

EMN BULLETIN

The EMN Bulletin provides policymakers and other practitioners with updates on recent migration and international protection policy developments at EU and national level. The 18th Edition provides information from January 2017 to March 2017, including the (latest) relevant published statistics.

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

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SPECIAL NOTE

On 2nd March 2017, the European Commission presented a [renewed EU Action Plan on Return](#) and a [Recommendation to Member States](#) on how to make return procedures more effective. Actions proposed at EU level include:

- ★ Increased financial support to Member States;
- ★ Improving information exchange to enforce return;
- ★ Exchanging best practices to ensure reintegration packages are consistent and coherent among all Member States and;
- ★ Swiftly concluding the negotiations of Readmission Agreement with Nigeria, Tunisia, Jordan and working towards engaging with Morocco and Algeria.

The European Commission's Recommendation provides Member States with guidance about concrete and immediate actions they can take to make return procedures more effective, for instance by reinforcing their capacity to carry out returns and setting up operational assisted voluntary return programmes by June 2017.

1. GENERAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 28th February, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) [declared](#) that it lacked competence to judge the legality of the EU-Turkey Statement, following a case brought by three asylum seekers in Greece. The Court found that it was the EU Member States as actors under international law which had concluded the agreement with Turkey rather than any EU institutions.
- ★ On 25th January, the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy released a [Joint Communication](#) addressing the challenges concerning migration management in the Central Mediterranean route. The Communication pledged assistance to Libya and its neighbours in reducing the number of people leaving Libya to reach Italy, including through an increase in funding, the deployment of EU missions, the fight against smugglers and traffickers through the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and the Libyan Coast Guard, as well as by increasing resettlement.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **The Netherlands:** Parliamentary elections were held in the Netherlands on 15th March. The governing liberal party (VVD) of the current Prime Minister lost 11 seats, but remained the largest party in parliament (30 of 150 seats). The governing social-democratic party (PvdA) lost severely, from 38 to 9 seats. The VVD, CDA (Christian democrats), D66 (liberals) and GroenLinks (greens) have started negotiations to form a government.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 8th February, the Management Boards of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex) held their [first joint meeting](#) in Malta. They discussed cooperation between EU agencies in hotspots in Greece and Italy, the exchange of data and analysis on migration flows to the EU, as well as future cooperation in light of the Commission's proposal to increase the responsibilities of EASO and the Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard adopted in September. The Executive Directors of both agencies also signed an [EASO-Frontex Cooperation Plan](#) for 2017-2018.

Judgement of the European Court of Justice [Case C-638/16](#)

In its judgement of 7th March 2017, the Court of Justice ruled that Member States are not required, under EU law, to grant a humanitarian visa to persons who wish to enter their territory with a view to applying for asylum. Nevertheless, they remain free to do so on the basis of their national law. The Court considers that EU law establishes only the procedures and conditions for issuing visas for transit through or intended stays on the territory of the Member States not exceeding 90 days.

- ★ On 28th February, EASO and Cyprus signed an [amendment](#) to the [EASO Special Support Plan](#) to provide further tailor-made support to Cyprus until 31st January 2018. Also, to continue the implementation of the initial support measures, upon a request by Cyprus new activities on backlog management and contingency measures have been added. As part of the agreement, EASO will deploy four experts, specialised in backlog management. As a measure of contingency planning, EASO also stands ready to provide operational assistance to Cyprus in the field of registration, screening and reception of persons requesting international protection in case of high number of arrivals.
- ★ On 3rd March, the Commission announced that the [funding of a special education programme](#) had helped 2,500 refugee and migrant children get back to school in Greece. The project is carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and supports the transportation of children to schools and the distribution of school kits with its funding amounting to €2.8 million in EU Emergency Support. This comes in addition to other support to informal education activities to over 9,000 refugee children in Greece and brings the total amount of overall EU support to Greece to over €1 billion.
- ★ In its [Tenth report on relocation and resettlement](#), the Commission revealed that less than 14% of the relocations originally pledged had been actually carried out since the launch of the relocation scheme in September 2015. As of March 2017, 9,610 asylum seekers had been relocated from Greece and 3,936 from Italy, leading to a total of 13,546 out of the 106,000 persons.

LATEST RELEVANT STATISTICS

- ★ According to [latest Eurostat data](#), the **number of first time asylum applicants for international protection lodged in the EU decreased by -51% in the fourth quarter of 2016 (207,000) compared with the same quarter of 2015 (426,000) and by -43% compared with the previous quarter of the same year (358,300)**. Figure 1a in the Annex shows that, during 2016, the applications reached the highest monthly number in August (137,980) and then dropped to 62,985 in December, representing almost half compared to December 2015 (108,770). As shown in Figure 1b of the Annex, **96% of the total applications for international protection were first time applications**, and the top-three Member States receiving asylum applications were **Germany** (77,240), **Italy** (37,770) and **France** (20,200).
- ★ A total number of **355,700 first instance asylum decisions** were issued in the EU and Norway in the fourth quarter of 2016. The total positive decisions for this period amounted to **216,895**, compared to **138,805** negative decisions (see Figure 2 in the Annex). As was the case in the previous quarter, the highest number of first instance asylum decisions were issued in **Germany**, followed by **Sweden** and **Italy**.

- ★ EASO published its [Latest Asylum Trends for February 2017](#). According to the report, the number of asylum applications lodged in the EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland reached 59,036 in February, representing the lowest monthly total in the past two years (46% lower than February 2016 and 19% lower than February 2015). The top-three countries of origin were Syria (7,795), Nigeria (4,105) and Afghanistan (4,041).

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** The Austrian Administrative High Court has referred a [question](#) to the CJEU with respect to the Dublin Regulation. In particular, the Administrative High Court would like to know whether a *de facto* toleration of entry may be regarded as a 'visa' for the purposes of the Dublin Regulation.
- ★ **Croatia:** The Ministry of the Interior developed an information leaflet on International Protection and translated it into English, French, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Somali, Russian, and Pashto languages.
- ★ **Cyprus:** In January and February, training sessions were organised in relation to the identification of victims of torture by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), in the framework of the EASO Special Support Plan to Cyprus. Three separate trainings of medical professionals took place, while one separate training was addressed to officers of the Asylum Service concerning the identification of victims of torture in the asylum procedure.
- ★ **Finland:** The reception centres in Helsinki, Turku and Oulu will [introduce an operations model](#) where intensified support will be provided to particularly challenging asylum seekers, such as those with mental health issues or problems with drugs and alcohol. In addition, on 27th January, [two new interim measures](#) were approved as part of the Aliens Act. They concern residence requirements applicable to children and to asylum seekers. The accommodation capacity of reception centres will be reduced by approximately 1,100 beds by the end of August 2017. The Finnish Immigration Service has therefore informed about the [contracts' termination to](#) those in charge of reception centres, who will eventually carry out employee cooperation negotiations with the staff at the centres.
- ★ **France:** As part of the reform on the right of asylum initiated in 2015 and the creation of many accommodation spaces in reception centres for asylum-seekers (CADA) and temporary accommodation centres (CPH), two decrees adopted on 7th March set fixed regional allocations relating to operating costs of [reception centres for asylum-seekers](#) and [temporary accommodation centres](#). The [Decree of 29th March 2017 on various provisions relating to the asylum seeker's allowance](#) specifies how to calculate and pay the asylum seeker's allowance. This Decree came into force on 1st April 2017.
- ★ **Hungary:** The Hungarian Parliament adopted the Act XX of 2017 on 'Strengthening the Procedure Conducted in Border Surveillance Areas' on 7th March, which entered into force on 28th March. The latter aims to assess asylum claims at the border and protecting the Schengen Borders. The Act contains special provisions on the option to submit an application for asylum, the circumstances of reception and the rules of procedure in order to prevent foreigners arriving illegally from entering the territory of the country.
- ★ **Ireland:** The [International Protection Act 2015](#) came into effect on 31st December 2016. The Act represents a significant development in the area of international protection, as it reforms the system for determining applications and introduces a single application procedure.
- ★ **Italy:** A new [decree](#) (in force since 17th February) foresees the acceleration of asylum procedures. The new law will create specialised immigration chambers to hear asylum appeals which are competent to decide on asylum appeal cases under a single judge.
- ★ **Latvia:** On 17th March, the extended asylum seekers reception centre "Mucenieki" was opened. At present, 450 asylum seekers can be accommodated in the centre.

