

September 2023

Welcome to the EMN Quarterly, our selection of the key developments in the areas of migration and asylum from April to June 2023. **The full PDF version of the EMN Quarterly can be found [here](#).**

EMN news



Special edition

This edition contains only national level updates. In June 2024, the EMN launched an updated version of the newsletter - EMNews - covering updates from the first quarter of 2024. EMNews will provide more focused and concise information covering EU and national level developments in the field of migration and asylum.

News from EMN Member and Observer Countries

Temporary Protection Directive

Following the extension of the Temporary Protection Directive to 4 March 2024, EU Member States announced additional updates at national level.

Regarding the labour market and integration in society, Finland [commissioned a report](#) to study the labour market position and employment services used by Ukrainians receiving temporary protection. France released multi-annual guidelines for the reception and integration of displaced persons from Ukraine. Luxembourg published information for beneficiaries of temporary protection on applying for a residence permit in the context of their salaried activity.

Sweden's Minister for Migration, Maria Malmer Stenergard, hosted an event discussing results from an [IOM study on how Ukrainians view their life in Sweden](#).

Several EU Member States reported increasing medical and/or psychological support. Croatia established a working group under the Ministry of Croatian Veterans to support wounded people arriving from Ukraine to receive treatment and rehabilitation. Latvia put in motion a support programme to provide measures (informal educational activities) to reduce psycho-emotional tension for children and young adults fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as increased measures to provide psychological support for officials of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. The Netherlands also designated various national organisations to provide psychological assistance specifically for displaced persons from Ukraine to improve access to mental healthcare.

EMN Member and Observer Countries extended the period for which accommodation is provided. Latvia has extended current provisions until the end of 2023 and Montenegro aims to extend provisions until 11 March 2024.

Support for minors was expanded in Finland and Latvia.

Lithuania closed the last remaining Foreigner's Registration Centre established after the outbreak of war in Ukraine as arrivals have reduced significantly; Ukrainians arriving in Lithuania now go directly to any Migration Department office to register.

General developments

Changes were reported on the restructuring of political institutions and in migration management legislation.

Germany approved the new [Skilled Worker Immigration Act](#) to further facilitate the immigration of skilled workers by removing existing hurdles and lowering the earnings limit for the Blue Card; a new system will also be introduced to make moving to Germany easier for foreign skilled workers, counteracting the shortage of skilled labour. Greece amended the organisational structure of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Portugal finalised agreements on how to merge the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) and the High Commission for Migration (ACM) into a new entity: the Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA, I.P.), that will go into force at the end of October. Italy approved a new [law](#) that amended the management of both regular and irregular migration. Lithuania amended the Law on Crisis Management and Civil Protection, establishing new criteria for declaring extreme situations of instrumentalisation of migration. Montenegro signed an agreement with the EU on operational activities carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) that expands the deployment of Frontex officers along the state border of Montenegro.

In Luxembourg, third-country nationals in possession of a legitimisation card may now exercise their active or passive right to vote in municipal elections.

Spain extended the National Programme for the Resettlement of Refugees.

Migration policy was tightened in some countries. Poland ended the regulation establishing the state of epidemic emergency that was put in place for COVID-19; foreigners who were benefitting from special solutions for extended stay were given 30 days to settle their situation. Sweden took steps to tighten migration policy such as putting forward higher wage requirements to obtain work permits and increasing language requirements to obtain a permanent residence permit.

New national data was released. Ireland released summary results from [Census 2022](#); Ireland's population increased by 8.1% since 2016 to reach 5 149 139, with positive net migration contributing to the increase. This is the first time the population has exceeded five million since 1851. Georgia published [data](#) on international migration, population, and demographic indicators for 2022.

International protection including asylum

Updates on accommodation. Belgium reported that residents in the reception network are finding it increasingly more difficult to find suitable accommodation once granted international protection, notably due to the shrinking number of affordable houses on the rental market; in response, Fedasil released [videos](#) that will be available in 14 languages in the autumn to support beneficiaries of international protection to find accommodation. France published new [guidelines](#) for accommodation offers for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, prioritising the improvement of reception and accommodation conditions and optimisation of accommodation capacities; France also published

[instructions](#) on reception policy for resettled refugees in 2023 that increase capacity, prioritise vulnerable groups, and provide alternative solutions to online applications for residence permits. **Italy** changed the criteria for reception, whereby applicants of international protection (with the exception of vulnerable individuals and people arriving from humanitarian corridors, resettlement and evacuations) are no longer eligible for second accommodation services in centres; and services in extraordinary reception centres are reduced.

