

December 2023

Welcome to the EMN Quarterly, our selection of the key developments in the areas of migration and asylum from July to September 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

Extensions for temporary protection statuses were extended in Greece and Portugal until March 2024, and in Estonia and the Czech Republic until March 2025.

Croatia's Ministry of Science and Education will co-fund support for primary and secondary school students displaced from Ukraine in the 2023/2024 school year.

Regarding the temporary remigration policy for third-country nationals with a Ukrainian residence permit, the Netherlands continued offering financial and practical support under specific criteria to voluntarily remigrate outside of the EU in a country where their stay is ensured to be durable. The

termination of temporary protection for third-country nationals with a Ukrainian residence permit was put on hold until the Administrative Jurisdiction of the Dutch Council of State makes a court ruling.

Finland will no longer apply temporary protection and grant new residence permits to those third-country nationals who have fled Ukraine and who were not granted international protection or a permanent residence permit by Ukraine. The decision does not affect the protection already granted or the validity of the residence permits already issued.

Legislative changes went into effect in **Luxembourg** where beneficiaries of temporary protection will benefit from the same redefined material conditions as applicants of international protection.

General developments

Updates on cooperation. **Austria** and India signed an [agreement](#) on a “Comprehensive Partnership for Migration and Mobility”, establishing cooperation in various areas of migration. In **Georgia**, expert meetings continued in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing the [Migration Partnership](#) between Switzerland and Georgia; the meetings focused on asylum-related issues and irregular migration.

Stateless status procedures were reviewed. In the **Czech Republic**, legislative amendments to the Asylum Act included clarifications of the procedure for granting stateless status, such as providing a definition for ‘statelessness’ in the legal system. In **Portugal**, [amendments](#) were made regarding the status of stateless persons, namely regarding the procedure for determining statelessness, guarantees for applicants, appointing the competent entity to address issues on statelessness, and rights that arise from stateless status; in August, a new law came into force that defined [Stateless Status](#) and importantly established travel permits for stateless persons.

Digitalisation of migration management. In **Ireland**, legal [amendments](#) went into force that allow documents related to immigration decisions, including deportation orders, to be delivered electronically rather than solely by post. In **Serbia**, amendments on the Law on Foreigners came into force to further harmonise national legislation with the EU acquis, mainly relating to temporary and long-term residence, and introducing the possibility for electronic applications for different permits.

Increases in migration statistics related to residence. **Finland** [reported](#) that the number of first applications for residence permits for reasons of study showed a dramatic increase of nearly 48% from the previous year. **Ireland’s** annual Population and Migration Estimates [report](#) found that immigration was at a 16-year high, with 141 600 individuals establishing residence in the country over the previous 12 months.

Security measures increased regarding Russia and Belarus. In **Lithuania**, a total of 1 164 citizens of Russia or Belarus were recognised as a threat to Lithuania’s national security, given [results from a special questionnaire](#) that was introduced in November 2022 requiring them to provide certain information and to express their views on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, following hostile and provocative actions made by Lukashenko’s regime against Lithuanian citizens, national authorities [advised](#) them not to travel to Belarus.

Significant changes in Government. In **Latvia**, an [extraordinary sitting](#) of the *Saeima* gave a vote of confidence to Evika Siliņa and her Cabinet of Ministers; the *Saeima* approved the new Cabinet due to Krišjānis Kariņš resigning from the post of Prime Minister on 14 August 2023, thus dissolving the government. In **the Netherlands**, the Dutch coalition government led by prime minister Mark Rutte offered its [resignation to the Head of State](#) after prolonged discussions between the four governing parties regarding immigration on which they were unable to reach agreement; some draft legal and policy changes related to migration and asylum were still to be debated, although few significant policy changes were expected until after the elections of November 2023 and the subsequent formation of a new government. In **Sweden**, the government [appointed](#) Maria Mindhammar as the new Director-General of the Swedish Migration Agency.

Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture [appointed a working group](#) to prepare an increase in tuition fees for non-EU and non-EEA university students. The working group is also expected to propose legislation to prevent the circumvention of tuition fees and to re-introduce university application processing fees.