Judgement of the European Court of Justice - Case C-528/15

In its judgement of 15th March 2017, the Court of Justice found that when read in conjunction, Article 2(n) and Article 28(2) of the Dublin III Regulation must be interpreted as requiring that the objective criteria underlying the reasons for believing that an applicant may abscond must be established in a binding provision of general application with national legislation. Without those objective criteria being listed, Article 28(2) is found to be inapplicable and detention on this ground is unlawful.

- ★ **Lithuania:** On 8th March, the government confirmed the Description of Accommodation of Asylum Seekers Procedure, which provides for the accommodation of asylum seekers - who cannot be accommodated in the Foreigners Registration Centre due to capacity issues- in other premises or in temporary housing. It also regulates the assurance of reception conditions. The Description changed the approach to the housing of asylum seekers, so that the Migration Department will be responsible for developing the list of all available social housing in municipalities and a service provider will ensure placement of persons in available premises.
- ★ **The Netherlands:** The Minister for Migration has informed via a [letter](#) to the Parliament on the position of children in the CEAS. The letter is a follow-up on comments from UNICEF, Defence for Children and the Dutch Council for Refugees (in Dutch: Vluchtelingenwerk) on the proposals for revision of the CEAS. The Minister informed the Parliament that in the review of CEAS, the European Commission has always taken the interests of children into account. The following topics were addressed in the letter: guardianship, admissibility procedure, accelerated procedure, border procedure, detention, and preventing secondary migration.
- ★ **Sweden:** A government-appointed committee has evaluated the Swedish response to the asylum crisis of 2015. The Committee found that taking in many asylum seekers in a short period of time meant an “immense strain” on the stakeholders involved, and that “everyone was caught unaware by the large number of refugees who made their way to Sweden”. To be better prepared for similar events in the future, the committee also said that the dramatic developments in autumn 2015 gave the Swedish Government and government agencies an opportunity to collect valuable experiences with regard to gathering information, analysing it and implementing measures in a structured way. The [final report of the Committee](#) includes a summary of its main findings in English.

Judgement of the European Court of Justice Case C-573/14

In its judgement of 31st January 2017, the Court of Justice ruled on the interpretation of article 12(2)(c) and 12(3) of the [Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC](#). The Court ruled that an application for asylum can be rejected if the asylum seeker has participated in the activities of a terrorist network. It is not necessary that the asylum seeker personally committed terrorist acts or instigated such acts, or participated in their commission.

Relocation and Resettlement

- ★ **Ireland:** The government has committed to resettling 1,040 refugees in Ireland by the end of 2017 under the UNHCR-led [resettlement programme](#). By the end of 2016, 519 persons had arrived in Ireland, of which 499 have been resettled in communities nationwide. Ireland has also committed to taking in a further 520 refugees in 2017 from Lebanon.
- ★ **Lithuania:** In March, Lithuania received the first group of persons to be relocated from Italy (eight persons from Eritrea). All previous relocations and resettlements were from Greece and Turkey (229 relocations from Greece and 25 resettlements from Turkey).
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 12th January, 15 adults and 14 children were [relocated](#) from Greece to Luxembourg in the framework of the relocation mechanism. On 1st February, 46 Syrian refugees (25 adults and 21 children) were [resettled](#) from Turkey to Luxembourg in the context of the EU-Turkey agreement of 18th March 2016. Moreover, on 21st and 22nd March, 23 adults and 29 children were [relocated](#) from Greece to Luxembourg.
- ★ **Portugal:** In the framework of the European Agenda for Migration, Portugal has already relocated and resettled 1,137 persons from Italy and Greece who were granted international protection status.
- ★ **Spain:** From January to March, 81 people were relocated from Italy to Spain, and 189 people were relocated from Greece to Spain. On 30th March, 21 people were resettled from Turkey to Spain, and an additional number of 24 people were relocated on 31st March.
- ★ **Sweden:** In mid-June 2017, Sweden will start receiving asylum seekers from Greece and Italy under the EU emergency relocation scheme. The [Swedish Migration Agency is preparing](#) to receive over 3,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy between 16th June and 26th September 2017. As Sweden received a disproportionately high number of asylum seekers in autumn 2015, the Council decided in June 2016 to suspend Sweden’s obligations to participate in the relocation activity. This suspension ends in June 2017.

- ★ **United Kingdom:** On 23rd February it was announced that more than 5,000 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the UK under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme since October 2015. Over 1,200 refugees arrived in the final three months of 2016, meaning 5,454 people have been given refuge since the government pledged to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020.

3. UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Belgium:** The Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons published [a manual for unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in Belgium](#) (available in Dutch, French and English – other languages will be available over the course of 2017). This manual provides information on the asylum procedure to unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and their guardians.
- ★ **Croatia:** IOM Zagreb is partner in the project “Protecting children in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe”, led by IOM Budapest. In this quarter, IOM Zagreb met with a number of stakeholders including the social welfare services and the child protection international authorities. The aim of the meetings was to develop a flowchart mechanism on Unaccompanied Migrant Children proceedings which will be piloted in two services: the Institution for education of children and juveniles Dugave and Children Institution A.G. Matoš located in Zagreb.
- ★ **France:** On 1st January, a reform related to third-country nationals who apply for residence permits on the ground of their health status came into force. An [information note](#) of 29th January specifies the relevant applicable procedure in order to ensure a more standardised application throughout the national territory of the medical assessment of the third-country national’s state of health.
- ★ **Italy:** In 2016, the Italian Parliament approved a bill that modifies some parts of the Legislative Decree n. 286/1998 regarding the protection measures dedicated to UAMs. The bill was approved on 29th March and aims at reinforcing the protection of UAMs, specifically introducing the prohibition of rejecting and returning UAMs at the national borders, procedures for the acceleration of identification of UAMs and a ceiling to the first-reception period, which has been limited to 30 days.

The project “NEVER ALONE, for a feasible tomorrow. Reception and support for unaccompanied children and youth reaching Italy alone” is part of the EPIM Sub-Fund on long-term prospects and protection of children on the move in Europe. Under this project, eight projects devoted to UAMs’ support and integration in 12 Italian regions, mainly Southern, have been awarded for a total of €3.5 million.

4. LEGAL MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

EU AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 15th March, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency published a [report](#) examining Member States’ integration policies and actions plans related to the participation of migrants, refugees and their descendants in society. While highlighting both promising practices and shortcomings regarding inclusive education, labour market participation and language learning, it finds that greater efforts are still needed to coordinate integration approaches among Member States, to fight segregation in the education system and to tackle discrimination and gender inequality.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** An [amendment](#) of the Proceedings of Administrative Courts Act (VwGVG) has entered into force on 1st January. Legal aid can now also be granted in proceedings other than criminal proceedings (before administrative courts).

According to the [proposed Act Amending the Aliens Law 2017](#), foreigners regularly staying in Austria may apply for a visa for exceptional circumstances from within the country, in particular for humanitarian reasons.

