

March 2023

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

EMN news



News from the EU

Temporary Protection Directive

The [EU Talent Pool Pilot](#) continued to support beneficiaries of temporary protection fleeing the war in Ukraine to find employment. The European Commission aims to launch the full EU Talent Pool and its web portal by mid-2024, opening it to international recruitment.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) presented findings from its survey on [experiences of displaced people fleeing the war in Ukraine](#) and released information on [local initiatives to host people fleeing the war in Ukraine](#) to understand how cities had reacted.

The European Commission published consolidated [information on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive](#).

The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published [a year in review on the TPD](#) to cover how crisis measures had resulted in legislative and policy changes.

General developments

Statistics and country guidance. The EUAA published [four scenarios](#) for asylum-related migration to Europe in 2032 to support policy making. The EUAA also released updated country guidance for [Syria](#) and [Afghanistan](#). Eurostat published its [annual asylum statistics](#), reporting that in 2022 there were 881 220 first-time asylum seekers applications for international protection in the EU, showing an increase of 64% compared with the previous year. By 31 March 2023, there were [3.9 million people with temporary protection status](#) in the EU; the news article also provides an overview of how many beneficiaries of temporary protection are hosted in each country. More detailed and recent information can be found in the [Statistics Explained article](#).

Revised [rules](#) for the Schengen Information System (SIS) went into force. [A new alert system](#) will increase detection of risk for both children and adults from becoming victims of human trafficking, gender-based violence, and terrorist offenses. The system introduces changes to border controls, identification of individuals, and security to prevent vulnerable groups from being taken unlawfully abroad or to prevent them from travelling without the necessary authorisations.

Updates on EU-level projects and action plans. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, and Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit held the first meeting of the [Labour Migration Platform](#) with EU Member States' representatives from migration and employment sectors as well as European Social and Economic Partners. The project Measuring irregular migration and related policies ([MirreM](#)) continued to run, working to examine estimates and statistical indicators on irregular migration to the EU. The EUAA published a [situational update](#) on EU and national level developments to identify and support victims of human trafficking in the asylum procedure. The update covers EU strategies (e.g. [the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025](#), [the Common Anti-Trafficking Plan](#)), availability of data, the use of technology in human trafficking, information campaigns, national reports and internationally available guidance and tools.

EU-level reforms. The European Parliament voted to [reform](#) how asylum and migration flows in the EU will be managed. The European Commission presented a policy document '[Towards an operational strategy for more effective returns](#),' that promotes a common European system with the objective to increase the overall number of returns and increase their efficiency through a streamlined process.

External Dimension. The Council of the European Union [prolonged sanctions on Russia](#) until 31 July 2023 that target specific sectors of the economy, and [prolonged restrictive measures on Belarus](#) until 28 February 2024.

The Council of the European Union adopted its position to allow [visa-free travel](#) for holders of a passport issued by Kosovo. [Serbia](#) became an Observer Country to the EMN.

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. The Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Montenegro announced national updates on the extension of temporary protection to people fleeing Ukraine regarding the validity or renewal of ID cards. **Estonia** reached an agreement with Finland whereby Finland will accept more applications for temporary protection for Ukrainians who express interest. **Finland** announced that thousands of people who fled Ukraine will be eligible for a voluntary municipality residency after residing in Finland for one year. **Italy** increased funding for municipalities providing assistance to unaccompanied minors and extended the duration of the permit for temporary protection until December 2023.

The Netherlands extended remigration assistance for eligible non-Ukrainian third-country nationals and sustained financial arrangements on the reception of displaced persons arriving from Ukraine. **Poland** amended national regulations regarding financial support and presented the option for a Ukrainian citizen to include a minor under their guardianship onto their electronic ID card.

