

# WHAT WERE THE NEW TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACROSS THE EU AND NORWAY IN 2020?

## EMN FLASH #17 - 2021

Introduction to the EMN Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2020

### Background

The European Migration Network (EMN) Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2020 provides a comprehensive overview of EU and national developments across a wide range of migration and asylum topics, including legal migration, international protection; minors and vulnerable groups; integration; citizenship and statelessness; borders, visa and Schengen governance; irregular migration including smuggling; return and

readmission; human trafficking; and migration and development cooperation.

What were common trends in migration and asylum at EU and national level in 2020?

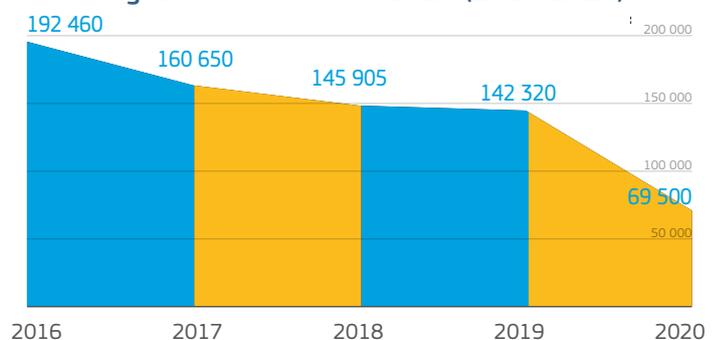
At a glance, the main trends and findings are introduced below.

### Key trends and findings

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of legal migrants and asylum applicants arriving in the EU in 2020 decreased substantially compared to 2019. The number of returns was generally lower, although a few Member States reported higher numbers than in the previous year.
- The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for new developments in asylum and migration management in 2020. Member States and Norway were impacted differently by the pandemic, depending on their epidemiological situation and on the pre-pandemic set-up of national systems. In some countries, new electronic systems and digital tools were introduced to ensure the maintenance of asylum and migration processes amidst restricted office hours or office closures and physical distancing measures.
- Member States undertook procedural changes to handle particularly the admission of highly skilled and essential workers during COVID-19 restrictions and introduced measures to protect the health of migrants and asylum seekers and prevent them from falling into irregular situations.
- Besides COVID-19 related impacts, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness for better migration management was a common theme of developments at EU and national level. The Commission's new Pact on Migration and Asylum, launched in September 2020, stresses the importance of effective and efficient procedures, systems and cooperation across all areas.<sup>1</sup>
- At national level, efforts often focussed on increasing administrative efficiency, notably through the harnessing of digital tools and through enhanced cooperation across different entities, including in third countries.

- Member States also adopted new strategic directions and priorities, commonly focusing on the attraction of new talent and enhanced labour market integration. New strategic forms of cooperation with third countries were established not only to enhance legal pathways, but also to tackle irregular migration.
- The protection of asylum seekers and refugees, including minors and other vulnerable groups, remained an area of considerable development in legislation and policy at EU and national level during 2020.
- The UK's official departure from the EU led to the implementation of measures to regulate the legal status of UK nationals and their family members in Member States.

### Third-country nationals returned to a third country following an order to leave - EU27 (2016-2020)



Statistics 2020 not available for Denmark  
Source: Eurostat (migr\_eirtn), extracted 27 May 2021

<sup>1</sup> Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM(2020) 609 final [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en)

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