International protection including asylum

Reductions in allowance, pilot project initiatives and changes in procedures for applicants of international protection. Austria presented a [pilot project](#) for cost transparency in basic care, initially targeting children, adolescents and persons with increased care needs, with plans to expand to all persons in organised accommodation in Vienna by 2024. Finland's Ministry of Interior is [examining](#) and seeking to reduce the reception allowance for international protection applicants and temporary protection beneficiaries. Luxembourg implemented legal changes exempting international protection applicants from the labour market test and introducing uniform basic aid amounts. Italy introduced a decree containing the amount and methods for the provision of voluntary financial guarantees by foreigners for applicants for international protection under accelerated procedure, according to specific conditions. At the moment this law is under analysis by jurisprudence.

Updates on reception conditions. In Belgium, the Council of State suspended the Secretary of State's decision to exclude single male applicants of international protection from reception places due to network saturation. In Bulgaria, the school year 2023/2024 saw an increase in the enrolment of children seeking international protection who are accommodated in the state's reception centres. In Cyprus, the Deputy Director-General Beate Gminder visited Cyprus' First Reception Centre, undergoing a € 22 million upgrade with joint efforts from the Cypriot authorities, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and co-funding from the 2021-2027 Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In Estonia, the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB) signed a [cooperation agreement](#) with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), empowering UNHCR to monitor refugee entry processes and enhance the knowledge and skills of PBGB staff in refugee law and protection standards. In Spain, steps were made towards [developing a disciplinary regimen](#) for the reception system. In Georgia, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)'s Border and Patrol Police and the Prosecutor's Office were (re) trained on international protection issues, in cooperation with UNHCR; Georgia also [adopted an order](#) that aims to improve reception conditions and to approximate legislation to EU regulations.

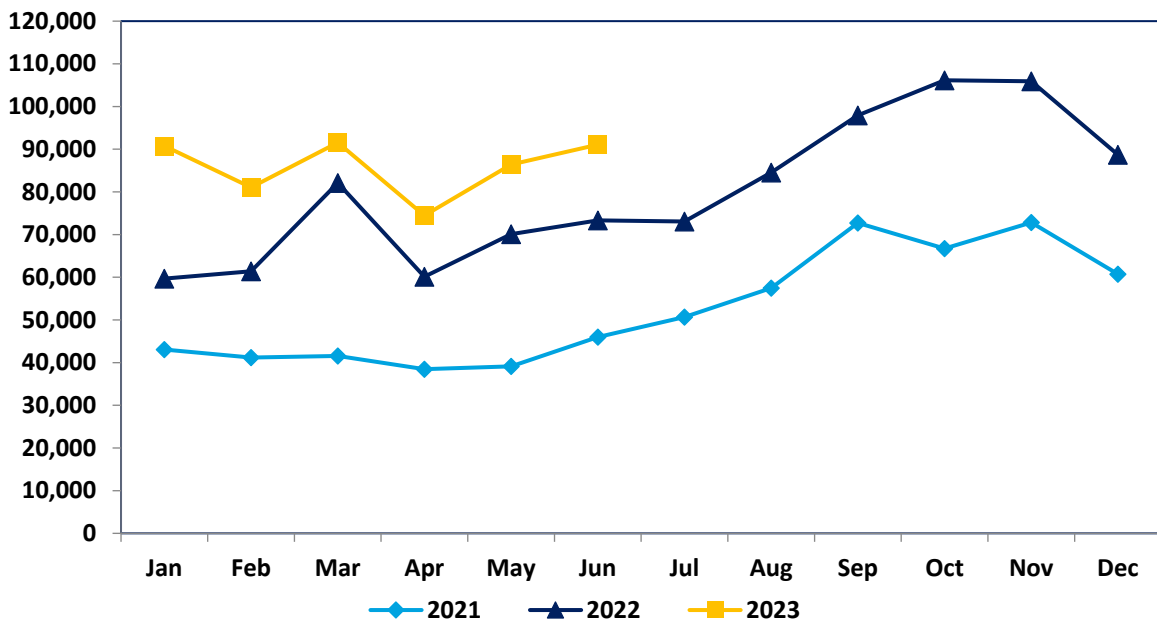
Legal bases revisited. Regarding the Dublin Regulation, Luxembourg materialised lessons learned from recent Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) judgements by [establishing objective criteria](#) in national legislation, including criteria related to the fear of an applicant absconding during a Dublin Regulation transfer procedure. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Council of State [ruled](#) that the time limit for the transfer of a third-country national to another Member State under the Dublin Regulation cannot be exceeded (suspended) if the applicant has objected in another procedure.

