

December 2023

Welcome to the EMN Quarterly, our selection of the key developments in the areas of migration and asylum from October to December 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 2025, six EU Member States and Montenegro announced additional updates at national level.

Austria reported on extending the inclusion of displaced persons from Ukraine in the Social Insurance Act. **Greece** updated legislation to provide beneficiaries of temporary protection the possibility to apply for a residence permit according to their Migration Code until 4 March 2025. The **Czech Republic** and **Latvia** reported extending temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine until March 2025. **Italy** extended protection until at least the end of 2024. **Portugal** extended the validity of temporary protection

for a period of six months. **Montenegro** reported that temporary protection permits continued to be granted during the reporting period.

More specifically, **Austria** amended regulations on health insurance, compensation of family expenses, and childcare allowance to include displaced person from Ukraine until 4 March 2025. **Greece** amended its Migration Code to extend categories of residence permits to beneficiaries of temporary protection until 4 March 2025. **Latvia** extended the period of validity of visas and residence permits for Ukrainians until 4 March 2025 and approved a [plan of measures](#) to continue providing support with increased coordination between state institutions, municipalities, non-governmental institutions and merchants. **The Netherlands** established the right to [rent benefits](#) for displaced persons from Ukraine for the duration of their temporary protection in the country. **Sweden** [expanded the scope of the TPD](#), primarily affecting applicants for international protection from Ukraine who arrived in Sweden before 30 October 2021 and have not had their applications examined; this group now has the opportunity to receive temporary protection on the condition they have been in Sweden legally prior to 22 December 2023.

In **Finland**, the municipal model for accommodation that was established after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine 2022 [ended](#), as it was intended as a temporary solution to allow people fleeing the war to stay in the place where they had settled when they arrived in Finland.

General developments

Legal amendments. **France** passed a bill to control immigration and improve integration, focusing on four priority areas: tightening conditions for issuing residence permits for family reunification, combatting irregular immigration by increasing return measures for foreign nationals who pose a serious threat to public order, making the right of asylum effective by reducing processing times for asylum applications, improving the reception of foreign nationals admitted to reside in France to ensure successful integration, while also paying particular attention to the acquisition of French language skills and access to work.

Portugal revoked the possibility of obtaining a residence permit through investment in real estate. **Italy** passed legislation for regulations on international protection, unaccompanied foreign minors, and measures related to reception. **Montenegro** is reviewing their Law on Foreigners within the context of their new government elected in October, where it will be sent to the European Commission for further comments after national inter-institutional consultations have been completed; amendments further harmonise the Law on Foreigners with the Law on Life Partnership of Same-Sex Partners and elaborate on the procedure for determining the status of stateless persons.

Portugal concluded the process of restructuring its borders and migration management system and the implementation of a new paradigm of public migration policies. The new Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA) results from the merge of the High Commission for Migration (ACM) and the administrative part of the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF).

Following general elections, the new [Coalition Agreement for 2023 – 2028](#) in **Luxembourg** was signed between the Christian Social People's Party (CSV) and the Democratic Party, different aspects of migration are addressed as part of the Coalition Agreement. In **Poland**, the President of the Republic of Poland appointed a new majority coalition government formed following mid-October parliamentary elections. **Lithuania's** government [confirmed the state budget](#) and articulated its commitment to enhancing the available institutional capacity to manage migration processes, allocating € 2 million to new posts and salary increases for staff in the Migration Department.

Updates on Strategies. The **Belgian** Presidency [programme](#) was released in December 2023, setting out the priorities and main directions of the Presidency of the Council of the EU. In the area of asylum and migration, the Belgian Presidency aims to address all remaining legislative files associated with CEAS and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Belgian Presidency will also take further discussions on return and reintegration, the future of the EU visa policy, legal migration, and the development of integrated border management. **Ireland's** Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (responsible for migrant integration and the accommodation of international protection applicants) published their statement of strategy 2023-2025.

An [Agreement on Migration and Mobility](#) between **Georgia** and **Germany** was signed, which aims to strengthen cooperation in the field of labour/circular migration, sharing experience in the educational field, and the fight against illegal migration. Georgia also adopted its [2024 Action Plan](#) as implementation tool of their 2021-2030 Migration Strategy.