- ★ **Belgium:** Three legislative changes were introduced in the reporting period. The first was a modification to the Immigration Act (published in the Official Gazette on 8th February) which introduced a new condition for certain foreign nationals to maintain their residence permit. From now on, certain foreign nationals will need to [provide proof of their willingness to integrate into society](#). If a ‘reasonable effort’ to integrate is not met, the Immigration Office can end their right of residence. There are however exceptions. This law also obliges certain foreign nationals applying for a residence permit to sign a “newcomer’s declaration”, which stipulates that they understand the fundamental values and norms of society and will act accordingly. The signed declaration will be a condition of admissibility of

the application- its content still needs to be defined through a cooperation agreement with the Belgian Communities and Regions. Secondly, a Royal Decree- which entered into force on 1st March- [increased the fees](#) to be paid by foreign nationals who apply for certain Belgian residence permits (to a maximum of €350). These fees are supposed to cover the administrative costs related to the processing of the applications for a residence permit. Third, a new law – published in the Official Gazette on 2nd February – now allows Belgian municipalities to [collect a fee when foreign nationals renew, extend, or replace a temporary residence permit](#), to cover the costs related to the processing of the applications. [The Royal Decree](#) of 5th March indicates that the aforementioned fee cannot exceed €50, that it only applies to temporary residence cards (A cards), and that it can only be collected once a year maximum.

- ★ **Croatia:** The new Administrative Fees Act (Official Gazette No. 115/16) came into force on 1st January. It is applied in procedures regulating temporary or permanent residence of a foreigner, residence and work permits, as well as work registration certificates. Furthermore, a new Regulation on the Administrative Fee Tariff entered into force on 1st February (Official Gazette No. 8/17). This regulation amended administrative fee tariffs, which were reduced. The tariffs for procedures regarding legal migration are specified under tariff number 9.
- ★ **Czech Republic:** In January 2017, the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior (SUZ) assumed the role of the general provider of integration services within the current State Integration Programme (SIP) for beneficiaries of international protection for a period of 12 months. SUZ will be responsible for the co-ordination and provision of integration services to beneficiaries of international protection in cooperation with other entities such as the ministries concerned, municipalities and NGOs. The aim is to facilitate the integration process of persons who have been granted international protection, especially regarding the Czech language, their entry into the labour market, housing, education and requalification courses.

Currently, the Czech Republic has the lowest unemployment rate among all EU Member States (3.7% according to Eurostat data). In order to cover labour market shortages, the number of applications for admission of labour migrants from third countries increased by 100% in 2016, and it is expected that the number may double again in 2017. Due to these reasons, a new tripartite working group for employment of foreign workers led by the Ministry of the Interior was set up in February 2017. The aim of the group is to quantitatively determine the annual migration needs of the Czech Republic. Determination of such needs requires not only the analysis of the labour market, but also a stable consensus of social partners on the need to cover a certain proportion of the demand for employees in shortage occupations by foreigners.

- ★ **Estonia:** On 1st March, the Estonian Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Police and Border Guard Board, launched a new advisory service to help both foreigners planning to settle in Estonia, as well as companies and organisations that hire them, to get personalised and trustworthy advice on matters of migration. The new service provides advice by telephone, Skype or written request, allows for personal consultation and to use the feature of preliminary control of documents related to migration process.
- ★ **Finland:** The Finnish Immigration Service [estimates that more applications will be submitted](#) in both residence permit and citizenship matters in 2017 than during the previous year.
- ★ **France:** An information note of 27th February enables to apply at department level the three-year arrangement (2016-2019) of 24th November 2016 between the State, the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) and the French national employment agency in favour of vocational integration. This applies to first-time arrivals who hold a residence permit, that wish to settle permanently in France and have signed the Republican Integration Contract (CIR), which was created through the law of 7th March 2016 on the rights of foreign nationals in France. This arrangement aims to facilitate foreign nationals the access to work by implementing an individual and adapted process.
- ★ **Ireland:** in February, the Irish Department of Justice and Equality launched the [migrant integration strategy](#), which provides the framework for government action on migrant integration from 2017 until 2020.
- ★ **Italy:** The [Decree of 17th February](#) on accelerating procedures for the recognition of international protection, identifying third-country nationals and countering irregular migration, devotes a specific article (22 bis) to Participation of Asylum seekers in Social Activities, directed - on a voluntary basis - at favouring local communities, promoted by local authorities and Prefectures. Furthermore, the decree foresees the setting up of dedicated commissions which will be responsible for the controversies regarding the provisions of “nulla osta” (authorisation to proceed with family reunification from the

relevant Immigration Service) and family reunification permits, as well as any decision taken by the administrative authorities related to the right to family reunification. Finally, provides that the request for nulla osta for family reunification should be sent electronically to the competent Prefecture. The Ministry of Interior is also finalising the first action plan for the integration of third-country nationals that will be published and disseminated in the coming months.

- ★ **Lithuania:** recently, the number of illegally employed Ukrainian persons in Lithuania has increased. According to information provided by the State Labour Inspectorate investigations, a number of Ukrainian nationals are working in Lithuania while being employed by recruitment agencies from Poland and sent to Lithuania as service providers. There are cases when salaries are not adequately paid or not paid at all. Since the employer is in another country (Poland), the enforcement of fines is complex.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** During the reporting period, different legal instruments were either approved or submitted to the Parliament for approval: the [bill](#) on the agreement between Luxembourg and Cap Verde regarding concerted migration flow management and solidary development was introduced into Parliament on 17th January. It to: a) facilitate the circulation of persons, b) organise and issue authorisations of stay, c) detail procedures of readmission, d) fight irregular migration e) strengthen the integration of the nationals of one country legally residing in the other country, and f) leverage migrants' skills and resources in support of development

On the acquisition of nationality, the following instruments were introduced: On 17th March the [Luxembourgish nationality law](#) was published. It reduced the required duration of residence for naturalisation from seven to five years and introduced the "right of birthplace" (just soli) of the first generation. The law also introduced new scenarios to avoid cases of statelessness. Previously, on 20th January, the Council of Government approved the [draft Grand ducal regulation](#) regarding the course 'Living together in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg' and on 3rd March approved the [draft Grand ducal regulation](#) on the language evaluation exam.

On 8th March, the Council of Government approved the implementation of a '[parcours d'intégration accompagné](#)' (accompanied integration pathway) for applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection. Learning the national and administrative languages and understanding the workings of daily life in Luxembourg will be the two constituent elements of the pathway. Regarding civic participation of third-country nationals, on 17th January, the Minister for Family, Integration and the Greater Region presented the [campaign](#) 'je peux voter' ('[I can vote](#)') to promote and increase foreign residents' registration on the electoral roll for the municipal elections taking place on 8th October. On 3rd March, a [bill](#) modifying the electoral law was introduced into Parliament. It foresees electronic registration of foreigners on the electoral roll for municipal and European elections.

On 1st January, the [agreement between Luxembourg and Australia](#) concerning the 'work and holiday visa' entered into force. It enables 100 individuals per partner state, aged between 18 and 30, to travel, work or study for the duration of one year in the other partner country.

On 3rd March, a [draft Grand ducal regulation](#) that defines the economic sectors eligible to investment in the context of the new investor visa was approved by the Council of Government.

- ★ **The Netherlands:** Start-ups and small businesses may, as of 1st January, [be eligible for a reduced fee](#) for recognition as a sponsor for work purposes. The fee is 50% lower than the current fee for recognition as a sponsor for work purposes. Applicants are however required to ask for this reduced fee themselves and to demonstrate that the company employs 50 persons or less. This reduced fee may also apply to sponsors who have already been recognised and who only have to file an application for recognition as a sponsor due to a change in legal form.

