ENHANCING THE INTEGRATION OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS IN EMN MEMBER AND OBSERVER COUNTRIES

Almost all EMN Member and Observer Countries reported measures to foster third-country nationals' general participation and inclusion in their host society.<sup>80</sup>

Over half of the EMN Member Countries<sup>81</sup> and Moldova reported updates to their national or regional integration strategies. Developments were driven by the need to coordinate integration processes between stakeholders,<sup>82</sup> ensure migrants' local language proficiency,<sup>83</sup> emphasise individual responsibility in the integration process,<sup>84</sup> include a broader group of people and ensure everyone can

participate in society,<sup>85</sup> and promote the labour market integration of migrants.<sup>86</sup> In October 2023, Ireland launched a public consultation to inform the development of a new migrant integration strategy to replace the strategy that concluded at the end of 2021.

To reduce the burden on the integration structures in receiving countries, two EMN Member Countries<sup>87</sup> reported adopting pre-departure integration measures. Supporting future integration, Malta offered visa applicants access to online services in their country of origin to access

65 European Commission Recommendation of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, COM(2023) 7700 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52022PC0655>, last accessed on 6 July 2024.

66 Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State (recast), COM(2022) 655 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A655%3AFIN&qid=1651221925581>, last accessed on 18 February 2024.

67 European Commission, 'Commission welcomes political agreement on revised rules for a combined work and residence permit in the European Union', Press release, 20 December 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_6710](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6710), last accessed on 18 February 2024.

68 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, SI, SK, and GE, MD, RS.

69 BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, SK.

70 Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021L1883>, last accessed on 18 February 2024.

71 UA.

72 NO.

73 CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, SE, SK, and NO, GE, UA.

74 CY, FI, SE, and NO.

75 CY.

76 BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, IT, LU, PL, SE, SK, and GE.

77 BE, CZ, FR, LU.

78 Government of France, 'Plan national de lutte contre le travail illégal (2023–2027)', [https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/pnliti\\_23\\_27.pdf](https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/pnliti_23_27.pdf), last accessed on 9 March 2024.

79 BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, IT, LT, NL, SE, SI, SK.

80 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, and NO, GE, MD.

81 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, MT, SE, SI.

82 CZ, FR, HR, IT.

83 BE, DE, EE, FR, SI.

84 FI, SE.

85 LU.

86 AT, BE.

87 DE, MT.

pre-departure orientation information. Twenty-one EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>88</sup> launched additional integration measures in education (e.g. language courses, additional classes in primary and secondary schools for migrant children) or social orientation. Cyprus introduced the 'Learning Greek in preschool' programme, which provided extra training for preschool teachers of children with a migrant background. Estonia introduced several programmes supporting municipalities and local educators in the transition to primarily Estonian language education. Four countries amended or considered changes to their compulsory civic integration programmes.<sup>89</sup>

To attract foreign talent and address skill shortages, eight EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>90</sup> implemented measures to improve the recognition of skills and academic qualifications and improve third-country nationals' access to the labour market. In Georgia, 11 vocational schools gained the right to recognise non-formal education by 2023 within 11 areas, including business and administration, information and communication technology (ICT), education, healthcare and agriculture. To enhance employability of third-country nationals, the Czech Republic granted advanced Czech language learners access to subsidised training courses to improve their digital skills and competencies. In Germany, the MY TURN project aimed to improve the long-term integration of women with migration experience and foreign citizenship into the labour market and to counteract possible (further) entrenchment of dependence on social support services.

Fifteen countries reported developments in relation to third-country nationals' access to basic services, including social protection,<sup>91</sup> social security,<sup>92</sup> housing<sup>93</sup> and healthcare.<sup>94</sup> Authorities reported enhanced third-country nationals' access to pensions from another EU country,<sup>95</sup> training on the rights of foreign nationals for public service staff responsible for providing access to rights,<sup>96</sup> and legal

amendments giving persons with temporary residency permits and subsidiary protection status access to social allowances on an equal footing with permanent residents.<sup>97</sup> While the Belgian region of Flanders increased the Dutch language proficiency level required to access social housing, Greece implemented the Supported Living Houses programme, offering adult beneficiaries of international protection with disabilities more access to living and care services, as well as recreational and socialisation activities.