International protection including asylum

Updates on the processing of applications. In **Belgium**, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons ([CGRS](#)) had announced that the notification of decisions granting or refusing subsidiary protection status to applicants from Gaza and the West Bank was [suspended](#) until the CGRS had sufficient objective information to assess the security situation in the Palestinian territories accurately. On 19 December the CGRS announced that the assessment had been completed and that it had decided to resume the processing of all Palestinian cases. **Bulgaria** approved an "Instruction on the terms and conditions for age assessment" that was developed jointly by the State Agency for Refugees and the State Agency for Child Protection. **France** amended [provisions](#) relating to 'wanted persons files', by including asylum seekers awaiting Dublin transfer who have absconded and extending the list of agents who can consult it. In **Luxembourg**, [men travelling alone](#) who have submitted an application for international protection are no longer automatically admitted to the first-time reception centre; instead, they are seen individually by the social services of the National Reception Office to assess their vulnerabilities and needs, and priority is given to women, children, families and vulnerable groups. In **Finland**, the Ministry of the Interior set up two [projects aimed at tightening the rules](#) on international protection in line with the Government Programme: the first project plans to make international protection temporary in nature and introduce the option to withdraw protection if the applicant commits a serious offence; the second project aims to improve the efficiency of the asylum process.

Italy introduced several legal provisions, including stricter criteria for the acceptance of international protection applications, shorter deadlines for requesting the reopening of the examination of the international protection application, extended access to the Reception and Integration System facilities to all women (not only pregnant women), and possible deviations from the capacity requirements for reception centres and facilities in circumstances of extraordinary urgency.

Sweden introduced [amendments](#) to their Aliens Act that increase requirements for family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, resettled refugees, and restrict possibilities to grant [residence permits](#) on humanitarian grounds.

Austria's [Constitutional Court ruling](#) found that legal counselling and representation for asylum seekers and foreigners by the Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services are unconstitutional, as the independence of the counselling and representation is not sufficiently guaranteed by law. **Greece** announced the provision of legal aid to applicants for international protection.

Access to the labour market. **Cyprus** increased the amount of time asylum seekers need after submitting their application to access the labour market for certain sectors and occupations up from one to nine months. **Greece** decreased the waiting time for applicants of international protection to access the labour market to 60 days (from 6 months) after lodging an international protection application.

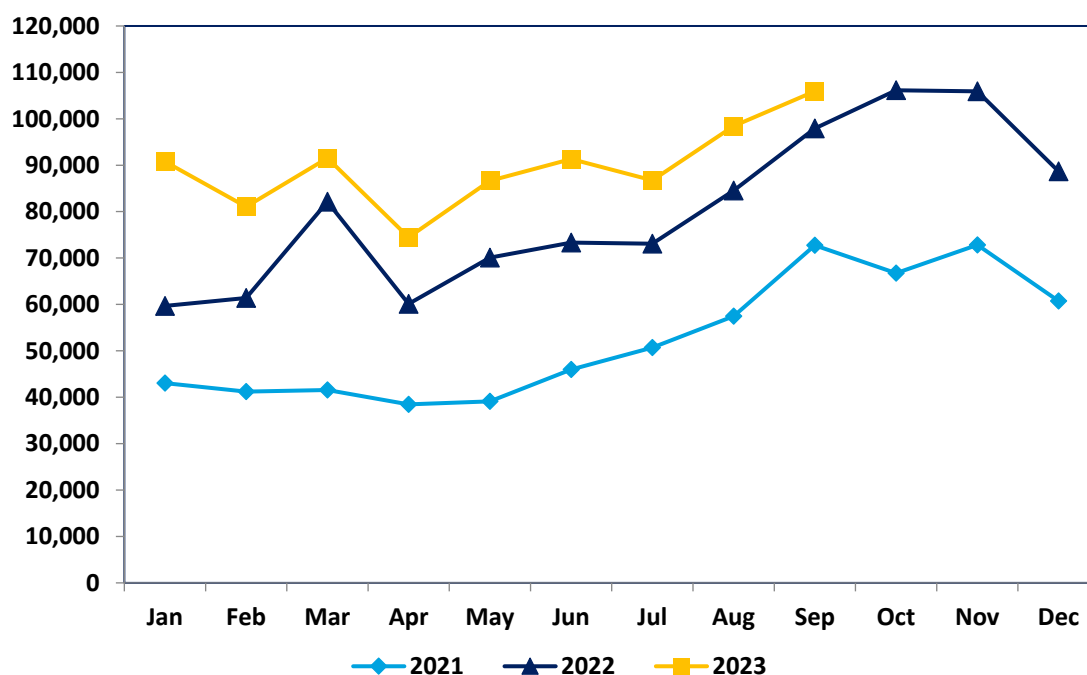
Focus on vulnerable groups. At the World Refugee Forum, **France** [reaffirmed its full commitment](#) to work alongside UNHCR to help refugees, announcing that it would triple its financial contribution over three years and committed itself to resettling isolated and particularly vulnerable refugee women in France, beginning with welcoming women from Afghanistan.