In France, the National Court for Right of Asylum (*Cour nationale du droit d'asile – CNDA*) [ruled](#) that Russian nationals resisting partial mobilisation or forced recruitment related to the war in Ukraine, characterised by widespread war crimes committed by the Russian armed forces, must be recognised as refugees under Article 9.2(e) of the EU Qualifications Directive, insofar as they would be led to commit such crimes either directly or indirectly.

Spotlight on protection for LGBTIQ+. In Ireland, a report was [published](#) on best practices and lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ people living in International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS). In France, a [decision](#) of the CNDA, provided protection to an Iranian national because of the risks incurred as a result of his homosexuality, recognised the existence of a "social group" of homosexuals in Iran, entitling them to refugee status in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention.

Portugal published its [Statistical Report on Asylum](#) that takes stock of key figures and trends relating to international protection.

Figure 1: Asylum applications in the EU-27, Q2 2023 (January-June 2023)



Source: Eurostat [\[migr_asypoctzm\]](#), total asylum applicants, extracted on 25 October 2023.

Unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups

Projects to support unaccompanied minors. Bulgaria established working groups chaired by the State Agency for Refugees to elaborate on the terms and conditions of age assessments and potential legal amendments regarding international protection. Greece launched a [pilot project](#) "Harmonization, Establishment and Certification of Best Interest Procedures" and began disseminating [online educational tools](#) with the support of local organisations and UNICEF to prepare unaccompanied minors for the education system and the labour market.

Publications. Greece published the [Operation Regulation for the Tracing Telephone Line of the National Emergency Response Mechanism](#). Italy published the [Semi-Annual Report on Unaccompanied Foreign Minors in Italy](#), providing a breakdown of statistics on gender, nationalities, reception and departures; requests for international protection; family reunification; new national and international procedures, and more. Italy also published a report entitled "[Listening and Participation of Unaccompanied Minors as an Intervention Methodology](#)", based on feedback from young residents in facilities managed by municipalities, gathered in collaboration between the Authority for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, various municipalities, UNHCR, and UNICEF.

Trainings were held in Georgia, where representatives from the MIA Migration Department completed a course on "Communication Standards with Vulnerable Groups."

Legal migration and integration

Cross-country cooperation on migration matters. Germany and Kyrgyzstan signed a [declaration of intent](#) to establish an agreement intended to open legal pathways for skilled workers in occupations that have a labour shortage in Germany and to facilitate returns for those who have no legal right to stay in Germany; the German Federal Government is also holding talks also with the Republic of Uzbekistan on comprehensive migration cooperation. Georgia and Peru signed an agreement "[On Exemption of Tourist/Ordinary Visas](#)"; after ratification, passport holders from the contracting parties will be able to enter and stay in the other party's territory for up to 90 days within a 180-day period without needing a visa.

Shortage occupation lists In **Belgium**, the Flemish region published a new list of medium-skilled [shortage occupations](#) open to migration. In **Lithuania**, the Migration Department [reported](#) that two-thirds of the quota for foreigners to work in occupations with a shortage of labour – namely drivers of international freight vehicles, computer technicians, train drivers, public transport drivers, or chefs – has been used up. In **Italy**, [quotas for seasonal workers](#) were raised to 40 000 places, adding to the existing 44 000 quota places, for positions in agriculture and the tourist-hospitality sectors.

Matching between employers and employees. A [study](#) published in **Finland** found that immigrants in Finland predominantly secure employment through direct approaches to employers or personal connections, while few find employment through the Employment and Economic Development Office (TE Office) or private employment services. In **Croatia**, the Chamber of Commerce held a [conference](#) on the employment of foreign workers: positioning Croatia as an attractive destination for immigrants”. In **Luxembourg**, all jobseekers registering with the National Employment Agency (ADEM) must take an [online test](#) in the languages they declared to have knowledge of (Luxembourgish/French/German/English) with the aim of promoting an objective and uniform assessment of the language level of jobseekers to facilitate job-matching. **Italy** adopted guidelines on professional civic-linguistic training programmes abroad, aimed at employment integration and boosting entrepreneurial activities.