Five EMN Member Countries<sup>98</sup> adopted national and regional action plans against racism and discrimination. Spain introduced a Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion, against Racism and Xenophobia (2023-2027) to increase the inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers in society. Five EMN Member Countries implemented or improved other measures to combat racism and discrimination by adopting new legislation,<sup>99</sup> introducing a dedicated fund for anti-racism projects,<sup>100</sup> increasing penalties for hate crimes or related offences,<sup>101</sup> improving responses to online cybercrimes and hate speech towards migrants,<sup>102</sup> or strengthening laws/measures against discrimination in the workplace.<sup>103</sup>

On the acquisition of citizenship, six EMN Member and Observer Countries,<sup>104</sup> reported measures aimed at simplifying the process through updated and clearer legislation and/or by introducing more user-friendly tools. Overall, new developments in national legislation show a clear trend towards reducing barriers and loosening stringent criteria to apply for citizenship and naturalisation.<sup>105</sup> In August 2023, to further facilitate the integration of foreign residents, the German federal government submitted a draft of a new Citizenship Law that streamlines the process to receive German nationality, including a reduction of the residence period required to apply for citizenship from eight to five years.



## 10. PROTECTING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS AND ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

Throughout 2023, nine EMN Member Countries launched or prepared to finalise new action plans to counter trafficking in human beings.<sup>106</sup> France's third National Plan to Combat the Exploitation and Trafficking of Human Beings 2024-2027 was presented in December

2023, following an especially broad consultation process involving 30 foundations and civil society associations, 10 ministries, international partners, and the independent national rapporteur. Training and awareness-raising actions to increase the ability of professionals and the general

88 AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and NO, GE, MD.

89 BE, FR, NL, SE.

90 AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, FR, LU, and GE.

91 BE, FR.

92 IT, LV, NL, SE.

93 AT, BE, FR, EL, IE, LU, SE, and NO, MD.

94 CZ, SK as well as BE, IE, IT, LU, MT who provided (improved) access specifically to beneficiaries of or applicants for international protection.

95 IT.

96 BE, FR.

97 LV.

98 BE, HR, FR, IE, LV.

99 BE, LU.

100 IE.

101 AT, LU.

102 CZ.

103 BE, FI, LU.

104 DE, IE, IT, NL and GE, MD.

105 BE, DE, FR, IE, IT, LU, NL and GE.

106 AT, CY, DE, FR, HR, IE, MT, NL, SI.

public to detect trafficking in human beings were reported by 20 EMN Member and Observer Countries.<sup>107</sup> Likewise, 13 national authorities in EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>108</sup> collaborated to establish legislation, training, national councils and inspections. Actions to promote the protection of third-country national victims of trafficking in human beings (e.g. improved access to legal aid in litigation<sup>109</sup> or increased funding for national support centres<sup>110</sup>) were recorded by 13 EMN Member and Observer Countries.<sup>111</sup>

To improve the reception of children and in particular unaccompanied minors, seven countries reported changes to improve child protection mechanisms through various approaches.<sup>112</sup> Austria introduced a new child protection concept whereby each federal reception centre supporting minors must have a child protection officer, while France implemented capacity-building initiatives targeting judicial youth protection staff. Five EMN Member Countries<sup>113</sup> expanded their accommodation capacities for unaccompanied minors. In two cases, this also entailed the expansion of appropriate housing options, including foster care<sup>114</sup> and semi-independent living.<sup>115</sup> Migrant children's protection and safeguarding were on the policy agenda in several EMN Member Countries<sup>116</sup> (e.g. publication of new guidelines/instructions, update of existing policies to strengthen the rights of the child).

In the case of separated children from Ukraine, five countries<sup>117</sup> amended their legislation to ensure that the best interest of the child was duly assessed and followed when providing accommodation and care, for example through

the appointment of (Ukrainian) foster families<sup>118</sup> or the arrangement of other suitable accommodation with adult relatives or social service providers.