Updates on cooperation. **Bulgaria** signed a memorandum of cooperation between the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers (SAR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In **the Netherlands**, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (*Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers*, COA), the Red Cross and the Ministry of Justice and Security signed a declaration of intent on durable cooperation. In **Georgia**, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA) participated in a visit to North Macedonia organised by the Asylum Capacity Support Group in collaboration with UNHCR to discuss best practices and lessons learnt.

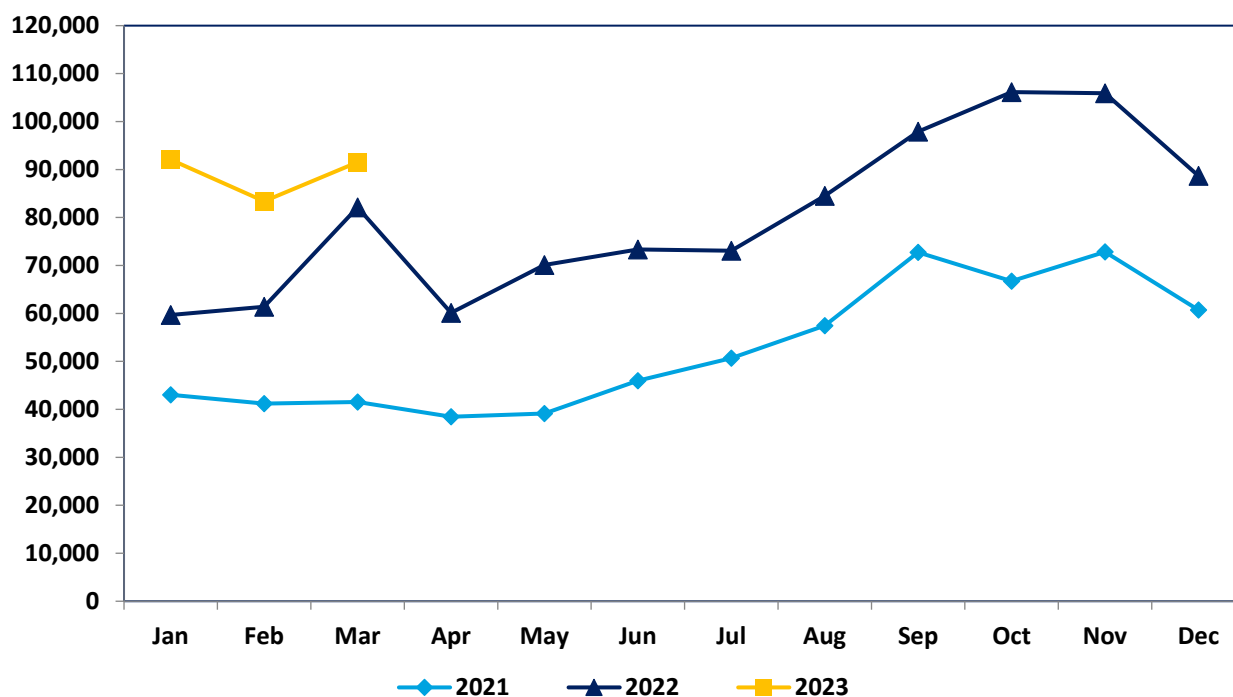
In **Croatia**, waiting time to access the labour market was shortened from nine to three months from the day that an application for international protection is lodged.

Updates on the examination of applications for international protection from Sudan. **Greece** released guidelines regarding the examination of subsidiary protection, in relation to applications for international protection, submitted by Sudanese nationals. **Malta** suspended the examination of applications for international protection lodged by Sudanese nationals and stateless persons whose former country of residency was Sudan until the end of August 2023.

In **Ireland**, the Department of Justice launched a new [website](#) to provide information on international protection, including statistics, descriptions of the types of protection and explanations of the asylum process.