Following a positive vote in the House (on 23rd February) on amendments to the Integration Act, the "[Declaration of participation](#)" will become a compulsory part of integration. This means that all new arrivals, as part of their integration exam, must go first through a procedure around the declaration of participation at their municipality, which allows them to get acquainted with the rights and obligations and the fundamental values of Dutch society. If approved by the Senate, the declaration of participation course will become mandatory for newcomers on 1st July.

- ★ **Norway:** On 1st January, amendments to the Norwegian Immigration Act entered into force. Firstly, new criteria to ensure integration were introduced for permanent residence in Norway. Applicants to whom the obligation to participate in Norwegian language and social studies tuition applies must also have a minimum level of spoken Norwegian and pass a test in social studies in a language they understand. Secondly, a requirement that both parties must be at least 24 years old was introduced in

family establishment cases. The purpose of this requirement is to combat forced marriage. Exemptions may be made if it is clear that the marriage or cohabiting relationship has been voluntarily entered into.

- ★ **Poland:** The Council of Ministers [adopted a project of act](#) to amend acts related to the promotion of employment and labour market institutions. The new regulations will come into force on 1st January 2018. The project sets out new rules for the admission of foreigners for seasonal work and short-term work in Poland, and creates a basis for the exchange of data concerning the performance of work by foreigners between labour offices. It also envisages the introduction of a fee for filing an application for authorisation for seasonal work and in connection with the registration statement.
- ★ **Sweden:** The Swedish government continues to create additional “fast tracks” to assist beneficiaries of international protection in their search for jobs that correspond to their education and experiences. The fast track initiative is also linked to the objective of alleviating labour shortages in certain Swedish industries. At the moment, fast tracks into the labour market for newly arrived refugees have been established for approximately 20 different professions. The Swedish government has developed a [website](#) that explains how the fast track initiative works, including information on existing fast tracks. In 2016, 2,804 newly arrived refugees started fast-track activities.

5. MANAGEMENT OF THE EU EXTERNAL BORDERS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 8th March, the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee of the European Parliament [voted its positions](#) and decided to enter into negotiations with the Council and Commission on the proposal for an Entry-Exit system and the corresponding modification of the Schengen Borders Code. The Council adopted its [mandate for negotiation](#) on 2nd March. The Entry-Exit System will register information relating to the entry, exit and refusal of entry of third-country (non-EU) nationals crossing the external border of the EU.
- ★ On 2nd March, five months after its launch, the Commission published its [Second Progress Report on the Operationalisation of the European Border and Coast Guard](#) (Frontex). According to the latter, the Agency is supporting Member States with around 1,350 border guards at different sections of the EU external border. However, gaps remain in terms of human resources and technical equipment, affecting in particular the three new pools of forced-return monitors, forced-return escorts and return specialists.
- ★ On 27th February, the Council of the EU [adopted the Commission’s proposal for visa liberalisation for Georgia](#), as a result, Georgian citizens with a biometric passport travelling to the EU for up to 90 days no longer need a visa. These measures will not apply to Ireland and the UK.
- ★ On 7th February, the Council of the EU adopted an [implementing decision](#) setting out a recommendation to prolong temporary internal border controls in exceptional circumstances. This follows a [Commission proposal](#) from 25th January and entitles Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Norway to prolong their temporary border controls for a maximum period of three months.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** On 8th February, Austria hosted the conference "Managing Migration Challenges Together". The participating Member States of the Salzburg Forum,¹ the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans,² the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) and their partners from Southeast Europe as well as Greece agreed in a [common declaration](#) on the elaboration of a Joint Action Plan including a Crisis Response Plan to manage migration along the Western Balkans route.
- ★ **Belgium:** The [“Passenger Name Record” law](#) – published in the Official Gazette on 25th January – foresees the obligation for carriers and travel agencies in different transport sectors (international transport by air, high-speed train, bus, and sea) to collect passenger data and send it to a central database. This data will be analysed and used – inter alia – to detect and prosecute terrorist offences and other forms of serious crime. The law has not entered into force yet, as Royal Decrees still need to be adopted for every transport sector and for the travel agencies.
- ★ **Italy:** On 20th March, Home Affairs ministers of Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Libya, Malta, Slovenia, Switzerland and Tunisia, as well as European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, met in Rome and agreed to establish a High Level Contact Group on the Central

¹ Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Mediterranean Migratory Route. The meeting was also attended by the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord of Libya, Fayez al-Sarraj, and by Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni. The Ministers agreed to increase regular coordination, cooperation and exchange of expertise and information in the management of mixed migration flows in the Central Mediterranean. A Declaration of Intent was issued, recalling the Malta Declaration of 3rd February.

- ★ **The Netherlands:** The Inspectorate of Security and Justice (Inspectie Veiligheid en Justitie (IVenJ)) recently conducted a [study](#) into the follow-up of recognised signals/indications from all the authorities involved in asylum and migration matters. The inspectorate concluded that the structure for reporting hard or soft signals/indications is in order at the police, the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary (Koninklijke Marechaussee), the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). This concerns asylum seekers-related indications that may be of importance in the fight against people smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism. According to the services involved and following a study, the ensuing signals/indications did not prompt any actual follow-up. Based on their report, the Inspectorate has made some recommendations: the exchange of 'soft signals/indications' between the police, the Royal Military Police, the IND and COA has to be further developed, the learning capacity of these organisations has to be reinforced by means of a joint analysis of the signals/indicators mentioned and the coordination and coherence between the various joint ventures involved in the fight against people smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism must be improved.
- ★ **Norway:** On 9th February, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security decided that border controls at the internal Schengen borders will continue until 11th May 2017. This follows the adoption of the aforementioned implementing decision of the European Council on 7th February, allowing Norway and four other States to maintain temporary internal border controls.
- ★ **Poland:** Polish Border Guard officers [participated](#) in a training session in Finland. The training consisted of inter alia activities concerning maritime operations coordinated by Frontex. Polish officers also had the opportunity to train on procedures on-board a ship including the fire alarm, evacuation of vessel and rescuing of survivors.

On 9th March, Frontex and the Polish government [signed](#) a headquarters agreement, which defines the legal status of the agency and its employees in Poland. The agreement will also allow Frontex to build its new headquarters in Warsaw, for which the Polish government has made a land contribution.

- ★ **Portugal:** In the framework of the Integrated Border Management Strategy (IBM), several meetings were held between national authorities and the Frontex Risk Analysis Network to discuss the coordination as well as the development of measures issued by the IBM.

6. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 2nd March, the European Commission published its [Fifth Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement](#). The number of arrivals to Greece continue to outpace the number of returns from the Greek islands to Turkey, with an additional 151 persons having been returned since the fourth report. This brings the total number of returns since the date of the Statement to 1,487. As regards visa liberalisation, seven benchmarks are still to be met. According to a recently published Commission [Factsheet](#), irregular arrivals to Greece have fallen by 97% since the deal was signed, and the number of deaths in the Aegean Sea has decreased from 1,145 in 2015 to 80 in 2016. More than 4,000 Syrian refugees have been resettled from Turkey to EU Member States.
- ★ On 15th February, Frontex published its [Annual Risk Analysis for 2017](#), outlining the nature of migration flows to the EU in 2016. The report finds that migration pressure at Europe's external borders remained high with the detection of over 500,000 illegal border-crossings. The majority of arrivals were recorded in Italy and Greece (roughly 180,000 each), however, while arrivals to Italy steadily grew throughout the year, in Greece more than 80% migrants arrived between January and March, before the signing of the EU-Turkey statement. Syrian nationals continued to represent the highest share of migrants illegally entering the EU (17% of total EU), at the same time, the detection of African migrants reached a record high of more than 170,000. The number of returns reached 176,000, roughly the same number as in 2015.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Austria:** According to the [proposed Act Amending the Aliens Law 2017](#), foreigners who do not immediately leave Austria after a final and enforceable return decision has been issued, may be punished with a fine between €5,000 and €15,000. If the fine cannot be collected, the foreigner may be imprisoned for up to six weeks.