Addressing the needs of other vulnerable groups prompted additional policy interventions in nine EMN Member Countries.<sup>119</sup> For example, to support LGBTIQ third-country nationals, Belgium created dedicated reception places,<sup>120</sup> Germany introduced special legal advice for queer and vulnerable persons,<sup>121</sup> and France launched special vulnerability training programmes on the needs of LGBTIQ asylum seekers.<sup>122</sup> EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>123</sup> also reported developments to address gender-based violence and to enhance the protection of single women, women with children, and unaccompanied girls. In particular, the fight against Female Genital Mutilations (FMG) was on the policy agenda of countries such as Austria, Ireland, and Luxembourg.

As part of the 2023 Global Compact on Refugees (GRF), the EU pledged to ensure accurate inclusion of forcibly displaced persons, stateless individuals, and host communities in censuses and surveys.<sup>124</sup> This will help improve the availability and precision of nationally produced data and evidence used to inform the design of programmes and policies to improve the protection and wellbeing of these vulnerable populations. On statelessness specifically, the Dutch and Portuguese authorities established a formal procedure to officially recognise their status in the Netherlands and Portugal, while Belgium introduced a new right of residence.



## 11. A RENEWED IMPETUS IN DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS ON MIGRATION

To prevent irregular migration and combat migrant smuggling and trafficking, five EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>125</sup> reinforced existing cooperation or concluded new bilateral or multilateral agreements with countries along the Western Balkan route, such as Albania. Four EMN Member Countries also reinforced cooperation with countries along the Central and Western Mediterranean routes, including Morocco, Tunisia, and Mauritania.<sup>126</sup>

Cooperation with third countries on readmission and reintegration of returnees was the most reported action on return, reported by 20 EMN Member and Observer

Countries.<sup>127</sup> The German Federal Government established a Special Commissioner for Migration Agreements in 2023 to oversee the conclusion of readmission agreements with several third countries.

Austria, Germany, and Italy concluded comprehensive migration partnerships with India, addressing irregular migration, return, legal migration, and the mobility of students and researchers. Ten EMN Member and Observer Countries<sup>128</sup> concluded legal migration agreements with third countries, including the Philippines, Tunisia, Argentina, the United States (US), Canada, North Macedonia, and

107 AT, BG, DE, EE, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and GE, UA.

108 BG, CY, DE, FR, HU, MT, LU, LV, PL, SE, SK, and GE.

109 LU.

110 PL.

111 AT, CY, CZ, FI, IE, IT, LU, PL, NL, SE, SI, and GE, UA.

112 AT, BE, BG, EL, FI, FR, HR.

113 BE, BG, EL, IT, LU.

114 EL, IT.

115 EL.

116 AT, BE, DE, HR, LT, MT, PL.

117 CZ, EL, HR, IT, PL.

118 CZ, HR.

119 AT, BE, CY, DE, EL, IE, IT, LU, MT.

120 BE.

121 DE.

122 FR.

123 AT, BE, CY, EL, IE, IT, LU, and MD.

124 Global Compact on Refugees, 'Multistakeholder Pledge: Inclusion of Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons in National Statistical Systems and Surveys', <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/multistakeholder-pledge-inclusion-forcibly-displaced-and-stateless-persons-national-statistical>, last accessed on 27 March 2024.

125 AT, HU, IT, NL, and RS.

126 AT, BE, BG, ES, IT.

127 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and NO, GE, UA.

128 AT, BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, SK, and RS.

Albania. Greece ratified an agreement on circular migration with Egypt for the employment of Egyptian seasonal workers in the agricultural sector. France and Germany both reported their involvement in the EU-coordinated Talent Partnership Scheme with countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and Pakistan.

The EU and its Member States continued to exercise global influence in international protection. In the context of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) 2023,<sup>129</sup> the EU made

collective pledges to offer durable solutions to major displacement crises, including a commitment to promote complementary pathways to the EU and community sponsorship schemes, as well as the continuation of funding for the Emergency Transit Mechanisms (ETM).<sup>130</sup> Belgium and Ireland reported individual commitments and pledges at the GRF 2023 to support the full implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