Projects to understand and support the integration of Ukrainians. **Finland** reported on a study's findings that [reviewed the future plans of Ukrainians who have fled to Finland](#) based on statistical data and qualitative interview data. The review notes that it is still difficult to predict the future plans of Ukrainians, although it is clear that Ukrainians will continue to be an important immigrant group in Finland regardless of when and how the war ends. **Sweden** will launch a survey with the International Organization for Migration to learn more about challenges Ukrainians face in Sweden. **The Netherlands** increased funding to municipalities to offer Dutch language courses to Ukrainians. **UNHCR** launched a plan that covers the protection of vulnerable groups through the provision of health care, education, social inclusion, and basic needs; the action plan also defines and clarifies the competencies of different organisations involved in the aid process.

In **the Netherlands**, temporary protection for non-Ukrainian third-country nationals will continue until 4 September 2023.

Montenegro began granting temporary protection to displaced persons from Ukraine as of 1 March 2023.

General developments

Updates regarding entry and exit regulations took place in several EMN Member Countries. **Austria** made amendments to the COVID-19 Entry Regulation on recording high epidemiological risk areas; China was the last remaining country on the list and was removed on 1 March 2023. Border controls at the internal border with the Slovak Republic were also re-introduced with mobile intervention teams and drones in an effort to reduce smuggling. International airports in **Croatia** started to fully apply the Schengen acquis provisions, meaning that passengers on flights within the Schengen area will no longer be subject to border control. **Portugal** completed the Portuguese Speaking Countries' Community (CPLP) Mobility Agreement and launched a portal that will make requests for residence permits more speedy and less costly; identification QR codes will be used on documents for authenticity checks.

New reform measures and strategies were adopted. **Belgium** approved a [first package of reform measures](#) by the Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration regarding the allocation of reception places, return, family reunification, and statelessness. **Croatia** made amendments to the Act on International and Temporary Protection to standardize interpretations and regulate rights; changes include faster access to the labour market for applicants for international protection, where the waiting time to acquire the right to work was reduced from nine to three months after lodging their application. **Italy** adopted provisions for the government to limit or forbid transit and stopovers on territorial waters of non-governmental ships involved in sea-rescue operations, introducing new penal sanctions in cases of non-compliance. **Poland** began accepting visa applications from citizens of Ukraine and Belarus. **Georgia** adopted its Human Rights Strategy for 2022-2030. **Moldova's** Bureau for Migration and Asylum was reorganized and is now called the General Inspectorate for Migration and structural changes were introduced to increase its effectiveness and access to services for foreigners.

Publications and events provided new insights on reforms and cooperation. **Finland** published two [studies commissioned by the Ministry of Interior](#) providing recommendations for a comprehensive reform of the Aliens Act, as well as recommendations to reorganise the migration administration in Finland. Finland also published a [final report of Immigration Dialogues](#), highlighting integration and challenges in finding employment. **Greece** hosted a [conference](#) on capabilities, tools and measures to address future migration challenges that resulted in participating members signing a Joint Declaration.

International protection including asylum

Relocations and transfers took place in **Bulgaria, Cyprus and Croatia** as part of voluntary programmes of solidarity with EU Member States under migratory pressure. In Croatia, an online brochure called “RH protection” explains the process of international application procedures and how applicants can exercise their rights in practice.

Germany launched federal funding to make asylum procedural counselling independent of the authorities and to help better identify vulnerable asylum seekers.

Housing capacity changes were announced. Luxembourg increased housing capacity for applicants of international protection through various alternative and temporary accommodation facilities. **The Netherlands’** Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) initiated a package of measures to increase capacity by 19 000 reception places and **Spain** will accommodate an additional 1 200 people in 2023 through the National Programme of Refugee Resettlement. **Ireland** announced that the provision of emergency shelter was paused for international protection applicant adults arriving at the Transit Hub at Citywest in Dublin.