On 22nd March, the Federal Minister of the Interior and the Director of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum presented the new information campaign "[Return Assistance – A New Start with Perspectives](#)". The campaign provides targeted information about the option of voluntary return and available assistance. In addition to the usual return assistance, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum launched a [special initiative](#) offering €1,000 to the first 1,000 persons deciding to return voluntarily. Furthermore, a two-phase model was developed whereby the amount paid out as start-up assistance depends on when the application for return is submitted, with more being paid out the sooner the decision for voluntary return is taken.

Also, on 30th January, the Austrian Government presented its [Work Program 2017/2018](#), which includes under the perspective "Curb Migration" a number of measures in the field of return, for instance the intensification of return counselling and an expansion of nationally funded projects. Furthermore, the fight against illegal stay should be reinforced, e.g. by prolonged pre-deportation detention to 18 months.

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) is planning to [support the reconstruction of IS-liberated territories in Iraq](#) in order to foster return possibilities.

Finally, Austria [participated](#) in a Frontex-Charter with Sweden to Afghanistan, which was the first common EU return operation coordinated by Frontex. On 29th March, Austria returned 19 Afghans back to Afghanistan. This is the first common flight to Afghanistan since the signature of the common agreement "Joint Way Forward" between the EU and Afghanistan from October 2016.³

- ★ **Belgium:** On 1st February, Belgium signed a [Memorandum of Understanding with Cameroon](#), which focuses on the fight against irregular migration, visas and stay, and readmission and reintegration.
- ★ **Croatia:** At the beginning of 2017, border police stations have registered 156 cases of illegal entry, movement and residence in the Republic of Croatia and 31 cases of irregular entries of UAMs. One person has been returned through a readmission agreement concluded with Slovenia, while 23 persons have been returned through a readmission agreement concluded with Serbia.
- ★ **France:** The law of 7th March 2016 on the rights of foreign nationals in France has modified the Code on Entry and Residence of Foreign Nationals and Right of Asylum (CESEDA), particularly as regards the obligations imposed on transport companies by creating two new categories of administrative fines up to a maximum of €30,000. These fines are foreseen in cases of non-compliance with obligations related to the transport of foreigners who have not been admitted to the territory. A circular of 18th January 2017 [sets the conditions for the application of these fines](#) by the border control agencies.
- ★ **Germany:** On 13th March, a new 'Centre for the Support of Returns' (Zentrum zur Unterstützung der Rückkehr 'ZUR') was launched. The federal and state governments agreed to set up the centre in order to better coordinate the enforcement of deportation orders, including collective deportations. In difficult cases they are to procure travel documents and clarify identities. The ZUR will also – as coordinating centre – cooperate closely with the embassies of the countries of origin. The respective responsibilities of the federal states in the matter of returns remain the same, although particularly difficult individual cases will also be handled by ZUR, including cases involving what are termed potential attackers or serial offenders who have been served with deportation orders. The ZUR is designed as a permanent facility. The centre's regular operations will start as of mid-May 2017. Federal and state governments also aim to encourage more people to return to their own countries voluntarily.

On 1st February, the Federal Government launched the [new return support programme](#) "Start-up cash Plus" ([StarthilfePlus](#)) providing a financial package of €40 million - in cooperation with the IOM- to supplement the joint REAG/GARP programme.⁴ It targets asylum applicants who are likely to receive a negative decision in the asylum procedure in Germany and is intended to provide a financial incentive

³ See http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI/_news/BMI.aspx (accessed on 30 March 2017).

⁴ The 'Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany' (REAG) and 'Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP)' is a humanitarian support programme providing assistance to persons in voluntarily returning to their country of origin or in onward migration to a state that is willing to receive them.
<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Rueckkehr/Rueckkehrprogramm/FoerderprogrammREAGGARP/foerderprogramm-reag-garp.html>

for them to voluntarily return to their home country. There are essentially two levels of assistance: 1) Asylum applicants who voluntarily decide to leave Germany and withdraw their asylum application before receiving a decision, will be eligible for assistance of €1,200 per person (aged 12 or over). 2) Asylum applicants who voluntarily decide to leave Germany after they receive a negative decision on their asylum application- and before the deadline set for their departure- and do not appeal the negative decision will be eligible for assistance of €800 per person (aged 12 or over).

- ★ **Italy:** The [Decree of 17th February 2017](#) on speeding up procedures for recognising international protection, identifying third-country nationals and countering irregular migration, ordered to rename the Identification and Expulsion Centres (CIE) into Return Detention Centres (Centri di permanenza per il rimpatrio, CPR). While currently only four CIE are operational in Italy, the new detention centres will be established nationwide. Moreover, the financial resources for financing repatriation are expected to increase (€19,125,000 for 2017).
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 8th February, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs [announced](#) the creation of a 'semi-open return structure', intended for persons to be transferred to states applying the Dublin regulation who have exhausted all appeals, as well as rejected applicants for international protection from the Western Balkans who have exhausted all appeals. This return structure will be the first of its kind in Luxembourg. The Minister furthermore announced that from 9th February onwards, an 'ultra-accelerated procedure' would be applied for applicants for international protection from the Western Balkans, detailing that more lawyers would be made available to accelerate the procedure.
- ★ **Norway:** a readmission agreement was signed between Norway and Pakistan on 25th January.
- ★ **Poland:** Border Guard Officers [dismantled](#) a Polish-Russian organised criminal group smuggling foreigners across the border. Officers conducted operations in the following Voivodships: Mazovia, Podlaskie, Lubelskie and the West Pomeranian. Detained persons were [charged](#) on leadership and participation in an organised criminal group involved in the organisation of illegal migration. It is estimated that they were able to smuggle hundreds of foreigners to the West during several months.

In addition, during inspection operations on the route Ukraine-Lithuania and Lithuania-Ukraine, Border Guard Officers have found Ukrainian holders of visas with permission to work in Poland, including an intention to work issued by Polish employers, that were however not working in Poland or Lithuania and their visas had a different purpose than the one declared in their application. Administrative proceedings were initiated and decisions were issued on the withdrawal and cancellation of visas, requiring them to return within 15 days.

7. ACTIONS ADDRESSING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 30th January, the Council of Europe Group of experts against human trafficking (GRETA) published a [report](#) on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Italy. The report assesses the specific situation of forced returns of victims of trafficking from Italy and the identification of victims of trafficking among asylum seekers and migrants.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Finland:** In 2016, the [assistance system for victims of human trafficking](#) received almost 2.5 times more applications than the year before. A total of 130 new persons (52 in the previous year) were accepted into the assistance system. Of these, 21 were minors (whereas none were registered in the previous year).
- ★ **France:** A [circular](#) of 31st January defines the conditions for approval of associations in charge of the implementation of the programme to quit forced prostitution. This programme was created by law no. 2016-444 of 13th April 2016 on the strengthening of the fight against the system of forced prostitution and the support of prostituted persons. The programme sets the rules of organisations of the departmental commissions, which were created by the abovementioned law, and are in charge of the coordination and the action plans in favour of the victims of forced prostitution, pimping and trafficking in human beings. It outlines the different steps to quit forced prostitution and the following social and vocational integration.
- ★ **Italy:** The Ministry of Interior started dissemination activities for the campaign "Aware migrants" carried out by IOM and financed under the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) for North Africa (in particular Egypt, Niger and Tunisia). The aim is to support the government's efforts to address irregular migration and trafficking in human beings along the main routes from East/Western

Africa across the desert and the Mediterranean, in addition to informing migrants on potential risks and violence that can occur during their journey towards Europe. The campaign, addressed to 15 countries, foresees a website translated in three languages, activities on four social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram), and messages and images via radio and in broadcasted TV.