**Figure 3: Examples of International Partnerships on Migration, 2023**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND SMUGGLING</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>LEGAL MIGRATION</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>COMPREHENSIVE MIGRATION PARTNERSHIPS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Spain</b><br>Deployed police officers to Mauritania to reinforce capacity of law enforcement authorities to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking<br><b>Austria, Hungary and Serbia</b><br>Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation on preventing irregular migration and migrant smuggling | <b>France</b><br>Participation in EU talent partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia<br><b>Spain and Slovakia</b><br>Work programme agreements for youth mobility with Argentina and Canada respectively                                                                            | <b>Austria, Germany and Italy</b><br>Each signed a comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement with India addressing irregular migration, migrant smuggling, legal migration and mobility of students and researchers |                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>RETURN AND READMISSION COOPERATION</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>CIRCULAR MIGRATION</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS</b>                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Georgia</b><br>Enacted bilateral readmission agreements with Spain, Iceland and the United Kingdom<br><b>Czech Republic and Estonia</b><br>Signed bilateral readmission agreements with Uzbekistan                                                                                                                               | <b>Greece</b><br>Ratified an agreement with Egypt for the employment of Egyptian seasonal workers in the agricultural sector<br><b>Italy</b><br>Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tunisia which authorises the annual entry of up to 4 000 non-seasonal Tunisian workers | <b>Belgium</b><br>Implemented PEM N'zassa project in Cote d'Ivoire to support Ivorian entrepreneurs through mobility exchanges and mutual learning with Belgian peers                                                                | <b>UN-level (Global Refugee Forum)</b><br>EU made collective pledges in order to offer durable solutions in addressing major displacement crises |

<sup>129</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), 'Pledges and contributions', n.d., <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions>, last accessed on 21 March 2024.

<sup>130</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, '2023 Global Refugee Forum: The EU announces resettlement pledges', 15 December 2023, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/2023-global-refugee-forum-eu-announces-resettlement-pledges-2023-12-15\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/2023-global-refugee-forum-eu-announces-resettlement-pledges-2023-12-15_en), last accessed on 22 April 2024.





## For more information

EMN website: <http://ec.europa.eu/emn>

EMN LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-migration-network>

EMN Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/emnmigration>

EMN YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@EMNMigration>

## EMN National Contact Points

Austria [www.emn.at/en/](http://www.emn.at/en/)

Belgium [www.emnbelgium.be/](http://www.emnbelgium.be/)

Bulgaria [www.emn-bg.com/](http://www.emn-bg.com/)

Croatia [emn.gov.hr/](http://emn.gov.hr/)

Cyprus [www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/emnncpc.nsf/home/home?opendocument](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/emnncpc.nsf/home/home?opendocument)

Czechia [www.emncz.eu/](http://www.emncz.eu/)

Estonia [www.emn.ee/](http://www.emn.ee/)

Finland [emn.fi/en/](http://emn.fi/en/)

France [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2)

Germany [www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html](http://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html)

Greece [emn.immigration.gov.gr/en/](http://emn.immigration.gov.gr/en/)

Hungary [www.emnhungary.hu/en](http://www.emnhungary.hu/en)

Ireland [www.emn.ie/](http://www.emn.ie/)

Italy [www.emnitalyncp.it/](http://www.emnitalyncp.it/)

Latvia [www.emn.lv](http://www.emn.lv)

Lithuania [www.emn.lt/](http://www.emn.lt/)

Luxembourg [emnluxembourg.uni.lu/](http://emnluxembourg.uni.lu/)

Malta [emn.gov.mt/](http://emn.gov.mt/)

The Netherlands [www.emnnetherlands.nl/](http://www.emnnetherlands.nl/)

Poland [www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network](http://www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network)

Portugal [rem.sef.pt/en/](http://rem.sef.pt/en/)

Romania [www.mai.gov.ro/](http://www.mai.gov.ro/)

Spain [www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home](http://www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home)

Slovak Republic [www.emn.sk/en](http://www.emn.sk/en)

Slovenia [www.gov.si/](http://www.gov.si/)

Sweden [www.emnsweden.se/](http://www.emnsweden.se/)

Norway [www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway#](http://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway#)

Georgia [migration.commission.ge/](http://migration.commission.ge/)

Republic of Moldova [bma.gov.md/en](http://bma.gov.md/en)

Ukraine [dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html](http://dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html)

Montenegro [www.gov.me/mup](http://www.gov.me/mup)

Armenia [migration.am/?lang=en](http://migration.am/?lang=en)

Serbia [kirs.gov.rs/eng](http://kirs.gov.rs/eng)