Updates on visa and residence permit legislation and procedures. **Greece** updated [rules](#) for individuals who had arrived as unaccompanied minors and criteria they would need to meet in order to obtain a ten-year residence permit. In **Ireland**, Bolivian nationals must now [obtain a visa](#) before traveling to (or through) Ireland. In **Latvia**, [amendments to the Immigration Law](#) state that, as of 19 September 2023, Russian citizens failing the State language test or seeing their permits expire due to failing the State language test can apply for a residence permit, committing to learn the State language, subject to certain conditions; additional [amendments on Repatriation law](#) that impact Russian citizens came into force. In **Georgia**, legal amendments entered into force, requiring migrant workers to be registered by a local employer in a special government [electronic system](#). **Moldova** [approved the Migration Information System](#) that aims to improve services provided by the General Inspectorate for Migration through online applications, increased transparency, and reduced file examination times, enhancing service quality for foreigners, individuals, and legal entities; Moldova also amended the implementation of the [Single Desk for Foreigners' Documentation](#), streamlining procedures and enabling applicants to obtain final documents efficiently at the One-Stop Shop, reducing duplication and optimising services for individuals and legal entities. **Serbia** approved legal amendments aligning national legislation and to simplify procedures for foreigners to work in Serbia, introducing a [unified permit for temporary residence and work](#) .

Family reunification. In **France**, the Council of State [clarified](#) that when assessing a child's age for family reunification with a refugee parent, it should be determined at the time of the visa application, without time constraints, and in case of a new application after a refusal, the child's age is considered based on the latest application, not the initial one.

Measures on climate-related migration. In **Slovenia**, [the Act Determining Intervention Measures for Recovery from the Floods and Landslides](#) entered into force. For the purpose of eliminating the consequences of floods and landslides, [the law enables workers](#), citizens of third countries, who do not need a visa to enter and stay in the Republic of Slovenia, to start work more quickly in professions that are already in short supply and absolutely necessary to eliminate the consequences of floods and landslides.

Statistics and reports on integration. **Austria** published its [Integration Report 2023](#) and [Statistical Yearbook "Migration & Integration 2023"](#). **Italy** published three reports: 1) a [report](#) on the Activities Carried Out in 2022 by Associations Working for Migrant Citizens 2) a [report](#) on Migrant Communities in Italy; and 3) a [report](#) on Foreigners in the Italian Labour Market.

Support programmes and measures to strengthen integration. **Finland** proposed [amendments](#) to increase integration for migrant mothers and endorsed the [Startup Refugees programme](#) that seeks to support applicants and beneficiaries of international protection as well as other refugees into the labour market. **Greece** launched an intercultural mediation training project. **Luxembourg** made legal [amendments](#) that replace the concept of integration with 'intercultural living together', and created a [School Integration and Welcoming Service](#) as a central starting point to support newly arrived families in finding the right school for their children. **The Netherlands** will reserve [€37.5 million](#) over the next three years to help beneficiaries of international protection find a job more quickly. **Spain** provided a subsidy of €1.5 million until 2026 towards

the integration of athletes and approved the [Strategic Framework on Citizenship and Inclusion, against Racism and Xenophobia \(2023-2027\)](#). **Moldova** reviewed issues related to the integration of displaced persons from [Ukraine](#). **Serbia** began work on its [National Strategy for Resolving Problems of Refugees and Internally Displaced persons](#).

Return

Updates on voluntary returns. **Finland** plans to stagger the assistance for voluntary return so that it encourages those who have been refused asylum to leave the country as quickly as possible and refrain from requesting a review of their asylum decision. In **the Netherlands**, the government gave approval to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to extend voluntary return and reintegration support. **Greece** provided counselling to third-country nationals who had been issued a return decision through its IOM AVVR programme.

Support provided by Frontex on both voluntary and forced returns. **Croatia** concluded a [Memorandum of Understanding \(Action Plan\)](#) with Frontex on the implementation of return procedures. **Greece** and **Georgia** both concluded additional joint return operations with Frontex. **Poland** began using the assistance of Frontex on both voluntary and forced returns, which included covering the cost of the return ticket and reintegration assistance under the Joint Reintegration Services (JRS).