Portugal reported on continued evacuations from Afghanistan; between April and June 2023, 136 Afghans were evacuated to Portugal.

Figure 1: Asylum applications in the EU-27, Q1 2023 (January-March 2023)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], total asylum applicants, extracted on 17 August 2023.

Unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups

Events and trainings called attention to unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups. In Austria, the chairwoman of the former Commission on the Best Interests of the Child held a [press conference](#), demanding that every refugee

child who arrives in Austria without parents must be provided with a guardian from the first day of the asylum procedure. In **Greece**, trainings were provided on the reception of vulnerable persons in cooperation with the EUAA and the NGO Metadrasi. In **Georgia**, the United Nations Children’s Fund organised a multi-agency seminar on the “Protection of the Rights of Unaccompanied and Separated Children on Move.”

Belgium presented a [guide](#) that aims to prevent and resolve the disappearances of unaccompanied minors, including actions to take when a minor goes missing and services provided through the police, reception facilities and field workers.

Updates on legal amendments. **Greece** issued a joint Ministerial Decision that modified standard operating procedures and the licensing framework of accommodation centres for unaccompanied minors; additionally the new [Migration Code](#) expanded access to residence permits to adult third-country nationals or stateless persons who entered Greece as unaccompanied minors. **Italy** can now issue residence permits for a maximum of one year to unaccompanied minors once they reach 18 years of age. **Latvia** developed the legal framework related to the operation of the “*Barnahus*”. **The Netherlands** passed a new Statelessness Determination Procedure Act and an amendment to counter statelessness among minors.

Portugal announced that they had committed to receive 70 unaccompanied minors from Greece under the framework of the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism.

Legal migration and integration

Fast-tracked application processes for highly-skilled workers or workers filling labour shortage gaps. **The Czech Republic** approved [two new economic migration programmes](#) aimed at highly skilled IT workers and polytechnic students from selected Indonesian polytechnics. **France** favoured the issuance of multi-annual residence permits for internationally renowned athletes and coaches (for electronic and video games). **Slovakia** provided a fast-track scheme for third-country nationals from selected countries to access to the labour market as bus drivers and heavy truck drivers (where there is labour shortage). In **Sweden**, a new model for handling highly qualified working permit cases has been introduced to reduced processing times.

Georgia exchanged best practices and lessons learnt in a [study visit](#) in Slovenia on residence and visa regulations, in relation to an ICMPD project, as well as overall migration management, citizenship and residence permit issues at a [delegation](#) in the Republic of Moldova.

Lithuania [established](#) an Agency responsible for the reception of migrants. The Agency will be coordinated by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and will ensure the provision of social, accommodation, and other essential services to migrants.

Updates on established quotas. **Austria** increased seasonal quotas in the areas of tourism, agriculture and forestry. **Greece** issued new quotas on residence permits for the purpose of employment, seasonal work, and highly-skilled employment. By May 2023, **Montenegro** had issued 30% more temporary residence and work permits in accordance with established quotas than in the same period the previous year.

Language requirements (referencing the Common European Framework of References for Languages): **Austria** lowered the German language level requirement for registered employees from A2 to A1 and gives credits for knowledge of French, Spanish and Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian. **France** requires a minimum knowledge of A2 level French in order to receive a residence permit, permanent residence permit, or an EU long-term residence permit. **Slovenia** removed administrative barriers for faster issuing of residence permits, while maintaining required language levels depending on the type of permit requested (A1/A2).

Publications and projects regarding integration measures. **Finland** published a [study](#) that states immigrants’ access to a doctor has weakened significantly over the past four years. Currently, one in three immigrants feel that they do not receive enough doctor’s services for their needs; it was also noted that mental health problems have become more common. **Spain** published an [annual report](#) looking at the evolution of the legislative framework and norms affecting the integration of the migrant population in Spain. In **Greece**, [the HELIOS integration programme](#) continued to run and [the MULTAKA project](#) was completed. **Portugal** launched a [Virtual National Support Centre](#) for the Integration of Migrants, expanding access to services while still providing face-to-face support.