- ★ **Luxembourg:** In accordance with the law of 9th April 2014 strengthening the right of victims of human trafficking, Luxembourg's Consultative Commission on Human Rights submitted its [first report on human trafficking](#) to the President of Parliament. The report identifies trends relating to trafficking, evaluates the results of the actions taken in the fight against the phenomenon and encourages the government to implement procedures that consider the victim, that allow to prosecute and sanction traffickers and that lead to a better prevention of trafficking.
- ★ **Poland:** A [Regional Modern Slavery Conference](#) was held at the beginning of March in Warsaw. Representatives of the governments of the UK, Poland and Lithuania, as well as law enforcement and intelligence agencies, civil society organisations, together with observers from Ukraine and Belarus, discussed the current state of play regarding prevention of trafficking in human beings. Representatives of the UK, Poland and Lithuania agreed to intensify existing cooperation to effectively enforce the law, by investigating and consistently prosecuting the slave-drivers and human-traffickers in the three countries, as well as protecting victims.
- ★ **Portugal:** The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings defended the [GRETA's second report on Portugal](#)'s implementation of the [Council of Europe convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) in the Council of Europe. The report was published on 17th March. In the framework of the [3rd National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings \(2014-2017\)](#), the National Coordinator (Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality) has requested all organisations from the Working Group to provide their activities report concerning 2016 and their work plan for 2017.

The Anti-trafficking in Human Beings Unit of the Central Directorate for Criminal Investigation of the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service carried out several actions addressing trafficking in human beings, for example: participation in the Europol's EMPACT⁵ and Joint Action day on Labour Exploitation operational meetings, as well as a ETUTU meeting that took place in Austria. The Unit also delivered training to 15 fellow border guards in Algarve, based on Frontex' Manual for border guards and representing Portugal

8. EXTERNAL DIMENSION

EU DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES

- ★ On 2nd March, the Commission presented its [Third Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries](#) under the European Agenda on Migration. Since its launch in June 2016, a number of results across the five sub-Saharan priority countries (Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Ethiopia) have been achieved. This includes a decline in departures of migrants from Agadez towards Europe and an increase in voluntary returns in Niger, intensified cooperation of Ethiopia as regards trafficking and smuggling, as well as continued political dialogue with Nigeria and Mali. Moreover, four additional projects for Senegal have been adopted under the EU Trust Fund in December.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ★ **Czech Republic:** In March, the government of the Czech Republic approved the financial aid priorities for 2017 within the Programme of the Ministry of the Interior for the Assistance to Refugees in Regions of Origin and Prevention of Large Migration Flows. This programme was established in September 2015 as a special tool to address the refugee/migration situation in Europe and its neighbourhood. Among its priorities are the Middle East (the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Republic of Iraq) and the region of Western Balkans (Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia). Lastly, a financial reserve of CZK 20 million (around €750,000) was approved for allocation to the region in need according to the current migration situation. The overall budget of the Programme for 2017 amounts to CZK 150 million (around €5.6 million).

At the beginning of 2017, the government also approved the priorities of the medical humanitarian programme MEDEVAC of the Ministry of the Interior. The priority regions include the Middle East (Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon), Eastern Ukraine, Africa (Morocco, Senegal, Ethiopia, Kenya) and Asia (Nepal, Cambodia). Medical activities will be supported with CZK 43 million (around €1.6 million), while CZK

⁵ European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats

12 million (around €450,000) will be devoted to the development of medical infrastructure in countries affected by humanitarian crisis. The MEDEVAC Programme has focused mainly on countries where the needs of humanitarian aid or the gaps in health infrastructure are combined with the migrations crisis.

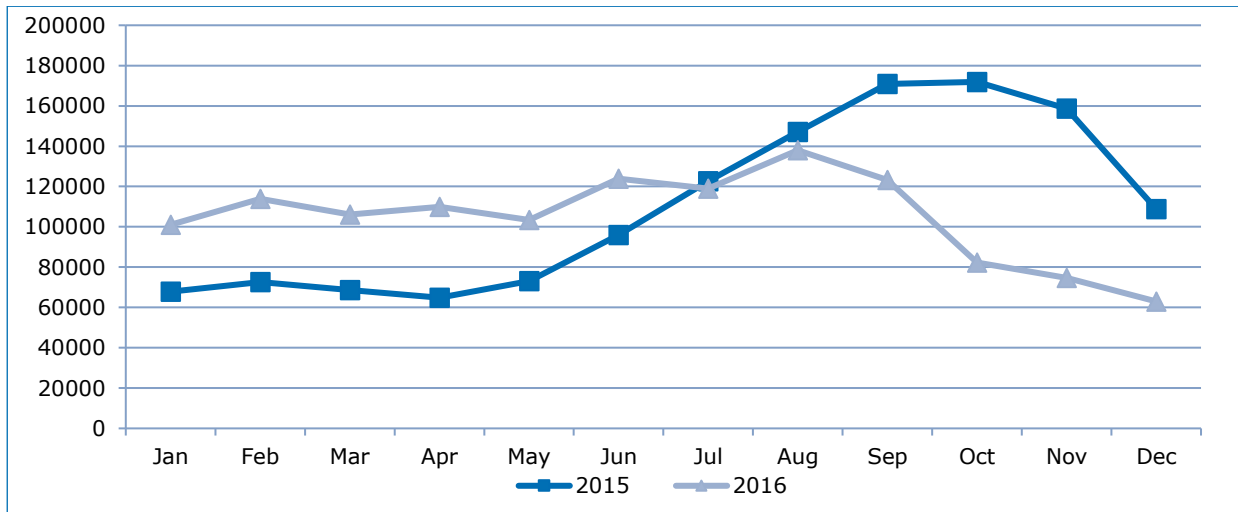
- ★ **Italy:** The 'Italian Fund for Africa' was launched on 1st February, devoting €200 million to cooperation projects/initiatives countering irregular migration and stopping human trafficking. The Fund is partly directed at cooperation initiatives with Libya. The management of the Fund stands within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian Cooperation Agency and the Ministry of Interior.
- ★ **Spain:** The bilateral Spain-Morocco Cooperation Project on capacity building for the management of migration, integration and asylum in Morocco initiated its first action. A civil servant from the Ministry in charge of the Moroccan residents abroad (Ministère chargé des Marocains résident à l'étranger et des affaires de la migration) carried out a research stay in the Permanent Observatory for Immigration and conducted a statistical study on Moroccan residents in Spain.

The 15th Meeting of the Spanish-Moroccan Permanent Group on Migratory Affairs took place in the premises of the General Secretariat of Immigration and Emigration on 29th-30th March with the participation of representatives of Spanish Ministries and representatives of Moroccan Ministries.