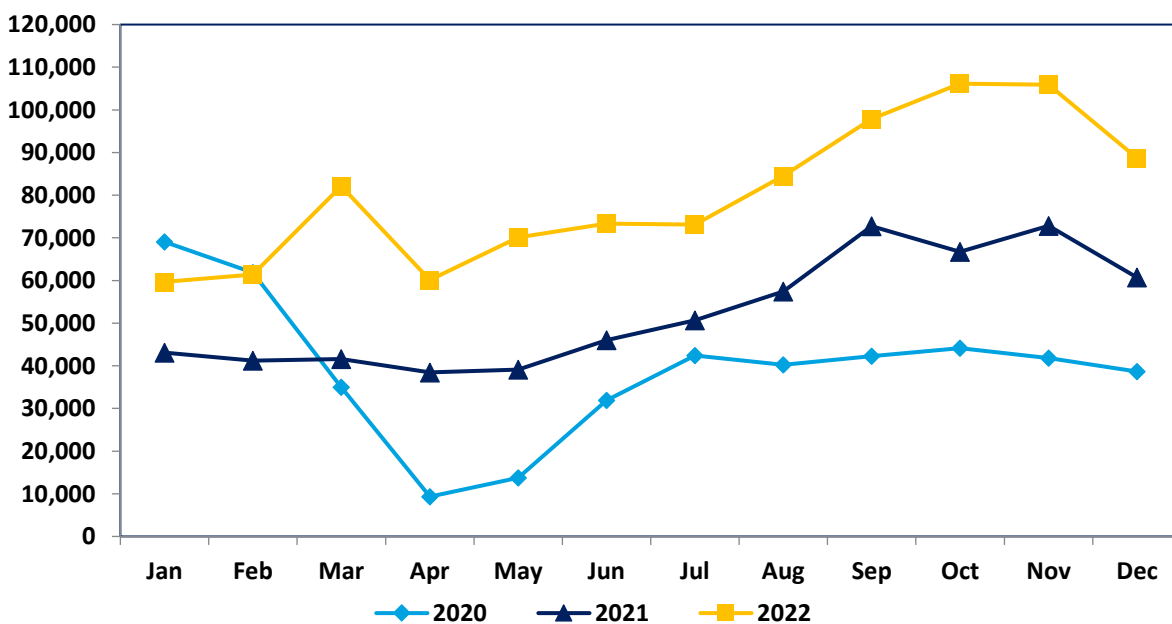
Third-country relations were updated in several EMN Member Countries. Following recent analyses and country reports by the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA), **France** began processing applications from Afghanistan for international protection based on a broader set of criteria on increased risk of being exposed to indiscriminate violence, and **Malta** updated its policy vis-à-vis Somalia and Syria.

Ukraine was removed from the list of safe countries of origin in **Luxembourg and the Netherlands.**

Sweden published a new legal position paper on statelessness to provide better guidance to case officers when investigating identity and to contribute to the UN global action plan to end statelessness by 2024.

Moldova inaugurated new headquarters for the Asylum and Statelessness Directorate.

Figure 1: Asylum applications in the EU-27, Q4 2022 (January–December 2022)



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctzm](#)] total asylum applicants, extracted on 18 April 2023.

Unaccompanied minors and vulnerable groups

Italy's Ministry of Interior requested emergency first-reception facilities for foreign unaccompanied minors to the Territorial Offices of the Government. **Italy** also published a national [biannual report](#) on unaccompanied minors.

Portugal received 55 unaccompanied minors from Greece as part of the European Programme of Voluntary Relocation.

Greece completed its last flight under the Voluntary Relocation Programme, through which 1 367 unaccompanied minors have been relocated from Greece to other European countries.

Legal migration and integration

Legal amendments to facilitate the employment of highly qualified third-country nationals took place in EMN Member Countries to create structural changes in the labour market and fill-in labour gaps. In **Bulgaria**, amendments to the Law on Labour Migration and Labour Mobility came into force, transposing the implementation processes provided for by the Directive (EU) 2021/1883 into national legislation. In **Cyprus**, a new Strategy for the Employment of Foreign Workforce was introduced. In **Estonia**, amendments to the Aliens Act introduced a new residence permit for short-term employment as well as new incentives for employers to hire foreign workers. **Finland** increased the automation in the residence application process, introduced a certification for employers, and established new types of residence permits tied with qualifications. **Italy** updated their programme on entry flows of non-EU works for both seasonal and non-seasonal work, establishing maximum quotas and a new procedure to check if there are workers already available in Italy.