Cooperation with third countries. **Greece** released its national list of countries listed as 'safe countries of origin', designating the same 16 countries as the previous relevant Joint Ministerial Decision, which included Egypt, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Georgia, Gambia, Ghana, India, Morocco, Bangladesh, Benin, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Togo, and Tunisia. **Greece** also released the list of safe third countries regarding Turkey as a safe third country for persons of origin from Albania, North Macedonia, Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Somalia, adding specifications regarding irregular crossings from Albania and North Macedonia into Greece. The designation of Turkey as a safe third country was an important step in

tackling trafficking in human beings and as part of the implementation of **EU-Turkey Joint Declaration**. Representatives from **Georgia's** Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) participated in a study visit supported by UNHCR at the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) to Malmö, with a specific focus on the assessment of indiscriminate violence and identification of the persons with specific needs.

Updates on resettlement and humanitarian corridors were reported in **Italy**. Under their National Resettlement Programme, Afghan national were resettled from Iran to Italy and granted refugee status. Italy also reported transferring Aghan nationals from Pakistan and Turkey, and transferring vulnerable persons in Lebanon, mostly Syrians, over to Italy. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed as a result of cooperation between the Italian Ministry of Interior, UNHCR and other national stakeholders to sustain evacuations through safe pathways for vulnerable people in Libya over the next three years.

Figure 1: Asylum applications in the EU-27, Q3 2023 (January–September 2023)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)], total asylum applicants, extracted on 18 January 2024.

Unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups

Projects. **Bulgaria** established a third safe zone for unaccompanied minors with the project "Enhancing support and integration, care and protection system of refugee and migrant children in EU countries" funded by UNICEF. **Greece** began implementing the project "[National Guardianship System of Unaccompanied Minors](#)" which provides guardianship services under two entrusted NGOs (METAdrasi and PRAKSIS). Greece also released the Joint Ministerial Decision on "Establishing Procedures for the Submission, Examination and Resolution of Complaints", which provides a complaints mechanism in the framework of the implementation of the new National Guardianship System. **Italy** began implementing [socio-occupational integration paths](#) for unaccompanied foreign minors and young migrants up to 24 years with unused endowments from the PERCORSI 4 project.

Latvia established [procedures](#) for the implementation of the '*Barnahaus*' (Child's House) a child-centred inter-institutional cooperation programme, including the scope and procedures of personal data processing.

France announced a new five-year plan, known as the “[National Strategic plan 2023-2027](#)” that sets out priorities to improve the assessment and care of unaccompanied minors.

Italy introduced legislative changes to the reception of unaccompanied foreign minors, whereby in the event of a temporary absence of temporary facilities, minors above the age of sixteen are temporarily placed in a specific section designated within adult centres for a duration not exceeding ninety days; additionally, public security authorities can order health examinations, including radiographic ones, for age determination.

The Netherlands implemented the New Statelessness Determination Procedure Act and an amendment to the Passport Act and The Netherlands Nationality Act to counter statelessness among minors.