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

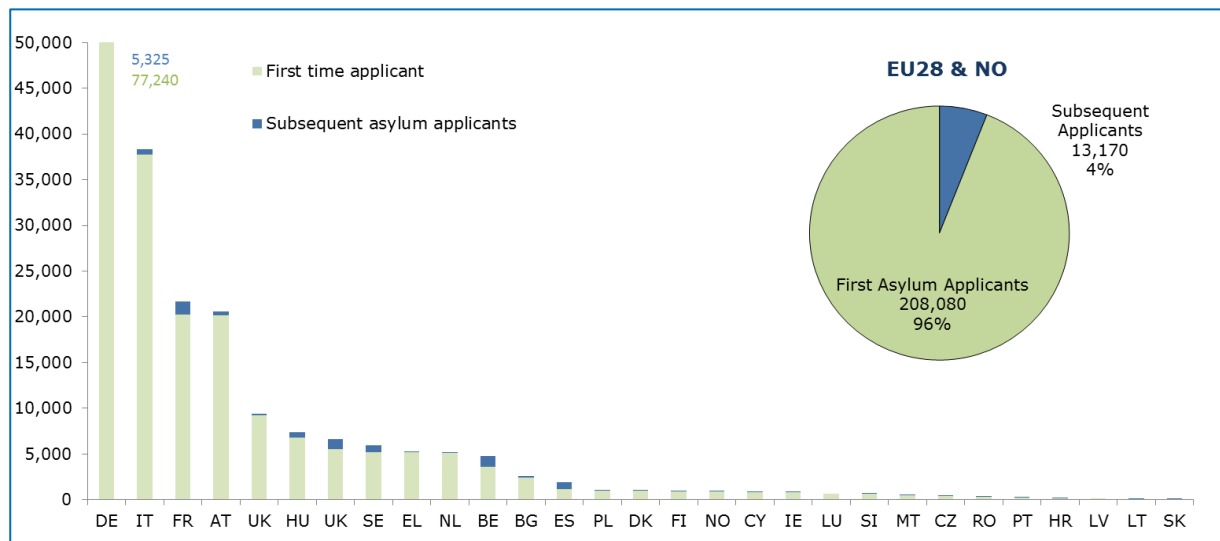
EU Figures

Figure 1a: Asylum applications in the EU-28, January 2015 – December 2016.



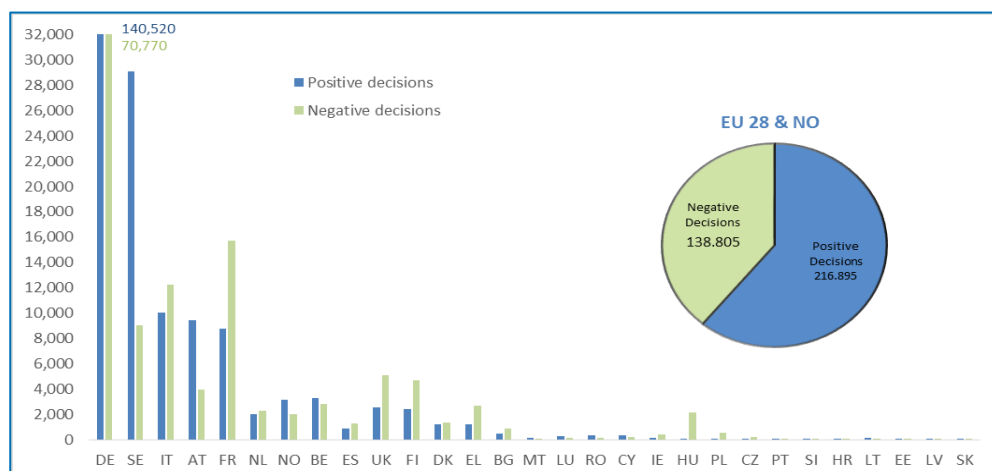
Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], total asylum applicants, accessed on 5th April 2017.

Figure 1b: First time asylum applicants and subsequent applicants (together, total asylum applicants) in the EU-28 and Norway, Q4 2016 (quarterly data)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], accessed on 5th April 2017

Figure 2: First instance asylum decisions in EU-28 and Norway for non-EU citizens, fourth quarter 2016 (quarterly data)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asydcfstq](#)], accessed on 5th April 2017 – Negative decisions include also “Dublin decisions” (according to Art. 4, EC Regulation n. 862/2007).

Figure 3a: Top fifteen nationalities of asylum applicants in EU-28 and Norway in 2016

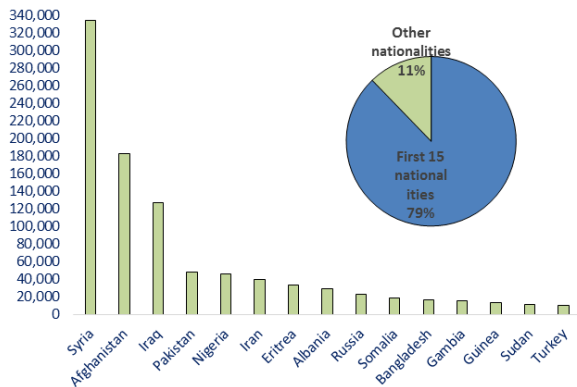
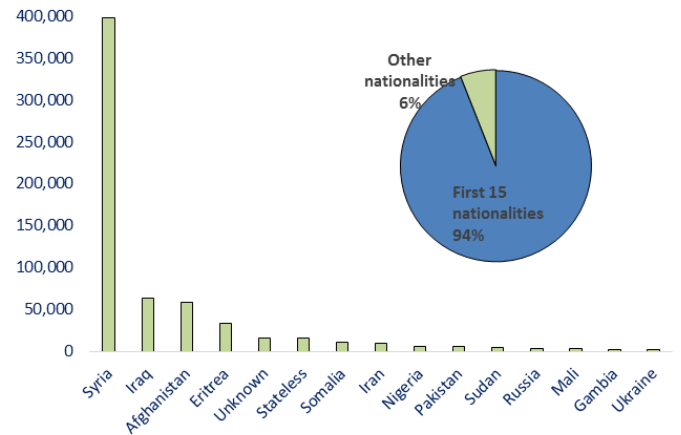


Figure 3b: Top fifteen nationalities of positive asylum decisions in EU-28 and Norway in 2016



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyvappctza](#) and [migr_asydcfstq](#)], accessed on 12th April 2016 – Negative decisions include also “Dublin decisions” (according to Art. 4, EC Regulation n.826/2007).

Figure 4a: Illegal border crossing – Top nationalities (in %)

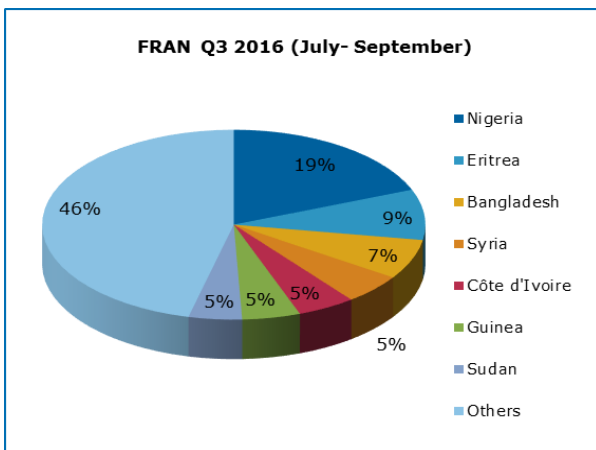


Figure 4b: Refused entry–Top nationalities (in %)

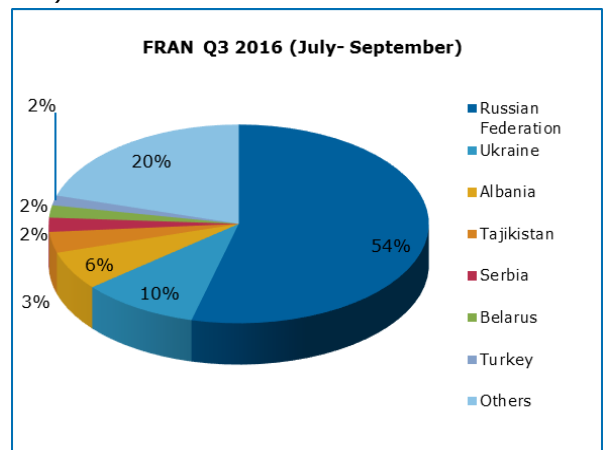


Figure 4c: Illegal stay – Top nationalities (in %)