The Slovak Republic also accelerated processes for hiring third-country nationals to address labour market shortages.

Sweden boosted efforts to bring more foreign-born women into the labour market; local authorities will reach out to mothers on parental leave who have little knowledge of the Swedish language through nurseries to support their integration and reduce social exclusion.

The Netherlands indexed the costs of applications for residency. Fees have been equalised and are significantly more affordable for the applicant.

Changes regarding citizenship came into force. **France** has made [the online application for French naturalisation](#) available, digitalising most of the process except for the assimilation interview and the ceremony to welcome the applicant into French citizenship. **Latvia** approved [Rules for the Acquisition and Loss of Citizenship Information System](#) that determine the amount of information to be included in the system, procedures for inclusion and deletion and time limits for storage, as well as the institutions to be granted access and to what extent.

In **Slovenia**, the Government proposals for amendments to the Foreigners Act and to the Employment, Self-employment and Work of Foreigners Act were amended.

Language learning in focus. **Poland** made legal amendments that change the method in which knowledge of the Polish language is confirmed for granting long-term EU residence permits that will go into force in June 2023. **Luxembourg** made legal amendments that redefined the mission of the National Language Institute to promote the Luxembourgish language, multilingualism, integration, social cohesion, and intercultural exchange. **Finland** published a plain language handbook that supports individuals whose native language is not Finnish or Swedish on topics of integration.

Updates on integration measures. In **Belgium**, the Flemish integration exam became stricter when it comes to "[fundamental values](#)". **Croatia** began implementing a two-year project "Integrated and holistic support to migrants and refugees" that is financed by the Swiss Red Cross. In **Greece**, [the HELIOS integration programme](#) continued to run and began planning for the ESF+ new programming period 2021-2027. **Ireland** published their [National Action Plan Against Racism](#)

[\(NAPAR\) 2023-2027](#). **Luxembourg**'s electoral law was amended to ensure that third-country nationals who are in possession of a legitimisation card can exercise their right to vote in municipal elections. **Moldova** signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) that demonstrates their commitment to facilitating the integration of foreigners through cooperation among stakeholders, the acquisition of the national language and improved access to the labour market.

Return

Finland published a study that proposed expanding the target group for assisted voluntary return. **Italy** continued with three projects on Assisted Voluntary Return conducted by the Italian Council for Refugees, CIES (*Centro Informazione e Educazione allo Sviluppo*) Onlus and ARCI (*Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana*). **Poland** updated administrative procedures on the chain of command within border guard units for cases regarding foreigners. **Georgia** participated in seven Collecting Return Operations (CRO) coordinated by Frontex.

Addressing human trafficking

Strategies to combat human trafficking were further developed. **Finland** adopted a resolution on preventing and combatting labour exploitation that includes long-term objectives and strategies on cooperation between relevant authorities. **Luxembourg** updated regulations relating to the Prostitution Committee, specifying its composition and functioning; the committee works closely with the Monitoring Committee to fight against trafficking in human beings. **Malta** analysed institutional structures, policies, and public consultation feedback to further develop their national strategy to combat human trafficking.

Monitoring and capacity building efforts continued. In **Italy**, the Ministry of Defence continued with capacity building for local forces in Libya, Niger and Mali to support actions against human trafficking. The Italian Police Department carried out police operations in Sicily that led to the arrest of ten people responsible for illicit brokering, working exploitation, aiding and abetting illegal immigration, and sexual exploitation. **Poland** continued to monitor crimes related to trafficking in human beings with particular attention given to the war in Ukraine and an observed increase in victims from South America. **Greece** organised a simulation exercise as part of the project "[ERADICATING](#) - Enhancing prevention and multi-agency cooperation against Trafficking", that is co-funded by the EU and aims at strengthening prevention mechanisms and early identification of victims of trafficked persons. The Prosecutor's Office of **Georgia** continued to work with UNODC, co-hosting workshops on trafficking in human beings and setting up regional mechanisms for cross-border coordination and cooperation for investigating and prosecuting related cases.