Slovenia’s [decree](#) providing appropriate accommodation, care and treatment of unaccompanied minors came into force. **Georgia** [adopted amendments](#) to the Organic Law on Georgian Citizenship, whereby the term of residence for naturalisation of a stateless person in Georgia decreased from 10 to five years.

Reports. **Ireland’s** Ombudsman for Children’s Office (OCO) published a [Special Report](#) on the Safety and Welfare of Children in Direct Provision, which was the first report of its kind since the OCO was established in 2004. The Council of Europe (COE) Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published its [baseline report on Ireland](#), which includes an update on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. **Italy** published the [Fifth Report](#) on the Quantitative Monitoring System for Voluntary Protection for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors.

Luxembourg’s Ombudsman for Children and Youth (OKaJu) presented a [thematic report](#) ‘Towards an Autonomous Administrative Status for Unaccompanied Children in Luxembourg. Getting unaccompanied children out of administrative and legal dark.’

Montenegro reported that six unaccompanied minors, three LGBTQI+, two persons with disabilities, and three people with mental health disorders were accommodated in reception centres with the appropriate support during the last quarter of 2023.

Legal migration and integration

Legislation and regulation updates. In **Austria**, regulations entered into effect implementing the updated annual [list of shortage occupations](#) and specifying the [quotas](#) for the temporary employment of foreigners in tourism and agriculture and forestry. **Italy** also released a regulation regarding the ‘programming of legal entry flows into Italy for foreign workers for the period 2023-2025’ that established the quota of 452 000 for entries over three years (136 000 for the year 2023; 151 000 for the year 2024; and 165 000 for the year 2025). **Cyprus** revised [legislation](#) so that EU citizens residing and/or working in Cyprus had greater flexibility in registering at Citizen Service Centres, operating in different parts of the island with extended working hours. In **Greece**, [several provisions on legal migration](#) were published regarding the obligations of employers and of third-country nationals who are invited to Greece for employment reasons and related sanctions; a new type of residence permit for work was also established for third country nationals who, among others, have a declaration of a job offer from an employer in Greece and have completed at least three continuous years of residence in the country. Greece also announced that the [new Migration Code](#) entered into force on 31 March 2024. **Ireland** expanded the [eligibility criteria](#) for the civil service to include non-EEA individuals holding Stamp 4 residence permissions. In **Slovenia**, an [amendment](#) to the Foreigners Act entered into force, which changed the language requirements needed for a temporary residence permit for family members of third-country nationals. In **Sweden** tougher maintenance [requirements](#) to receive a work permit in Sweden were introduced.

Updates on data and digitalisation. In **Estonia**, the [Automated Biometric Identification System \(ABIS\)](#) database was completed that increases comparability, reliability, and verification of identity. In **France** first and renewal applications for “private and family life” residence permits will be [processed exclusively online](#), which cover foreign nationals who are victims of human trafficking offenses, beneficiaries of a protection order and unaccompanied foreign minors. **Ireland** [announced](#) that people are now able to apply for citizenship online.

In **Italy**, a [regulation](#) regarding applications for non-seasonal subordinate work, family and socio-health assistance, and seasonal subordinate work was passed, noting applications are to be processed through a designated online platform.

Programmes and projects. **Croatia** held an international conference on “New Legal Pathways for Access to Protection and Integration of Refugees in Europe – Opportunities and Challenges” within the framework of the two-year project [Complementary Pathways for Southeast Europe – COMP4SEE](#). **Finland’s** ministerial working group on employment and entrepreneurship approved the [revised Talent Boost programme](#) on work-based and education-based immigration for 2023-2027. The programme aims to provide Finland with skills that meet its needs and to strengthen economic growth, employment and innovation activities.

Agreements with non-EU countries. **France** published the [agreement](#) between the government of the French Republic and the government of the Republic of Congo, extending short-stay exemptions. **Greece** extended the deadline until 30 November 2023 to submit applications for residence permits to nationals of [Bangladesh](#) in accordance with provisions within the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Greece and Bangladesh for migration and mobility. **Italy** signed the [Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Tunisia](#), which authorises the annual entry of 4 000 non-seasonal Tunisian subordinate workers and simplified procedures for visa and residence permit issuance. Italy also signed a [bilateral agreement with India](#) to facilitate the mobility of students, workers, professionals, researchers, and academics, as well as counter irregular migration, exploitation, and trafficking in human beings. **Portugal** inaugurated two new Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration which, that from 29 October onwards became part of a four AIMA Shops (one-stop shops offering a wide range of integration services) and 155 AIMA Spots (local posts set up in partnership with municipalities, civil society organisations and institutions of higher education).