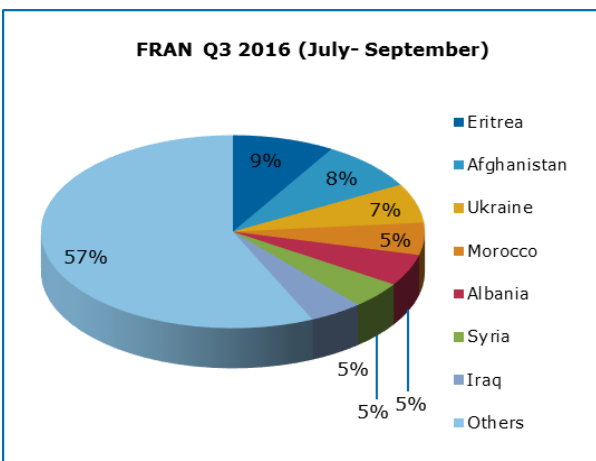
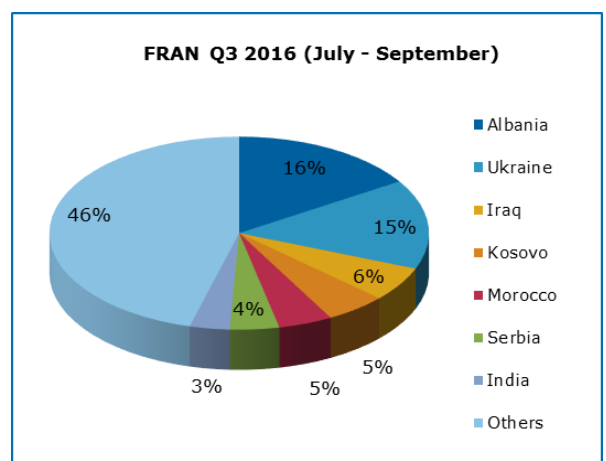


Figure 4d: Effective return–Top nationalities (in %)



Source: [FRONTEx FRAN Quarterly Report Q3 2016](#) (July - September 2016)

Latest available national statistics

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM

- ★ **Cyprus:** A significant rise in applications for international protection was recorded in Cyprus in the first three months of 2017, mainly due to a number of boat arrivals in Cyprus, indicating a new route established from Turkey to Cyprus (a total of 310 Syrian nationals applied for international protection until 10th March). The increase concerns Syrian applicants, including unaccompanied minors and the presence of family members in Cyprus may be a pull factor for more arrivals. Moreover, on 22nd March, 18 refugees arrived from the areas not under the effective control of the Government of Cyprus (Turkish-occupied areas) to the areas controlled by the Republic. Six of them were unaccompanied minors from Somalia while 12 were Syrians, one of whom was also an unaccompanied minor. On 23rd March, seven more unaccompanied minors from Somalia arrived to the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus via the same route. It is important to mention that it is the first time that Somalis have arrived together with Syrians in these numbers, using the route Mersin-Cyprus.
- ★ **Slovakia:** The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior published its [Statistical Report 2016](#) which contains an overview of the number of asylum applications, number of granted asylum or subsidiary protections and granted citizenships in 2016. The statistical report also includes data on nationalities, citizenships, age and on unaccompanied minors.
- ★ **United Kingdom:** The Office for National Statistics' [Migration Statistics Quarterly](#) (produced with Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions and National Records of Scotland) was published on 23rd February. This provides quarterly data on UK migration flows, visas, asylum and settlement.

On 23rd February, the Home Office published [Immigration Statistics October to December 2016](#). It provides the latest UK figures on those subject to immigration control, for the period up to year ending December 2016. Topics included: admissions, visas, asylum, settlement, citizenship, detention, removals and voluntary departures.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND RETURN

- ★ **Slovakia:** Bureau of Border and Aliens Police of the Police Force Presidium published the [Statistical Overview of Legal and Illegal Migration in the Slovak Republic](#) for the year 2016 which provides data on both legal and irregular migration including returns.

ACTIONS ADDRESSING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

- ★ **Portugal:** In cooperation with the Directorate-General for Justice Policy (Ministry of Justice), the Observatory on Trafficking in Human Beings published the "[Trafficking in Human Beings Justice Statistics 2008-2015 Bulletin](#)" aimed at supporting further analysis on trafficking and concluded the "Trafficking in Human Beings 2016 Statistical Report".

Updates on EU legislation transposition

LEGAL MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

- ★ **Cyprus:** The Seasonal Workers Directive (2014/36/EU) and the ICT Directive (2014/66/EU) were transposed into national law on 27th January and 17th January respectively.
- ★ **Latvia:** On 2nd March, the law "Amendments to the Immigration Law" (No.36, 16.02.2017) came into force, which incorporate the legal framework of the Seasonal Workers Directive (Directive 2014/36/EU) and the European Intra-Company Transfer Directive (Directive 2014/66/EU). The amendments include, inter alia, definitions of seasonal workers in Latvia and the concept of an intra-corporate transferee. Furthermore, it grants family members of all employed persons with the right to employment, as well as determine travelling conditions for intra-corporate transferees and seasonal workers. Lastly, amendments also concern the Blue Card Directive ([Directive 2009/50/EC](#)). They shorten the term for review of documents for persons who request the EU Blue Card to 10 working days and also make it easier for persons without the required education but with professional experience to receive the Blue Card.
- ★ **Luxembourg:** On 3rd February, the Council of Government approved the [bill](#) transposing Directive 2014/50/EU of 16 April 2014 on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility between Member States by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights.

On 8th February, Parliament passed a bill adapting the existing legislation in the domain of legal migration, most notably transposing Directive 2014/36/EU on seasonal workers and Directive

2014/66/EU on intra-corporate transfers into national law, introducing an authorisation of stay for investors and a mechanism for continuation of activity, detailing the conditions under which a third-country national corporate officer (*mandataire social*) can apply for an authorisation of stay, extending the period of validity of the "European Blue Card" residence permit from two to four years and modifying dispositions regarding the change of status of students. It furthermore softened the conditions for family reunification and extended the permitted period of minors and their families from 72 hours to 7 days. The [corresponding law](#) was published on 20th March. The Parliament [invited](#) the Government to undertake an evaluation of the functioning of the Detention Centre, particularly with regard to the period of detention for families and unaccompanied minors.

Other EMN outputs and upcoming events (see also the [EMN website](#))

- ★ **Croatia:** On 22nd-23rd February, a Croatian delegation (Major of Rijeka and members of the Association of Municipalities) attended the 8th Plenary Session of the EU Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives (ARLEM) in Malta, as well as the conference "Addressing the causes of migration and acceptance of immigrants". The ARLEM Plenary was held back to back to the Committee of the Regions Bureau meeting in Malta and a conference on migration on 22nd February, co-organised by the Committee of the Regions and Malta, to which all ARLEM attendees were invited.

On 9th February, a panel discussion about newly arrived migrants and ethnic minorities was held in Vukovar, Croatia. The panel was organised by the European House Vukovar and the German Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in Zagreb.

- ★ **Luxembourg** On 11th February, the second [national conference](#) (*assises nationales*) on integration on the local level took place in Luxembourg. During this event, 162 municipal representatives and decision-makers exchanged their views with professionals on issues ranging from education, access to affordable housing, culture and community life, in view of being better equipped to tackle short- and long-term integration needs.
- ★ **Spain:** On 30th March, the Council of Europe's European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) held a workshop regarding the General Recommendation No. 15 on Combating Hate Speech. The event took place in the premises of the General Secretariat of Immigration and Emigration in collaboration with the University of Zaragoza.