External Dimension

Cross-border cooperation efforts were further developed. **France** signed a new protocol on the management of migration flows between with Senegal, a new "working holiday" visa agreement with Ecuador, and published an agreement on the management of migration flows and co-development with the Republic of the Congo. In **Germany**, a new position was created within the Ministry of Interior and Community; the Special Representative of the Federal Government for Migration Agreements, assumed by Joachim Stamp, will further develop practicable and cooperative migration agreements with key

countries of origin in compliance with human rights standards. These agreements can include the expansion of economic cooperation, qualification measures for the German labour market, but also collaboration on the return of rejected asylum seekers. The V4 Countries (**the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic**) delivered on their pledge to send patrol ships to the Libyan coast guard together with the Italian authorities. **Italy** completed the [PASPED programme](#), where efforts were made to combat irregular migration through the creation of job opportunities for young people in Senegal. **The Netherlands** and Niger strengthened cooperation on migration. **Poland** held talks with the leader of the democratic opposition in Belarus, where Poland announced they are ready to actively participate in initiatives undertaken by the European Commission to regulate issues relating to Belarusian refugees. **Spain** and Morocco signed two memoranda of understanding to exchange knowledge on migration management and integration, with a special focus on groups such as women, children and young people and victims of trafficking or violence.

EU Legislation Transposition

Bulgaria established a working group to support the transposition of Directive (EU) 2021/1883 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment. **The Czech Republic** submitted a draft law amending the Asylum Act and the Act on the Residence of Foreigners on the Territory of the Czech Republic has been submitted to the Government. The draft law transposes, among other things, the new EU Blue Card Directive, which concerns the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment. **Italy** received a letter of formal notice from the European Commission that the requirement of 10-years of residence to receive the Citizen Income is not aligned with European Union Law on matters regarding the free movement of work, citizen rights, long-term residence and international protection. **Malta** began transposing the provisions of Directive (EU) 2013/33 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast). **Poland** introduced provisions to ensure the application of Regulation (EU) 2018/1860 on the use of the Schengen Information System for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals, and Regulation (EU) 2018/1861 on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System (SIS).

Border management and irregular migration

Defense measures and border controls increased. **Estonia** made a legislative amendment that introduced the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS). Additionally, the Estonian Police and Border Guard maritime patrol vessels were merged with the Estonian Navy. In **Finland**, the Ministry of Interior launched three projects to amend border guard legislation, including to enable a more effective response to potential hybrid influencing operations against Finland that exploit migration. **Latvia** increased efforts on technology and infrastructure for border surveillance, such as presence capture systems and observation equipment. **Georgia** adopted the [Integrated Border Management Strategy of Georgia for 2023-2027](#) and increased security at the Georgia-Azerbaijan State Border with the support of an [EU-funded project](#), installing a new video surveillance system that is complemented by a long-range ground radar system and alarms. **Moldova** amended migration legislation to combat abuses, focusing on residence and work permits and expulsion procedures for foreigners.

Actions taken in response to the crisis in Belarus. **Latvia** extended its state of emergency on the Latvian-Belarusian border, taking into account continued risks of irregular migration and hybrid attacks by the Belarusian regime. **Lithuania** closed its Foreigners' Registration Centre in Kybartai in response to decreased flows of irregular migration via the Belarus-Lithuania border. **Poland** suspended traffic at the Polish-Belarusian border crossings until further notice due to state security.

In **Croatia**, changes were made to the State Border Surveillance Act and external border crossings were defined as part of the full implementation of the Schengen acquis.

In Slovenia, an upgraded Schengen information system entered into operation that included return decisions in order to deter irregular migration.

Finland published a [study](#) that examined how undocumented migrants are registered in the public social welfare service system, highlighting key challenges and potential solutions.

Recent EMN publications:

- EMN inform on [Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection](#)
- EMN inform on [Prospects of displaced populations in non-EU first reception and transit countries](#)
- 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](#)

Stay tuned for upcoming EMN publications:

- EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum (ARM), Statistical Annex and Country Factsheets
- 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

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