Legislative changes were announced. **Finland** approved a comprehensive reform of their Integration Act that increased municipal responsibility and facilitates access to employment and other services. **Ireland** launched a public consultation on the review of the Critical Skills Occupations List and the Ineligible Occupations List for employment permits. **The**

Netherlands reduced the number of civic integration exam attempts per failed exam section from four to three. **Georgia** made Vocational Education and Training (VET) fully funded by the state for students with a stateless status.

New guidance was released. **Greece** published a [Guide for Beneficiaries of International Protection](#) regarding aspects of everyday life such as employment, education, healthcare, and welfare. **Ireland's** Department of Justice announced new [guidance for naturalisation applicants](#). **Luxembourg** began distributing personalised "[Citizen's Guides](#)" to municipalities, to invite newcomers to discover their municipalities.

Return

Updates on voluntary returns were reported by **Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal** and **Spain**. In **Greece** 541 third-country nationals departed voluntarily while 778 forced returns were carried out; 65 detained third-country nationals who had been issued a return decision were provided with counselling services under the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, none of whom departed voluntarily to their country of origin. **Spain** introduced cases where minors are accompanied by only one parent into the [manual](#) of voluntary returns.

Updates regarding detention. In **Italy**, there are now two types of detention: 1) for migrants in the Dublin procedure, and 2) for applicants of international protection in the 'accelerated' procedure. The Italian authorities also drew the attention of the Italian Parliament regarding negotiations on the new Pact for Migration and Asylum. While highlighting the positive aspect of seeking shared responses and courses of action, concerns remain about the extension of certain border detentions and the possibility of forced transfers of migrants to transit countries, regardless of the person's connection to the territory and without being bound by adherence to the Geneva Convention. In **Sweden**, the government tasked the Swedish Migration Agency to set up [reception centres for return](#). The Minister for Migration, Maria Malmer Stenergard, explained that "there are many advantages to have people with return decisions staying in a reception centre for return. It sends a clear message that the asylum process is over and that return should be the main focus."

The UN Committee against Torture issued a [decision](#) on a complaint against **Finland** concerning the return of a Chechen asylum seeker to the Russian Federation. According to the decision, Finland must reconsider the complainant's asylum decision, as the return would constitute a violation of Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Georgia enacted agreements with the United Kingdom and Iceland on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation. 362 Georgian citizens were returned from EU Member States during the reporting period. There were 21 returnees to **Montenegro** who were all provided with questionnaires, individual, and family reintegration plans.

Addressing trafficking in human beings

Several countries reformed their Victim Support Act. **Estonia** changed the status of presumed victims, while still providing services to those who are affected by related crimes including psychosocial assistance, for the first time.

Hungary expanded its referral mechanism for victims of trafficking following recommendations made by several international evaluation bodies (e.g. GRETA, USA TIP Office).

Other policy changes and updated guidelines. **Austria** updated its internal guidelines for officials making decisions according to the Dublin III Regulation to include a chapter on trafficking in human beings. A special Commission in **Belgium** tasked with evaluating national legislation and policies on trafficking in human beings and smuggling ended its work with the [adoption of 100 recommendations](#). **The Netherlands** extended the scope of the reflection period to cover all third-country nationals presumed to be victims of trafficking in human beings. **Slovenia** amended its Act on Compensation to Victims of Crime, facilitating access to compensation for victims of trafficking.

The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)'s third evaluation report was put to use. **Poland** provided comments to [GRETA's third evaluation round report](#). Representatives from government, public bodies and civil society in **Georgia** reviewed recommendation provided in GRETA's evaluation report in a [roundtable discussion](#). The same type of [roundtable discussion](#) took place in **Montenegro**.

Trainings and capacity building efforts took place in **Greece, Italy, and Portugal**.

In **Portugal**, [Operation El Dourado](#) was concluded by SEF, flagging 47 victims of human trafficking in football (36 minors).

Publications. **Finland** published a [report](#) on the cases and situations of victims of trafficking in human beings who have experienced sexual violence and have been clients of Victim Support Finland, and a [report](#) on reflection periods given to victims of trafficking in human beings and suspicions of trading in sexual services as grounds for denial of admittance or stay. **Luxembourg** received the [International Assessment Report on Human Trafficking and maintained its ranking at the highest possible level](#). **Poland** published their [Human Trafficking Report](#) for 2022.