Georgia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) created an [informative video clip](#) on visa-free travel to EU/Schengen area that was aired on television, to remind Georgian citizens of the importance of visa-free travel with the EU, achievements, efforts made to gain it and measures to preserve it.

In **Montenegro**, shortly before the end of the year, there were 94 271 foreigners residing legally in Montenegro, out of whom 29 842 had a permanent residence permit and 64 429 temporary residence.

Concrete measures to support integration. In Austria, [draft legislation](#) was adopted that reformed the National Socialism Prohibition Act 1947 – the criminal law instrument in the fight against anti-Semitism, right-wing extremism and National Socialist reactivation. In **the Netherlands**, the Council of State [ruled](#) that applicants for international protection are allowed to work more than 24 weeks per year and the Senate supported temporary [education provisions](#) for recently arrived minors. **Finland’s** [Startup Refugees won](#) the Responsible and Inclusive Entrepreneurship category in the European Enterprise Promotion Awards. In **Greece** the action “[MOMENTUM](#)” “Breaking silos, promoting young third-country national women’s access to targeted vocational training and labour market opportunities through social economy” was completed. In **Ireland**, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) [announced](#) that approximately €750 000 per year would be made available under the National Integration Fund to national and regional projects supporting the integration of migrants. **Italy** presented the [results of the PUOI project](#) (United Protection with Integration Objective), showing the socio-occupational integration paths it had offered. In **Luxembourg**, on 29 November 2023, the Minister of National Education, Children and Youth presented [the Government Program for Education](#), highlighting linguistic offers that take into account the diversity of the school population. **Georgia** finalised the enrolment process for Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes for 14 foreign citizens (with compatriot living abroad, asylum seeker, refugee or humanitarian statuses), who enrolled and received state funding. Georgia also [participated in a study visit](#) to the Czech Republic that was supported by UNHCR on the topic of integration support provided to refugees within the State Integration Programme.

Reports. **Finland** published a [report](#) on the employment, use of employment services and future plans of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection. **Greece** published a [Guide for Beneficiaries of International Protection](#) in collaboration with the UNHCR. **Italy** published several [reports on migrant citizens in metropolitan cities](#).

Return

Updates on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme and forced returns.

Finland issued a [new Decree on Assistance for Voluntary Return](#), which entered into force on 1 January 2024; the new decree implements the Government Programme objective of staggering the assistance for voluntary return to encourage people to leave the country as quickly as possible and refrain from requesting a review of their asylum decision. The decree also harmonises the level of assistance with Finland's reference countries. **France** also issued a decree that [reformed the system of awarding assisted voluntary return](#), a scheme granted to third-country nationals in an irregular situation who can prove six months of continuous residence on French territory introducing a degressive system for the amount of aid granted, while increasing the initial amount of aid granted, and imposing that only irregular foreign nationals who have been notified of an obligation to leave French territory will be eligible for assisted return. **Greece** provided updates on counselling services through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme provided by IOM Greece to detained third-country nationals against whom a return decision has been issued in order to motivate them to depart voluntarily: of a total of 159 beneficiaries, two expressed their will to return to their country of origin. New legislation also established the position of National Coordinator for Returns. **Italy** signed a grant agreement to begin implementing Voluntary Assisted Returns through the IOM. **Georgia** participated in seven Collecting Return Operations coordinated by Frontex, resulting in safe return of 384 Georgian citizens from EU Member States to homeland. Also in Georgia, expulsion decisions were issued to 48 foreigners and 32 foreigners left the country based on those decisions. **Montenegro** returned two migrants to their countries of origin with the assistance of the police by obtaining travel documents and tickets, and six migrants were returned with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) AVRR programme.