External dimension

Cooperation Agreements. **Italy** signed a [ratification agreement](#) with Moldova, ensuring the portability of pensions and benefits for workplace and occupational illness. Additionally, a mission involving experts from the Turkish Ministry of Interior took place in Italy as part of the bilateral cooperation agreement between the two countries. **Luxembourg** signed [framework cooperation agreement](#) with Costa Rica, aiming to support migration management and socio-economic inclusion of migrants.

The Czech Republic approved three financial donations through the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism: €1 million for a Maltese project in Libya, €1 million for the reintegration of returnees in Senegal, and €500 000 for the construction of an accommodation centre for unaccompanied minors in Cyprus.

Finland's Embassy in Moscow has assumed consular and immigration responsibilities previously managed in St Petersburg, now overseeing all passport and notarial services, as well as handling cases of Finnish nationals requiring assistance in Russia.

Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched two annual grant programmes: 1) "[Support for Diaspora Initiatives](#)" and 2) "[Supporting the Georgian Dancing and Singing Groups Abroad](#)".

EU Legislation Transposition

Transposition of the [Directive \(EU\) 2021/1883 \(Blue Card Directive\)](#). **The Czech Republic, Latvia and Portugal** successfully completed the transposition; **Italy** introduced amendments to its implementation; **Finland** made steps towards its transposition, requesting comments on the draft government proposal.

The Czech Republic improved the transposition of the [Directive \(EU\) 2011/95 \(Qualification Directive\)](#) through an amendment to their national Asylum Act.

Italy enacted a new law "Urgent Provisions for the Implementation of Obligations Arising from Acts of the European Union and Ongoing Infringement and Pre-Infringement Procedures against the Italian State", complying with [Directive 2004/38/EC](#) on EU freedom of movement and residence. It extended provisions to non-Italian family members of Italians exercising EU free movement rights, granting them an EU family residence card; foreign family members of Italians not exercising this right qualify for a national residence permit for family reasons.

Luxembourg made legal amendments that provide travel authorisation for visa-exempt third-country nationals as a mandatory precondition for entry into Luxembourg, in accordance with [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/124](#).

Border management and irregular migration

Accelerating processing procedures. **Cyprus** will begin constructing a new reception centre and pre-departure detention centre, aiming to speed up the processing of international protection applications and accelerate returns. **Finland** launched a new [legislative project](#) to introduce a border procedure.

Data collection. **Estonia's** updated migration surveillance system (MIGRIS) went live, introducing an automated IT solution to assist officials. **France** expanded eligibility for the "PARAFE" automated border crossing system to all third-country nationals at border crossings and discontinued the collection of fingerprints.

Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia adopted a [joint declaration towards Belarus](#), deciding that actions will be taken together and that in the event of a security incident, all border crossings with Belarus – applicable to both people and goods – will be closed.

Upped security measures on passenger vehicles. **Estonia** [prohibited](#) motor vehicles with Russian license plates from entering through the external border and **Poland** placed a [ban](#) on importing passenger cars registered in Russia to Poland. **Portugal** temporarily reintroduced internal border controls during Youth World Day (YWD) from 1 to 6 August for security, collaborating with the Spanish National Police and using advanced risk analysis to minimise disruptions, while FRONTEX officers supported air border checks in Lisbon, Porto, and Faro during the International Air Transport Association (IATA) summer strikes. **The Slovak Republic** introduced several measures to tackle increased transit migration pressure from Western Balkan route.

Spain's [Operation Crossing the Strait](#) announced the results for 2023 on vehicle traffic, presenting historically high figures.

Georgia approved an [Action Plan on the Integrated Border Management Strategy](#) (2023-2027).

Serbia adopted the [Serbian Schengen Action Plan](#).

Recent EMN publications:

- EMN study on the [Integration of applicants for international protection in the labour market](#)

Stay tuned for upcoming EMN publications:

- EMN inform on Access to autonomous housing in the context of international protection
- EMN inform on Family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection
- EMN inform on the Digitalisation of identity and residence documents issued to third-country nationals
- EMN inform on Monitoring the integration of third-country nationals
- EMN inform on Practices and challenges in processing victims of torture and ill treatment in the context of international and temporary protection

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