Events. The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities in **Croatia** organised an [international conference](#) 'Improving the response to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, especially women and girls, by combating the demand in Southeast Europe'. In **Malta**, the 3rd Anti-Human Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee took place to discuss the targeted revision of the Directive (EU) 2011/36 on Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims. In **Poland**, a workshop on strengthening the legislative response to risks of trafficking in human beings for Ukrainian refugees together with the UK All Parliamentary Group on Human Trafficking Foundation and the OSCE; a one-day seminar on Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Labour Exploitation was also held in Warsaw, organised by the Council of Europe with the help of the Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration.

External Dimension

Italy presented new Strategic Guidelines on the Migration-Development Nexus, redirecting their placement of resources and capacities for cooperation on migration and development. Projects implemented by the Italian Border Police continued in Turkey (on implementing the Memorandum of Understanding concerning standard operating procedures), Côte d'Ivoire (CIVIT Project), and Egypt (International Training at the Egyptian Policy Academy).

The Netherlands joined the European migration organisation ICMPD and presented their [Dutch-Africa Strategy 2023-2032](#).

Georgia held a [forum](#) dedicated to Diaspora Day.

EU Legislation Transposition

Bulgaria, Portugal and Poland made steps to transpose [Directive \(EU\) 2021/1883](#) on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment (the Blue Card Directive).

Poland worked on transposing [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1860](#) on the use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals; and [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1861](#) on the establishment, operation and use of the SIS in the field of border checks, and amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, and amending and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006 (SIS II).

Slovenia transposed [Directive \(EU\) 2020/1057](#) with regard to special rules for posting drivers in the road transport sector in their [Transnational Provision of Services Act](#).

Border management and irregular migration

EMN Member and Observer Countries stepped up technical equipment and reinforced physical borders. Border police at **Croatia**'s external borders received large deliveries of hand-held X-ray scanners for finding hidden objects and persons as well as devices for verifying the authenticity of travel documents. **Lithuania** began repairing a 100-kilometer border patrol path on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border and strengthened checks on arrivals from Belarus and Russia following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. **Poland** began constructing an electronic barrier on the Polish-Russian border and completed construction of the electronic barrier on the Polish-Belarusian border; the electronic carriers include video cameras, power-transmission-and-detection cables; and day-night and thermal imaging cameras. **Georgia** placed immigration-border controllers in airports of the EU/Schengen countries in the framework of MIA-Frontex cooperation.

Updates on Schengen. The European Commission carried out a Schengen evaluation in **Finland** in May and June to see how Finnish authorities apply the Schengen acquis.

The state of emergency was extended in **Latvia** the Latvian-Belarusian border until 10 August due to the rapid increase in number of irregular crossings, and a state of emergency was declared in **Italy** in response to larger numbers of people arriving through the Mediterranean migration routes. **Poland** announced they would use the draft Technical and Operational Strategy for European Integrated Border (EIBM) shared by Frontex with an Action Plan, as well as the [European Commission's Communication](#) establishing a multi-annual strategic policy on EIBM, to develop a new national strategy.

EMN Member and Observer Countries took steps to counter irregular migration. **France** presented a [national plan to fight irregular work](#) for 2023-2027. **Luxembourg** provided [legal clarifications](#) on conditions for granting permission to stay for personal reasons. **Georgia** provided trainings to their Patrol Police Department on smuggling, human behaviour, fraud and identification as part of the [Prometheus II project](#). **Montenegro** began implementing a project with IOM to strengthen integrated border management capacities.

Recent EMN publications:

- EMN inform on [Accompanied children's right to be heard in international protection procedures](#)
- EMN inform on [Displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation](#)
- EMN inform on [Statelessness in the European Union, Norway and Georgia](#)
- EMN inform on [Resettlement, humanitarian admissions and community sponsorship](#)
- [EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum \(ARM\), Statistical Annex](#) and [Country Factsheets](#)

Stay tuned for upcoming EMN publications:

- EMN study on the Integration of international protection applicants in the labour market
- EMN inform on the Analysis of irregular migratory routes to the EU
- EMN inform on the Digitalisation of identity and residence documents issued to third-country nationals
- EMN inform on Family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection

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