Updates on detention. **Finland** [set up a project](#) to examine the provisions on detention and entry bans in the Aliens Act, looking to tighten the Aliens Act in accordance with the set of measures related to voluntary return and departure laid down in the Government Programme. **Germany** [adopted a draft law](#) to improve procedures for removing foreign nationals who had no right to remain in Germany and were required to leave the country, including increasing the maximum length of custody from 10 to 28 days, facilitating the expulsion of members of criminal organisations, and hindering fraudulent follow-up applications for asylum. **Italy** extended the maximum duration of detention in Repatriation Centres to 18 months, which is now established in its national law. In **the Netherlands**, it was established that the Minister for Migration needs to inform detained foreign nationals in writing in a language they understand, according to the '[information obligation](#)' of the Minister towards the detainee.

Latvia implemented a government protocol on the agreement between the European Community and Ukraine on readmission.

In **Slovenia**, the RECAMAS-CT application that was set up by Frontex and the Slovenian police is ready for use, providing updated software to tackle irregular migration and make returns more efficient by facilitating case management and identification.

Addressing trafficking in human beings

Several **trainings and capacity building efforts** took place in **Greece**, in coordination with the EUAA, IOM, and national stakeholders. A working visit to Athens of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator, Diane Schmitt, also took place to highlight initiatives being undertaken to prevent trafficking in human beings. New legislation also established the new position of National Coordinator against Smuggling at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. **Italy** focused on capacity building for local forces to fight trafficking in human beings; supported actions being carried out in Libya and Niger; and is collaborating closely with the Tunisian authorities to regulate migration flows, exchange information, and investigate transnational criminal networks engaged in trafficking. As part of their National Action Plan, **Poland** conducted an information and educational campaign to raise public awareness about trafficking in human beings and spot suspicious activity on the internet, with a focus on forced labour exploitation. **Slovenia** held an [international conference](#)

with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Council of Europe, the Ministry of the Interior and the non-governmental organisation Society Ključ on 'Preventing, Combating and Responding to Trafficking in Human Beings in the Context of Asylum and Migration in the Republic of Slovenia'. It also launched an [awareness raising campaign](#) on the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day that included a [digital advertising catalogue](#) with different profiles of the most frequently exploited workers, which was distributed to more than 200 companies in Slovenia. **Georgia** held a [simulation-based training](#), a [moot court competition](#), and a [sitting](#) of Inter-Agency Coordination Council Implementing Measures Against Human Trafficking, providing training and capacity building to combat trafficking in human beings to a variety of relevant stakeholders. **Montenegro** launched a new EU-funded regional project entitled 'EU Support to Strengthen the Fight against Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans' that is expected to contribute to strengthening the capacities of all relevant Montenegrin authorities in addressing trafficking in human beings.

Ireland launched its [third National Action Plan](#) to Combat Human Trafficking 2023-2027, with key actions foreseen including revising the national referral mechanism to include other competent authorities for identifying victims of human trafficking and developing a new training framework for people who encounter potential victims.

External Dimension

The Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania reported on the initiative by the international community, UNHCR and other EU Member States to provide financial support to refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh in Armenia.

The Czech Republic approved three [projects to be implemented in Ukraine](#) in cooperation with local NGOs, focusing on assistance to internally displaced persons, land mines and unexploded ordnance safety awareness and provision of health care.

Italy established the [Italian Coordination of Diasporas for Development Cooperation](#) comprising over 100 associations in nine regional networks and signed a [memorandum with Ethiopia](#) to further strengthen collaboration between the two countries' educational systems.

Sweden hosted a [Khartoum Process Thematic Meeting](#) in Stockholm that was initiated by Sweden and Somalia to discuss tools and frameworks to establish a whole-of-government approach on migration.

EU Legislation Transposition

Italy published a decree regarding [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), expanding the pool of workers who could come to Italy through this channel.

Italy received a reasoned opinion from the European Commission for not complying with EU rules on social security coordination (Regulation EC 2004/883) and the free movement of workers (EU Regulation No. 492/2011 and Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), which may be referred to the Court of Justice of the EU in case of non-compliance.

Sweden made [new rules with regard to family reunification](#). With the objective to prevent forced marriages, a sponsor and their spouse are now normally required to be 21 years of age, before the spouse is able to join them. The previous age threshold was 18 years (under [Council Directive 2003/86/EC](#) on the right to family reunification).

Border management and irregular migration

Borders with Russia. Estonia completed its second border section along the [eastern border](#), covering nearly half of their 135-kilometer land border with Russia. Finland further [extended the closure](#) of border crossings with Russia into the new year. Latvia also announced the [suspension of two border crossing points operation](#) following Russia's decision to allow holders of Ukrainian passports to enter Russia from third countries only through two border-crossing points – the Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow (Russia) and the *Vientuļi* border crossing point on the Latvia –Russia border. Poland opened a surveillance centre and launched an [electronic barrier](#) that operates on the entire perimetry of the Polish-Russian border (nearly 200 kilometres).

Borders with Belarus. Estonia sent the police unit [ESTPOL8](#) to Latvia to support Latvian colleagues in preventing irregular migration on the Latvian-Belarusian border. The European Commission [approved a project](#) in Lithuania submitted by the Ministry of the Interior and allocated € 9.3 million to update previously installed electronic surveillance systems on the 84.4 kilometre strip at the Lithuania-Belarus border.

Internal EU border controls. Austria reintroduced border controls at the internal borders with Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and extended border controls with the Czech Republic. Slovenia initially reintroduced temporary control on the internal Schengen [border with Croatia and Hungary](#) on 21 October 2023 as a temporary short-term measure, which was then [extended](#) twice and established for six months in accordance with the Schengen Borders Code. Poland extended the [temporary border control](#) of persons at the Polish-Slovak border again.

Schengen external borders. Croatia published information regarding decisions and requests to access the national Entry/Exit system, which also clarified the types of decisions on refusal and cancellation of travel authorisation in the ETIAS system. Schengen evaluations were carried out in Estonia. Georgia introduced a special face-recognition electronic programme at the border check points to enhance the efficiency of the border control and assist the correct implementation of the visa free regime with EU/Schengen countries. Georgia also adopted an Action Plan for the implementation of the integrated model of risk analysis of the state border of Georgia with the aim of fully integrating a Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)-based risk analysis approach.

Restructuring of border controls. Portugal proceeded to the necessary legal adaptation within the scope of the restructuring of the Portuguese border control system, including the approval of qualified border posts for entry into and exit from national territory and a new template for the entry declaration in Portuguese borders.

In Cyprus, contracts have been concluded for the building of a new Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection and a new Pre-departure Detention Centre in the area of Limnes, Larnaca after agreements were concluded by the Ministry of Interior. The two centres, costing around € 85 million, are expected to be finished within 24 months and improve Cyprus' infrastructure, leading to faster processing of asylum procedures and the acceleration of returns.

Efforts to counter irregular migration. Latvia adopted [Amendments to the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia](#), which established certain rights for officials including, upon reasonable suspicion, to search vehicles and capture persons who have irregularly crossed the state border. Additionally, Latvia adopted [Amendments to the Criminal Law](#), which provided stricter punishment for offences related to the facilitation of irregular migration. Finland and Italy will put forward [joint initiatives](#) to promote a consistent approach on the external dimension of migration policies and countering migration-related malign influence in all for a, including combatting smuggling and the instrumentalisation of migration. Finland is also introducing a [new border procedure](#). Montenegro's Ministry of Interior developed several IT tools and software to contribute to the monitoring of migrants and migratory flows in Montenegro.

Bilateral cooperation. France authorised the [approval of the protocol](#) between the Government of the French Republic and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on the readmission of persons in an irregular situation. Four officials from the Ivorian Ministry of the Interior were transferred to Italy to

collaborate on activities related to the identification of presumed irregular Ivorian migrants, beginning with a three-month trial period.

Recent EMN publications:

- EMN study on the [Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and practices in 2023](#)
- EMN study on the [Illegal employment of third-country nationals: 2017-2022 situation analysis](#)
- EMN inform on the [Integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market](#)
- EMN inform on the [Access to autonomous housing in the context of international protection](#)

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